

508-06.04 (1)

**BRIEFING NOTE****CURRENT SITUATION IN DAVIS INLET****ISSUE:**

- Mr. Al Garmen, Health Canada, contacted Labrador & Aboriginal Affairs late Monday afternoon, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1999. Mr. Garmen had been to the community of Davis Inlet the previous week and called to express much concern regarding the current situation. Mr. Garmen witnessed many youth sniffing gas in public without any attempt of intervention from the community. He expressed his concern that Davis Inlet was a tragedy waiting to happen.
- In June 1999, the community forced the removal of the Social Worker and efforts to hire a new Social Worker have been unsuccessful. In the interim, a social worker and community service worker from Sheshatshiu have been rotated into the community to respond to crisis on an as needed basis.

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

- Health Labrador Corporation (HLC) will assess the current situation in the community by contacting key community members and determining an appropriate response.
- Labrador & Aboriginal Affairs will offer to meet with officials from HLC to discuss these issues further.
- Discuss with Health Canada, Innu accountability for various federally funded initiatives.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Ms. Delia Connell, Health Labrador Corporation, was contacted to discuss the information reported by Mr. Garmen. Ms. Connell indicated that this concern is not new and has, in fact, been a concern for many years. She indicated that intervention cannot be forced upon the community. It is HLC's philosophy that any efforts to facilitate intervention must come from the community itself with HLC supporting the Innu's efforts in a role that the Innu determine appropriate for HLC.
- Ms. Connell raised the issue that lack of financial commitment from the Province to facilitate any extraordinary measures [e.g. funding community patrols] will be a potential sore point for the Innu. It may be possible to discuss creative funding alternatives with HLC, for example, utilizing salary savings from the unfilled social work position in Davis Inlet. A commitment to the Innu that the Province is willing to provide funding would demonstrate that the Province is acting in good faith and values Innu efforts to seek solutions.

- Ms. Connell stated that HLC could mobilize a team to go in to Davis Inlet and work with the community to devise a plan of action, and not go in with pre-determined solutions. However, she cautioned that such efforts will not work unless the community is willing to accept the assistance of HLC.
- Ms. Connell indicated HLC would, as a starting point, contact community members to assess how the community is feeling about the current situation and determine whether any efforts by HLC to assist would be accepted. She intends to contact Chief Mark Nui and Healing Coordinator Mary Jane Andrews. Ms. Connell also plans to contact public health nurses who would be able to update her first-hand on the current situation in the community.
- If the current situation in Davis Inlet is serious enough that the Province may have to consider a number of apprehensions of youth to ensure their safety, Ms. Connell stated the Province must be prepared to follow through by acting and ensuring the needed resources would be available. Again, Ms. Connell cautioned that consideration of this issue is not to be taken lightly and every effort should be taken to keep apprehended children/youth at risk in their own community.

**Labrador & Aboriginal Affairs**  
**November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999**