



**Standing Committee *Ajauqtiit***

**Interim Report on the  
Review of Bill 6, *Official Languages Act* and  
Bill 7, *Inuit Language Protection Act***

Fourth Session  
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**Steve Mapsalak, MLA**  
Chair

**James Arreak, MLA**  
Co-Chair

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October 30, 2007

Hon. Peter Kilabuk, MLA  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Office of the Speaker  
Legislative Assembly Building  
Iqaluit, Nunavut  
X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Members of the Standing Committee *Ajauqtiit*, I have the honour of presenting the Standing Committee's Interim Report on the Review of Bill 6, *Official Languages Act* and Bill 7, *Inuit Language Protection Act*.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Mapsalak, MLA  
Chair

## Introduction and Background

The Government of Nunavut inherited the *Official Languages Act* from the Northwest Territories upon the creation of Nunavut in 1999. On February 26, 2001, the First Legislative Assembly established a Special Committee to review the *Official Languages Act*, as required under section 29 of the law.

This Special Committee consulted with key stakeholders on language in Nunavut, including GN departments, the federal government, the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, the Francophone Association, and other jurisdictions, including Nunavik, Greenland and the Northwest Territories. The Special Committee held public meetings in over one-third of Nunavut's communities. The Special Committee made a number of recommendations to the government in its final report, which was presented to the House on December 2, 2003.

On March 28, 2007, the Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth tabled draft bills for a new *Official Languages Act* and a new *Inuit Language Protection Act*. On June 5, 2007, the Minister also tabled the department's summary report on its community consultations on the draft language bills, which were jointly held with NTI in the spring of 2007.

On June 5, 2007, Bill 6, the proposed *Official Languages Act* and Bill 7, the proposed *Inuit Language Protection Act*, received 1<sup>st</sup> reading in the Legislative Assembly. On June 6, 2007, both bills received 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and were referred to the Standing Committee for scrutiny.

Bills 6 and Bill 7 have been in the public domain and available on the Legislative Assembly's website since they received 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Advertisements inviting public comment were placed in *Nunatsiaq News*, *News/North* and *Kivalliq News* in July 2007. Local cable television stations broadcast invitations for public comment in June and July. All MLAs' constituency offices in all communities received copies of the Bills to make available to the public.

On June 13, 2007, the Chair of the Standing Committee wrote directly to a number of individuals and organizations, providing copies of both bills in all four languages. The Chairman's letter formally invited submissions on the two Bills from:

- All 25 mayors in Nunavut;
- The President of the Kivalliq Chamber of Commerce;
- The President of the Baffin Regional Chamber of Commerce;
- The President of NTI;
- The Languages Commissioner of Nunavut;
- The President of the Francophone Association of Nunavut;
- The President of the Nunavut Association of Municipalities;
- The President of the Nunavut Employees Union; and
- The President of the Nunavut Teachers' Association.

In July of 2007, the Standing Committee Chair wrote to the Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth with respect to specific sections of the bills. The Standing Committee also wrote to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut, asking for her views on provisions impacting the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The Standing Committee recently received responses to its correspondence. These will be tabled after the Standing Committee has had the opportunity to review them in detail.

As of September 18, 2007, formal written submissions have been received from a number of organizations and individuals. These are listed in the appendix to this report.

The Standing Committee held public hearings on Bills 6 and 7 in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly from October 18-19, 2007. The Standing Committee allotted times for each organization and individual to make a presentation on their submission to the Committee. Members had the opportunity to pose questions to the witnesses. These hearings were open to the public and were well attended. Although Arctic Co-operatives provided the Committee with a written submission, representatives could not appear in person due to other commitments. The Standing Committee will, however, follow up with Arctic Co-operatives through correspondence, which will be made public through tabling in the House at the appropriate time. The Committee may decide to hold further public hearings in other communities in Nunavut.

Standing Committee Members were pleased by the effort and care that went into the submissions provided by stakeholders in Nunavut.

During the public hearings, the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, Mr. Johnny Pujjutt Kusugak, announced that he will be resigning from his position in December of 2007, due to family commitments. The Standing Committee *Ajauqtiit* took the opportunity to publicly thank Mr. Kusugak for his service to Nunavummiut and for his contributions to the development of Bills 6 and 7. The Standing Committee wishes him the best in the future.

