



Cambridge Bay
Ikaluktutiak
ᐃᑭᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ

Kugluktuk
ᑭᐸᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ

Bathurst Inlet
Kingaok
ᑭᐸᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ

Bay Chimo
Umingmaktok
ᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ

Gjoa Haven
Okhoktok
ᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ

Taloyoak
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Kugaaruk
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A Letter to the Honourable John Main, Premier of Nunavut from Kitikmeot Inuit Association Vice President, Social and Cultural Lawrence Otokiak

Cambridge Bay, Nunavut
March 4, 2026

Mr. Main I would like to thank your office for this opportunity to share what I believe Cabinet needs to understand as mandate discussions moving forward.

The issues I am raising are everyday realities for Inuit in the Kitikmeot. They effect our children, families, and Elders in very real ways. Housing, education, and infrastructure all matter. Very important work is underway in each of these areas. This work should continue.

What is not receiving the same level of attention as these issues is language, and its direct connection to what is happening in our schools.

Language is how Inuit understand the land, our relationships, and the world around us. It carries knowledge, values, and identity. It is how Elders teach and how children learn who they are. When Inuit language is not used in classrooms and public spaces, that connection weakens. Over time, the use of our language has eroded, not by choice, but because it was pushed out of daily life and education.

If language is only taught as a subject, rather than used daily in classrooms, it becomes something students learn about instead of something they live. While we continue to build homes and improve infrastructure, language is quietly slipping away. If this issue remains unaddressed, it is something we risk losing permanently.

We also need to be honest about school absenteeism. From what we see in our communities, this is not about a lack of effort or interest from parents or children. Inuit families live by rhythms shaped by the land, weather, and travel. Early school start times do not always work for our young children. If we want better attendance, we need flexibility, so schools fit better with how families actually live their lives.

Housing overcrowding continues to put pressure on families. Children are trying to learn and grow in homes where multiple generations share small spaces. This directly affects their ability to succeed in school, no matter how much their family cares.

In my role as an elected leader, and as a voice for cultural and social development, I will continue working closely with NTI to advance these issues responsibly with the Government of Nunavut.

This is about ensuring our systems work for Inuit families across Nunavut.

Thank you.

Lawrence Otokiak
Vice President, Social and Cultural
Kitikmeot Inuit Association