

RELEASE

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FOR CLINICALLY AND CULTURALLY SAFE MEDICAL EVACUATIONS

Kuujjuaq, February 6, 2018 – One of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services' (NRBHSS) priorities is to offer children and their families safe services, from both the clinical and cultural point of view. That aim guides the deployment of services offered on the Nunavik territory as well as services offered off-territory, notably in Montréal with our partners of the McGill RUIS.

We believe a child's well-being relies on the quality of his ties with his family, his community and his culture. That commonly accepted principle assumes greater importance in an aboriginal context where evacuations for medical reasons have long been based solely on clinical considerations, with harmful and lasting consequences on the communities' social fabric.

In Nunavik, where the 14 communities are accessible only by air, aeromedical evacuations represent the only means of safely providing urgent care, including care for the pediatric clientele, to which the users are entitled. Evacuations from the Kuujjuaq and Puvirnituq health centres allow simultaneous transportation of a parent or legal guardian, with the sole exception of urgent medical evacuations to the various specialized-services institutions of Montréal, which are performed through the aeromedical-evacuation services of the ÉVAQ. Its services are therefore of crucial importance for our region, but they would be greatly improved if parents were allowed to escort their child on board such flights.

Thus, and with the goal of remedying the present situation, an awareness process was undertaken with our partners at the MSSS and the ÉVAQ in 2017. Since then, we have also proposed for them a solution so they can benefit from our experience in this matter. It is possible to offer medical evacuations that are clinically and culturally safe while ensuring the primacy of access to health services for the entire population of Québec.

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 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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