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Building Nunavut Together
Nunavuliuqatigiingniq
Bâtir le Nunavut ensemble

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Minister Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster's Office
Minista Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster Titirarvinga
Bureau de la ministre Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster

March 16, 2026

Translation to Follow

Mr. Simon Kuliktana
Member of the Legislative Assembly, Kugluktuk
skuliktana@assembly.nu.ca

Dear Mr. Kuliktana,

On March 9, 2026, you raised a concern that it is harder for residents in smaller communities, like Kugluktuk, to access cancer screening services, such as mammograms, and asked how the Department of Health is working to achieve equity in this area. In addition, you asked how much funding from the recent tobacco settlement will be used to expand and improve cancer screening in Nunavut.

Cancer Screening

Cancer screening helps find cancer early, before it spreads and when it is easier to treat. Nunavummiut from all communities, small and large, are encouraged to speak with their health care provider about any symptoms or concerns they have and to discuss which tests may be appropriate for them.

Nunavut is moving toward an organized approach to cancer screening, beginning with colorectal cancer. The colorectal cancer screening program was officially launched in May 2025, and it is now in 18 communities. The Department of Health (Health) continues to work on launching this program across the territory; Kugluktuk will be online as soon as the required software is in place.

All community health centres in the territory have updated cervical cancer screening guidelines, which are consistent with national guidelines. Nunavummiut can access pap smear tests from a community health nurse, and all pregnant women are offered a pap smear test upon their first prenatal visit.

Diagnostic screening for breast cancer is available in-territory at the Qikiqtani General Hospital (QGH) and Nunavummiut can also access mammograms out-of-territory (e.g., Winnipeg, Yellowknife, Edmonton). Medical travel for diagnostic mammograms is covered. Medical travel for screening mammograms is not covered, although Nunavummiut who are travelling for other reasons (i.e., medical travel, duty travel, or personal reasons) can speak to their health care provider about arranging a screening

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mammogram during their trip; the cost of the mammogram procedure would be covered.

Screening for lung cancer requires specialized equipment and is currently only available in Iqaluit, although the Department of Health is exploring whether screening outside of Iqaluit, in the Qikiqtaaluk region, may be possible.

Tobacco Settlement

As you noted during the March 9, 2026, sitting of the Legislative Assembly, in March 2025, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice approved a $32.5 billion settlement. This settlement is the largest of its kind in Canadian history and the third largest worldwide.

Nunavut will receive up to $97M of this total amount over the next 20 years and has already received its first payment of approximately $24.3 million in August 2025. Typically, these funds would go into general revenue, however, Health and the Department of Finance are in discussions on how some of the funding can be used for Health projects, program development, and prevention initiatives.

Thus far Health has received support for the following initiatives:

- Replacement of X-ray machines and diagnostic imaging equipment in regional centres and community health centres.
- Creation of twelve Basic Radiological Technician/Laboratory Clerk (BRT/Lab Clerk) positions across the territory.

Nunavut sits on the Provincial-Territorial Liaison Committee, which represents the interests of the provincial and territorial governments with the settlement administrators and the tobacco companies.

I trust the above information addresses your questions.

Sincerely,

Hon. Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster
Minister of Health

cc: Megan Hunt, Deputy Minister of Health