



Context

A recent study shows that the level of poverty in Nunavik is two to three times higher than in other parts of Québec. Moreover, poverty in our region is continuing to increase, while elsewhere in Québec and Canada, it is decreasing. The low level of education of Nunavimmiut is a barrier to employment, and constitutes one of the major elements contributing to poverty.

A Few of the Challenges

In Nunavik, 50% of the population is under the age of 20, and 93.4% of students drop out of classes before completing high school. A wide variety of jobs exist in the region; however, because 58% of these full-time positions require post-secondary education or trade certification, many can not be filled by Nunavimmiut.

A long-term labour plan that integrates the various actions and initiatives of different stakeholders needs to be developed.

As Québec follows through on its goal to develop the north, expanded mining activities are expected to continue to drive demand for more qualified workers. Increasing the number of Nunavimmiut qualified to work in mining will be a major challenge.

The Kativik Regional Government has prioritized the hiring of Nunavimmiut in the region's construction industry over several years without Québec-government support.

For many jobs in Nunavik, locally organized vocational training is the best solution. However, because many other positions require college or university diplomas, college programs and infrastructure are needed in the region to help youth stay in school longer.

The criteria for many training programs funded by the federal and provincial governments are inapplicable in Nunavik.

Despite the job opportunities with Nunavik organizations in Montreal, Inuit living in this city also face serious employment difficulties. There is an absence of appropriate training programs.

Solutions and Priorities

Youth need to be encouraged to stay in school, and to strive to obtain higher levels of education and trade certification. The development of a school retention strategy will help focus regional efforts in this respect, but the mobilization of resources and limited funding remain an issue.

Concerted actions and programs with adequate funding are needed to encourage Nunavimmiut to take up job opportunities outside of their home communities.

A strategy for human resources in the mining sector must be created to promote the training and hiring of Inuit.

Women need to be encouraged to enter sectors of employment traditionally filled by men, such as mining and construction.

Significant funding for construction trades training and mentoring is needed.

Nunavik must be recognized by the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) as a distinct region. Currently, a part of Nunavik is attached to the CCQ's Côte-Nord region and the other part to the CCQ's Abitibi- Témiscamingue region. In neither case are construction contractors under an obligation to hire Inuit for projects in Nunavik. If Nunavik were a separate CCQ region, construction contractors would be required to hire Nunavimmiut before hiring workers from other regions. The Kativik Regional Government would moreover be able to act as an employment agency for the placement of Inuit construction workers.

Tourism represents an emerging sector for Inuit employment and business opportunities. Adequate funding resources are needed to encourage training as well as progress regarding certification, insurance and risk management, authentic-quality product offerings, and so on.

Discussion

Educational requirements will continue to result in many jobs being filled by workers from outside of Nunavik. Our goal must therefore be to train Nunavimmiut, with focus on youth and women, to qualify for the existing employment opportunities and then to help them to retain these jobs.

