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THE NRBHSS TESTIFIES AT THE VIENS COMMISSION

Kuuujuaq, February 21, 2018 – On February 12, 2018, at the Viens Commission, members of the administration of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) testified concerning discrimination affecting *Nunavimmiut*.

Locally hired employees, the majority of whom are Inuit, are not entitled to the same benefits as employees hired more than 50 km from their place of residence, which makes the health and social services network less attractive and less competitive, besides going against the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA)*.

To resolve the situation, the NRBHSS is working with the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)* and has proposed a pilot project that includes:

- the creation of two employment titles based on work experience and specifically reserved for beneficiaries of the *JBNQA*;
- benefits similar to those applicable to employees hired more than 50 km from their place of residence.

Carrying out this pilot project would enable fostering the attraction and retention of Inuit employees for vacant positions in the Nunavik health and social services network. More broadly, fostering the employment of Inuit with working conditions comparable to those applicable to non-Inuit would result in lowering the high costs related to the hiring of non-local personnel. “What is at stake here is the implementation of the provisions of the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* aimed at fostering Inuit employment, as it is the only viable option in the long term,” explained Minnie Grey, NRBHSS Executive Director.

The NRBHSS also testified on the discriminatory practices of certain institutions of the health network which refuse to register Nunavik patients on their waiting lists or which bill the Nunavik institutions with higher costs when they accept Nunavik patients. Those institutions offer highly specialized care to Inuit patients which our network is not yet capable of providing.

“We strongly believe that *Nunavimmiut* patients are victims of discrimination based on their location and that there is a profound misunderstanding by the long-term care facilities with regard to their duties toward any resident of the Province of Quebec,” stated Minnie Grey. To limit our vulnerability, we have undertaken efforts necessary to offer, in Nunavik, these long-term residential services offered off-territory until today.

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The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is a public agency created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. It is responsible for nearly the entire Québec territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.

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Source: Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services

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