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Quebec spending falls 25 per cent short in Nunavik

Youthful population likely explanation for lower per-capita payments, study suggests

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Quebec spends about 25 per cent less money per capita in Nunavik than elsewhere in the province, says a new socio-economic study of the territory.

In the 1980s, government spending was about equal, but in 2003 Quebec spent \$3,063 per capita in Nunavik and \$4,187 per capita elsewhere in the province.

The most probable explanation for the change researchers could come up with is that transfers increase as a population ages.

And Nunavik has a younger population.

But its youth, combined with lower education levels than in the rest of Quebec, means the region has a greater need for new jobs and more reliance on government money, suggests the Socio-economic profile of Nunavik 2006.

And the survey says Nunavik's heavy dependency on government money leaves residents more vulnerable to cutbacks in spending than people who live in southern Quebec.

From 1991 to 1998, Nunavimmiut were harder hit than southern Quebecers by cuts to provincial government spending.

Public spending dropped by 14 per cent, compared to six per cent elsewhere in the province. Personal spending also tumbled.

"One is the cause of the other. When the government is spending less money, the government is giving less money to the people," Duhaime said.

The federal government also cut spending in Nunavik from 1983 to 1998. Spending improved in 2003 but was still lower than in 1983.

The new regional government for Nunavik may protect the region from government spending cutbacks, which have a "severe impact" on people, Duhaime said.

"In the Nunavik Government, you will more able to take crucial decisions about money," he told the recent meeting of the Kativik Regional Government council.

The profile is a result of the Nunivaat Nunavik statistics program, which grew from a 2004 agreement between the Kativik Regional Government and Laval to provide updated statistics and research reports. Nunivaat now has a database of information at www.nunivaat.org.

The statistics provide arguments for Nunavik officials to negotiate more government funding to meet its special needs in health, education, infrastructure and social assistance.

"Since we are trying to have a good future for our region, we will have to have good tools," said KRG chair Maggie Emudluk.