



Nunavik's Tuberculosis Crisis: A Call for Urgent Action

Kuujuuaq, September 16, 2025 – The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) wants to address the growing concerns about the tuberculosis (TB) crisis in the region. Case numbers are rising at rates far above those in Quebec and Canada, underscoring both the resilience of our communities and the deep structural challenges that continue to drive health inequities in Nunavik.

Current Situation

So far in 2025, 83 cases of TB have been diagnosed, with the rate expected to exceed 800 per 100,000 people. This would make Nunavik's TB rate among the highest in the world and place the region on track for its largest caseload in history. Seven communities are currently experiencing outbreaks.

Why TB Persists

TB is both preventable and curable, yet it continues to affect Nunavik disproportionately. Severe housing shortages, chronic underfunding, fragile health infrastructure, and limited diagnostic access all create the conditions for transmission and delayed care. Workforce shortages and reliance on fly-in resources further weaken the region's ability to respond.

Actions Underway

The NRBHSS is working closely with community leaders, health centres, and government partners to strengthen Nunavik's response:

- **Supporting communities in outbreak:** a call for tender has been launched to coordinate outbreak logistics, including temporary housing, alternative clinical spaces, and additional personnel.
- **Empowering Nunavimmiut:** new federal funding is expanding the Public Health Officer program, training Nunavimmiut to deliver culturally safe TB support directly in their communities.
- **Securing resources:** the NRBHSS is working with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) to obtain urgent and sustained investments for the health system in Nunavik.

Building on Years of Work

Since 2019, the NRBHSS has led a Regional TB Committee with community leaders and health representatives and established a high-level steering committee with Nunavik's three health organizations to advance TB elimination. In partnership with health centres, the NRBHSS opened Sailivik, a Public Health Centre in Kangiqsualujjuaq, offering culturally grounded prevention and support services; with more centres planned in other communities. Awareness campaigns are ongoing to reduce stigma, improve treatment adherence, and encourage early testing.

The NRBHSS also welcomes the recent opinion letter from Dr. Khan, published in *Le Devoir* and *La Presse*, which underline the urgent need for stronger government action to address TB in Nunavik. We fully agree with Dr. Khan's call: real progress depends on immediate and sustained commitments from both the provincial and federal governments.

To ensure that local concerns remain at the heart of the response, Sarah Beaulne, Executive Director of the Inuulitsivik Health Centre and Jennifer Munick-Watkins, Executive Director of the NRBHSS, recently met with Nunavik's mayors to discuss TB and identify collaborative ways to move forward. This collaboration reinforces our shared commitment to protect Nunavimmiut and work hand in hand with community leadership.

"Our communities have shown remarkable strength in the face of this crisis. But resilience alone is not enough. Ending TB in Nunavik requires urgent investments in housing, health infrastructure, and staffing stability. We need solutions that address the root causes of these inequities and give our people the conditions they deserve to thrive."

— Jennifer Munick-Watkins, Executive Director, NRBHSS

"Tuberculosis is both preventable and curable, yet it continues to take a devastating toll on Nunavik. This is unacceptable. Our teams are working tirelessly with communities, but the conditions driving this crisis persist. Immediate and sustained action from both the provincial and federal governments is essential if we are to stop the spread of TB and protect the health and dignity of Nunavimmiut."

— Dr. Yassen Tcholakov, Clinical lead in infectious diseases, NRBHSS

The Road Ahead

TB has been a reality in Nunavik for far too long. While communities and the NRBHSS and health centres are responding with urgency, lasting solutions demand action at all levels of government. With strong Inuit leadership, urgent investments, and sustained commitment, Nunavik can move toward a future free of TB.

The NRBHSS thanks health professionals, public health officers and community partners across the region who continue to respond tirelessly under challenging conditions. Most of all, we recognize the resilience of people living with or affected by TB, as well as all Nunavimmiut, whose strength remains at the heart of this fight.

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is a public agency created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It is responsible for nearly the entire Quebec 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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