



Press Release

For immediate release

KRG disappointed over cancellation of Arctic Winter Games but calls it understandable given the circumstances

Kuujuuaq, March 8, 2020 – The Kativik Regional Government is deeply disappointed for the athletes, coaches and organizers of Team Nunavik-Québec over the cancellation of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games. The KRG applauds the dedication and hard work of all those involved in an event that had all the makings of being a resounding success.

However, given the rapid spread of COVID-19 or Coronavirus, government and health officials as well as the Arctic Winter Games Host Society in Whitehorse, Yukon took the precautionary step to cancel the games yesterday.

«We are disappointed that the event was cancelled but relieved that precautions were taken to protect our athletes and other team members. Minimizing the risk and exposure to all participants is very important for everyone involved», said the Chairperson of the Kativik Regional Government Jennifer Munick.

The decision came just days before the 62 Nunavik athletes and coaches, three cultural performers and seven mission staff were poised to depart this Saturday on a chartered flight for Whitehorse where the games were to be held from March 15 to 21.

Athletes from villages on both the Hudson and Ungava coasts were scheduled to converge on Kuujuuaq next Friday. A parade through the streets of Kuujuuaq as well as greetings and words of encouragements from dignitaries was planned as part of a major rally to boost the morale of our team members.

Our athletes were scheduled to participate in five different Arctic Sports and Dene Games in which they have excelled in the past. It would also have been an occasion for our youths to enjoy the different cultural groups throughout the circumpolar regions and learn about other circumpolar cultures.

Yukon's acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Catherine Elliott who recommended the cancellation of the games out of concern for the health of the athletes, visitors and local population explained during a news conference on Saturday that there were no Covid-19 cases in Yukon. While the risk of the virus spreading in the region was low, the situation was changing rapidly worldwide and becoming much more unpredictable. «In a setting like the Arctic Winter Games, even a suspected case would be devastating...While the situation may change in the

next week, it's not going to get better,» Dr. Elliott said, barely holding back her tears of disappointment during the news conference.

That same disappointment was felt by the KRG when it received the news. However, the KRG was quick to grasp the importance of the decision for the safety of its athletes and the rest of the Team-Nunavik-Québec contingency. The KRG understands how tough of a decision this was for the organizers and given the uncertainty of the virus spreading in the region, it views the cancellation as a responsible move.

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The Kativik Regional Government 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.