



Municipality of Puvirnituk ends state of emergency involving water access crisis

Kuujuuaq, Quebec, June 6, 2025 — Mayoress Lucy Qalingo has informed the Kativik Regional Government, the Government of Quebec, and the coalition of Nunavik agencies assisting Puvirnituk that the town is ending the state of emergency.

The Mayor and Council of Puvirnituk declared a state of emergency on May 17 and extended the emergency declaration ten days later.

The community endured a public health crisis resulting from the failure of its water supply system, which occurred almost ten weeks ago. The water pipeline that supplies raw water to the water treatment plant became severely damaged and inoperable due to severe winter conditions. Repetitive blizzard and blowing snow events significantly impacted the operation of tanker trucks that distribute water and collect wastewater. The extended disruption of the water supply posed public health risks, including the reduced ability for residents and the local hospital to maintain basic hygiene and sanitation.

During the emergency, the KRG Civil Security Department coordinated relief efforts of health and safety agencies and community partners, including the Inuulitsivik Health Centre, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, Nunavik Housing Bureau, Air Inuit, Northern and Coop stores, and Hydro Quebec. Civil Security also coordinated the mobilization of the 2nd Canadian Rangers Patrol Group that helped to set up community service centres, deliver bottled water to residents in need, and assist the placement of the temporary water bypass pipeline.

The Municipality of Inukjuak provided exemplary leadership and support by sending a team of volunteers including the town manager, water truck drivers and heavy equipment operators to relieve overworked Puvirnituk municipal staff, and expand water delivery and snow removal efforts.

KRG Civil Security was also a critical link to Quebec's Ministère de la Sécurité Publique and the coordination of the Quebec Government's response, including the airlift of 145,000 litres of bottled water to the community.

Conditions in the town have improved over the past two weeks. With technical assistance from the KRG Department of Municipal Public Works, the municipality successfully installed a temporary water pipeline bypass, thereby restoring the flow of raw water. This is a stabilizing, interim solution until more permanent repairs can be completed throughout the summer.

The municipality has experienced water distribution problems in previous years. The biggest challenge to reliable and effective municipal water distribution is the chronic underfunding of resilient water supply infrastructure that can withstand the realities of typically extreme Nunavik winter weather.

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“Our water crisis has shown the world that inexplicable living conditions still exist in this country, and we are more determined than ever to make governments accountable for providing a resilient water system comparable to what people outside of Nunavik take for granted. I want to thank the technical crews, first responders, Inuulitsivik staff and civil emergency response teams who have worked long hours to focus effort and solutions to reduce get the situation stabilized as quickly as possible. I also want to reassure the community that the KRG is committed to pursuing infrastructure solutions that resolve water access issues by any and all means.”

– Hilda Snowball, Chairperson

“I am relieved for the residents of Puvirnituk that conditions have stabilized, and that the worst of the water crisis has passed. While the most severe and immediate threat to public access to the water supply has diminished, there remain steep obstacles to ensuring that Puvirniturmiut can rely on the current system when they need it most. The Puvirnituk Council joins me in extending our deepest, heartfelt gratitude to everyone who came to our aid.”

– Lucy Qalingo, Mayor of Puvirnituk

The Kativik Regional Government delivers comprehensive public services to Nunavimmiut under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975). KRG is governed by a 17-member Council of elected municipal representatives from 14 northern communities in Nunavik, an elected Chair and Vice-Chair, and the chief of the Naskapi First Nation of Kawawachikamach.

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