



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CASES OF ACTIVE TUBERCULOSIS IN NUNAVIK

**Kuujuaq, May 6, 2013** – The Department of Public Health (DPH) of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) would like to inform the population of new cases of contagious tuberculosis in certain communities of the region. Since the outbreak in Kangiqsualujjuaq in 2012, the DPH and the Ungava Tulattavik and Inuulitsivik Health Centres have pursued their efforts to ensure quick diagnosis and appropriate treatment of cases of active tuberculosis as well as follow-up for persons who have been in contact with those cases.

On May 1, 2013, nine cases of tuberculosis were reported in Nunavik for 2013: seven in Salluit and two in Kuujuaq. By comparison, data for 2011 and 2012 respectively indicate 27 and 75. The current outbreak in Salluit follows the tendency observed over the past few years of a rise in cases of active tuberculosis in both Nunavut and Nunavik.

Even though the situation seems relatively under control, it is important to remain vigilant. Control of tuberculosis can only be effective with the collaboration of the affected communities. Visiting houses where gambling occurs or where inhaled drugs are shared (gathering houses), where several persons spend hours in overcrowded and poorly ventilated environments, constitutes a major risk of infection with the presence of an individual infected with pulmonary tuberculosis and who has not been diagnosed. Young persons are often the ones affected, and they tend to delay consulting at the CLSC in spite of symptoms that indicate tuberculosis infection.

The Nunavik DPH requires the collaboration of the entire population in order to identify any clinical situation that could represent a case of active, contagious tuberculosis and apply control measures without delay, thus limiting the risks of transmission.

### ***What Is Tuberculosis?***

Tuberculosis is a contagious disease caused by a microbe, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The microbe is most often found in the lungs, but other organs such as the ganglions, kidneys and bones can also be affected. Tuberculosis can develop rapidly after initial contact with the microbe or can manifest several years later.

### ***What Are the Symptoms?***

The symptoms most indicative of tuberculosis are an unusual cough that lasts more than three weeks, often accompanied by expectoration, as well as fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nocturnal sweats and weight loss.

### ***How Is the Infection Transmitted?***

When a person infected with contagious pulmonary tuberculosis coughs or sneezes, he or she projects microbes into the air. Another person who inhales those microbes can then get infected.

***Who Are Most at Risk of Being Infected with Tuberculosis?***

Those most at risk are persons in close and prolonged contact with a contagious case; this means domestic and other intimate contact. The most vulnerable are children, elderly persons and those whose immune system has been compromised by other diseases or an unhealthy lifestyle.

***Once Infected, Will a Person Develop Active Tuberculosis?***

The majority of those infected by the microbe will not develop the disease. The risk of developing the disease is greater among:

- young children and adolescents;
- persons whose immune system has been compromised by:
  - a major disease such as diabetes, HIV infection or cancer, or a form of treatment that weakens the immune system;
  - an unhealthy lifestyle, characterized by alcoholism, substance abuse or poor nutrition.

***Is There a Treatment for Tuberculosis?***

Yes, and it is essential. By taking the medication as prescribed, infected persons will recover and will no longer be contagious. They will thus avoid serious complications as well as protect their loved ones. It is important to note that in Québec, treatment for tuberculosis is mandatory. The disease is treated with several medications (usually two to four different types) that must be taken regularly over a period of six to nine months. Thanks to the effectiveness of the medications used, the contagiousity of cases generally diminishes quickly.

*Nunavimmiut* may contact their CLSC for additional information.

*The NRBHSS is a public agency created in 1978 under the **James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement**. It is responsible for nearly the entire Québec territory located north of the 55<sup>th</sup> 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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