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NUNAVIK REGIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
RÉGIE RÉGIONALE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX NUNAVIK

PRESS RELEASE

Nutrition North Canada

Real Impacts of the New Program Remain to Be Determined

Kuuujuaq, Québec – March 29, 2011 – The Kativik Regional Government (KRG) and the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) are reacting cautiously to the adjustments recently announced to the Nutrition North Canada program.

Following several weeks of intense media attention, the federal government announced on March 9 that it would expand its list of foods eligible for subsidy. The expanded list now includes all food, as well as most non-food items that were covered under the Food Mail Program prior to October 2010.

“While the announcement appears to respond to the concerns expressed by Northerners over the last few months, it falls short of the KRG Council resolution this past December,” noted KRG Chairperson Maggie Emudluk. Over the last few months, both the KRG and the NRBHSS have repeatedly urged the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, John Duncan, to maintain the Food Mail Program until a thorough assessment of the real impacts of the new Nutrition North Canada program can be completed.

“No data exists to give us a clear picture of how the new program will affect Nunavimmiut, especially the region’s most vulnerable residents: pregnant women, children and youth, elders, and single parents,” declared NRBHSS President Alacie Arngak. The 2009 *Poverty in Nunavik: Status Report* assesses the poverty rate in Nunavik as high as 30%. It should also be noted that a truncated list of food items eligible for subsidy in effect since October 2010 was having disastrous impacts in the North.

The federal government’s next step must be to initiate immediately a thorough assessment of the impacts of the new Nutrition North Canada program, through direct and transparent consultations with Northerners. The expanded list of eligible items announced by Minister Duncan on March 9 is effective for only 18 months and the new, complex rates that are part of the Nutrition North Canada program are still scheduled to take effect on April 1 of this year.

The sole objective of the KRG and the NRBHSS in this matter is to ensure that Nunavimmiut will continue to have access to healthy and affordable food and basic household items, comparable to Canadians throughout the country. Specifically, the federal government must take care that the new Nutrition North Canada program does not neutralize years of efforts to reduce the cost of living and improve health, early education, transportation infrastructure and the economy in the North.

The KRG is a non-ethnic public organization created in 1978, under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. The organization has jurisdiction over nearly the entire territory of Québec north of the 55th parallel in areas such as municipal matters, transportation, the environment, policing, employment, labour training, income security, childcare services, renewable resources, land-use planning, civil security and economic development.

The NRBHSS is a public organization created in 1978, under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. The organization has jurisdiction over nearly the entire territory of Québec north of the 55th parallel regarding the delivery of health and social services to the residents of the 14 communities.

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