



News Release

Nunavut Legislative Assembly Approves *The Official Languages Act*

Iqaluit, Nunavut (June 05, 2008) – The Nunavut Legislative Assembly has passed an Official Languages Act marking a significant achievement in the second legislative assembly's stated goal of strengthening Inuit culture.

"This is a very important day in Nunavut's history," said Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Culture Language Elders and Youth, "with the approval of the *Official Languages Act* the Inuit language along with English and French are now poised to become Nunavut's Official Languages. This is a key first element in our work to ensure the Inuit Language stays at the centre of life in Nunavut, while protecting and promoting the rights of those who speak English or French."

With passage through the Nunavut Legislature completed the *Official Languages Act* must now be referred to the Government of Canada as required by the *Nunavut Act*. After federal agreement is received and regulations are ready, the Act can be brought into force.

"This piece of legislation defines who we are as Inuit in Nunavut and we are calling on all members of the federal parliament to grant this legislation speedy passage," said Tapardjuk.

This new *Official Languages Act* deals with the use of Official Languages in the Legislative Assembly and the courts and with the delivery of territorial government services to the public. Provisions of the Act also ensure that documents, signs, and notices from Nunavut public bodies are in the official languages.


A single Minister will be given the responsibility for overseeing a comprehensive Official Languages implementation plan and be held accountable for progress made in implementing the legislation. The role of the Languages Commissioner has been strengthened and expanded, both as a language ombudsperson and through a compliance function to ensure that the legislation is followed.

"For the first time Inuit in Nunavut will have a clear legal statement of their inherent right to use the Inuit Language in full equality with English and French," said Tapardjuk, "this exceeds any other statutory protection in place for Inuit or an Aboriginal people in Canada and has the same status as human rights legislation."

The *Official Languages Act* was the result of more than eight years of consultation and collaboration. Minister Tapardjuk expressed his appreciation to all those involved and in particular Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, past and present Languages Commissioners of Nunavut, Association des francophones du Nunavut and the Legislature's Ajauqtiit Committee. "The collaborative work of all involved improved this legislation," said Tapardjuk.

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