

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

Renewed call for Action on first confirmed case of COVID-19

(May 1, 2020, Iqaluit, Nunavut) On the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Nunavut, NTI renews its calls for swift action in testing, halting intercommunity travel and ensuring access to water and sewer services.

"We all knew that COVID-19 would arrive in Nunavut. There is still time to limit the spread and manage the impact. The emergency situation, even prior to COVID-19, was and is beyond the financial and human capacity of the territory to address. We need decisive, collaborative action," said Aluki Kotierk, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI).

Widespread point of care testing and near point of care testing must be established immediately in territory, with urgency in Pond Inlet to allow for necessary isolation and evacuation of infected individuals and avoid further spread of the disease. Nunavut's lack of a public health laboratory, along with the territory's remoteness, the reduction in flights, and delays due to blizzards, is resulting in an average of seven days to obtain COVID-19 test results.

NTI renews its call to immediately halt non-essential passenger air travel to and from Nunavut and between communities, including private charters, and to treat commercial airlines in Nunavut as essential services.

Nunavut Inuit need reliable access to daily water and sewer delivery, with urgent priority in Pond Inlet. All Nunavut households must receive water and sewer services daily during the COVID-19 pandemic and a plan must be developed to guarantee daily delivery indefinitely.

"I would like to thank the Chief Public Health Officer of Nunavut for keeping COVID-19 out of Nunavut this long. I would also like to thank Nunavut Inuit for supporting each other through physical distancing, hand washing and following the instructions of Dr. Patterson. I know the good people of Mittimatalik will do everything possible. We are with you," said Vice-President James Eetoolook.

Anyone who believes they have been exposed to COVID-19 is advised to call the Government of Nunavut's COVID-hotline at 1-888-975-8601 between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., or notify the community health centre, and immediately isolate at home for 14 days. Please do not go to the health centre in person.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include a fever, cough or difficulty breathing. The best protection from spreading or catching the virus is physical distancing, handwashing for at least 20 seconds, coughing and sneezing into an elbow and staying home as much as possible.

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