## **Stakeholder Issues and Concerns**

A number of themes have emerged during the Standing Committee's consideration of the bills. During the public hearings, a wide range of diverse perspectives and recommendations were articulated by witnesses. In some cases, recommendations on certain issues differed between presenters.

These include:

## **Bill 6, *Official Languages Act***

- The Inuit language needs to be equal to English and French. Acts, statutory instruments and key government publications, including the *Nunavut Gazette*, must be translated into the Inuit language. All versions must be authoritative.
- In its current form, Bill 6 needs to be strengthened. It is too weak in its current form.
- Bill 6 should be more like Quebec's *Charter of the French Language*.
- Fines for violations of the Act must be high enough to ensure that organizations comply with the law.
- The Minister responsible for these Acts must be the Minister of CLEY.
- The Minister responsible for these Acts must be the Premier.
- The role of the Languages Commissioner should include the responsibility to undertake language promotion initiatives. The office's role should not be limited to investigating complaints.
- Bill 6 must define "essential services" to include those services that will assure that the Francophone community will have a full array of educational, social and cultural institutions to support its development.
- Revenues from fines for violations of the Act should be allocated to the Office of the Languages Commissioner.
- Revenues from fines for violations of the Act should be allocated to the language community that did not receive a service.
- The government should not create laws requiring services that it will not be able to actually provide. The experience of the NWT must be considered.
- The majority of the presenters expressed the view that Bill 6 should not be passed unless their proposed amendments are made.

## **Bill 7, *Inuit Language Protection Act***

- The future of the Inuit Language needs to be a priority. It is a concern that more and more Inuit youth are speaking English instead of their mother tongue.
- Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun should be the language of instruction for all subjects in Nunavut's public schools.

- The timeframe for implementing sections of the Act relating to Inuit language of instruction should be accelerated.
- The Government of Nunavut must provide sufficient education materials and programs to allow them to be delivered in the Inuit language. The bill should require that early childhood, daycare and adult education programs be delivered in the Inuit language.
- Bill 7 should ensure that employees in both the public and private sectors have the right to work in the Inuit Language.
- The *Inuit Language Protection Act* must recognize the education rights of children of beneficiary members of the Francophone community.
- The majority of the presenters expressed the view that Bill 7 should not be passed unless their proposed amendments are made.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The Standing Committee looks forward to continuing its work on the review of Bill 6, the proposed *Official Languages Act* and Bill 7, the proposed *Inuit Language Protection Act*. Members would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to stakeholder representatives who took the time and made the effort to submit formal input and comment.

The Standing Committee will table copies of all correspondence, submissions and transcripts from its recent public hearings. These will enter the permanent public record. The Standing Committee will continue its scrutiny of the bills, giving careful consideration to the testimony provided by witnesses at its recent hearings.

The Standing Committee will be inviting the Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth to appear before the Standing Committee on the week of December 3, 2007, to address issues emerging from the Committee's review. This appearance will be held in a public forum. This will be the first time that a Minister will appear in public before a Standing Committee at this stage of the legislative process regarding proposed legislation that has been brought forward in the House. The Standing Committee strongly believes that such an appearance is warranted. Language is a very complex issue in Nunavut, and many presenters strongly argued that the bills should be amended. The Standing Committee looks forward to having the opportunity for a full discussion with the Minister on these issues.

Accordingly, the Standing Committee will seek the approval of the Legislative Assembly to extend the review period for these bills.

## Appendix

<b>Organization/Individual</b>	<b>Bill 6 – <i>Official Languages Act</i></b>	<b>Bill 7 – <i>Inuit Language Protection Act</i></b>
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI)	8 page submission	20 page submission
Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA)	2 page submission and supporting documentation	2 page submission and supporting documentation
Languages Commissioner of Nunavut	6 page submission	9 page submission
Francophone Association	9 page submission	1 page submission
Arctic Cooperatives Ltd.	2 page submission	-
Inuit Broadcasting Corporation	-	5 page submission and supporting documentation
Madeline Redfern (as an individual)	3 page submission	6 page submission
Nunavut Arctic College Interpreter/Translator Students	-	1 page submission