



# Public-Health Recommendations concerning Return of Nunavimmiut to Work at Nunavik Mining Sites

At the N-REPAC meeting on July 27 with municipal representatives and representatives of mining companies, a written recommendation was requested from the Department of Public Health.

## The first question is:

Are there established preventive measures applicable to all workers, regardless of place of residence, to avoid allowing sick individuals to travel to Nunavik mining sites?

## The established measures are as follows:

1. Two negative questionnaires on symptoms (at 48 hours and immediately before the flight for the two mines);
2. Temperature check (immediately before the flight);
3. PCR screening test, either before departure from the South (CRI) or once at the site (Raglan):
  - a. **in case of a positive test result**, valid for all travellers regardless of place of residence:
    - i. preventive isolation on site according to the procedure applicable at each mining company:
      1. two possibilities in case of a positive PCR test result:
        - a. the workers are asymptomatic;
        - b. the workers become symptomatic;
  - b. **if the worker is asymptomatic**, probably a false positive and the result will have to be checked;
    - i. the worker will be kept in isolation for the time it takes to confirm the positive result. If confirmed positive, see 'c' below;
  - c. **if the worker becomes symptomatic**:
    - i. case management according to the procedure applicable at each mining site, jointly with the company physician.



## The second question is:

What about the preventive measures established at the mining sites?

Dr. Luc Bhérer visited the Raglan site with the CNESST inspector from June 16 to 19 and Christiane Poiré, occupational RN, visited the CRI site from June 22 to 25, performing assessments using the *CNESST* checklist (Appendix).

On July 27, Luc Bhérer, physician in charge, stated:

"Both mine sites have been implementing necessary preventive measures requested by CNESST.

Therefore, I can attest personally that preventive measures are well implemented and supervised, no derogation has been made by both inspectors. Workers travelling to the mine sites are symptom-free and the screening test result is below the sensitivity of the method in use. There is no way to be 100% sure that each and every one is not an asymptomatic and contagious carrier. However both mine representatives mention that there are no sick workers on either site anymore since preventive measures (washing hands, physical distancing, etc.) were implemented. Therefore, even if mine sites cannot be risk-free, if every worker, including Nunavimmiut, respects preventive measures in place, the probability is very high to stay COVID-free and for family and community members to be safe.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that a positive test result (asymptomatic worker) or diagnosis (symptomatic worker) should be reported to Dr. Marie Rochette, Nunavik Director of Public Health, who will conduct an epidemiological investigation jointly with the mining companies' resources, as has been done in the past. The necessary actions will then be undertaken jointly with the director of Public Health or the persons she designates to act on her behalf."

## The third question is:

Does the Department of Public Health consider that additional measures are necessary?

It does not appear realistic to require 14-day quarantine for Nunavimmiut returning to their community after a work session at a mining site. Although the test is not a panacea, the Department of Public Health recommends performing an additional PCR screening test for Nunavimmiut before their return to one of the Nunavik communities. It will also be very important



for mine workers to monitor their symptoms and remain vigilant in terms of obtaining a medical assessment at the CLSC without delay in case of doubt. The mining companies should inform and train them so they rigorously apply, like all other workers, the established measures for work at a mining site and know what to do and not to return home.

An issue remains relative to a Raglan mine's preoccupation that a new, total confinement of the Nunavik villages can compromise its ability to maintain its operations, given that it employs about 160 workers from the region. It is recommended to sustain a dialogue with the stakeholders (representatives of the N-REPAC, mining companies, Makivik and the municipalities) by organizing monthly meetings. It is also recommended that in the event of an outbreak in a community or a case at the mine, the same group meet to identify solutions that protect the health of Nunavimmiut, workers and the business continuity of the mines. The communities must understand that although the risk of contamination at the mining sites is deemed very low, it nevertheless exists.