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Uqauhinut Kamisinaup Havakvia Nunavunmi
Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut
Bureau du Commissaire aux langues du Nunavut

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Release of the Systemic Investigation of Qikiqtani General Hospital

IQALUIT, Nunavut (May 11, 2016) – The Office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut (OLC) has tabled a systemic investigation report assessing the availability of services and communications in Inuktitut and French between March 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013, and the compliance of the *Official Languages Act*, R.S.N.W.T.1988 at the Qikiqtani General Hospital.

The OLC has received, for many years, concerns from citizens regarding their inability to communicate with and receive services in the official language of their choice from the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS), renamed the Department of Health in 2013. “As the non-compliance of language rights is recurrent and seems to be an endemic issue, we decided to conduct a systemic investigation”, says the Commissioner, Sandra Inutiq.

The Commissioner made fourteen recommendations pertaining to policies, procedures and practices that clearly reflect the great importance of complying with the *Official Languages Act* and its considerable impact on accessibility, safety, quality and equality of health care services for all citizens of Nunavut.

Providing communications and services in Inuktitut and French is a matter of justice: ethics requires all persons to be treated with the same level of integrity, dignity and equality. “A patient must not be subjected to an unwelcoming response or gesture, longer wait time, inferior quality service or longer suffering period just because he or she requires service in Inuktitut or French rather than in English”, adds the Commissioner.

“Inuit and French language communities must be offered and receive health care in the official language of their choice, in order to clearly explain their pain, understand professionals’ questions and the diagnosis, follow prescribed medications and properly follow recommended treatment. The quality of care has to be equal to that offered to people from the Anglophone community who are proficient in English.”

