



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
Office of the Minister

November 03, 2014

The Honourable Rona Ambrose, P.C., M.P.
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building,
Tunney's Pasture Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
North Tower, 10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H4

Dear Ministers Ambrose and Valcourt,

I am writing further to the letter to you from the Grand Chief of the Innu Nation, Chief of the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and Chief of the Mushuau Innu First Nation (the "Chiefs"), dated October 2014. As you are aware, the Chiefs wrote to you concerning Canada's funding and support of healing initiatives pertaining to the Labrador Innu, specifically: the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS), which in its current phase as the Labrador Innu Targeted Health Programs is set to expire in March 2015.

The healing and capacity needs of the Labrador Innu have been recognized by a series of programs and strategies dating back at least as far as the 1993 "Report on the Complaints of the Innu of Labrador to the Canadian Human Rights Commission" by Special Investigator Donald McRae. The Report found that the federal government's inaction in failing to acknowledge its constitutional responsibility to the Innu and the inappropriate settlement at Davis Inlet had an immense negative impact on the physical, social and cultural well-being of the Innu communities. A follow-up Progress Report in 2003 also reviewed the recommendations of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Report, which emphasized that Aboriginal community health and well-being depend on the approach to issues such as housing, education, cultural identity and language, health and self-government. Community control of such issues was emphasized in these Reports.

The federal government has a constitutional and fiduciary duty to the Labrador Innu. Canada has taken financial responsibility for the Labrador Innu since the recognition of its members as status Indians under Canada's *Indian Act* in 2002. The Innu people of Labrador are to be commended for their efforts and successes under the current LICHS

funding. The Province acknowledges the progress made to date, in cooperation with the federal government and the Labrador Innu. However, continued funding is needed in order to ensure that the progress made so far is sustainable. Continued investment is needed in order to support the Innu on their journey to healing. If Canada does not to renew this funding, the progress made would be negatively impacted and could result in the re-emergence of the social and health issues that were so dire as to attract international attention to the Innu people of Labrador in the 1990s and 2000s.

The Province considers the Innu Round Table Secretariat ("IRT Sec") to be an effective manager of programs, including the well-documented need for Innu capacity development. Improvements have been made in graduation rates and school attendance (both secondary schools recorded record numbers of graduates in 2014), capacity development, and mental health and addictions. Moreover, the Innu communities have successfully completed an Innu Healing Strategy, which outlines the vision for a healthy future for the Innu people and their communities, through a community-based provision of healing services. As self-government negotiations continue towards a Canada-NL-Innu Nation Final Agreement, this model of Innu-led service provision will be central to Labrador Innu aspirations and self-determination.

Following discussions with Hon. Sandy Collins, Minister of Child Youth and Family Services, I would also like to express the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's support for the Innu's ongoing pursuit for Enhanced Prevention Funding Approach. The long-term benefits of prevention services on child welfare within the Innu communities would be substantial. In the last fiscal year, the Innu Nation worked with the Miawpukek First Nation and federal officials in order to draft a framework agreement for this service, but was halted by a lack of federal funds allocated to Enhanced Prevention in the Federal Budget. The Innu have expressed frustration that as the next federal budget cycle approaches, nothing has gone forward in discussions with federal officials. Innu children represent a large proportion of the Province's children in care, and providing First Nations with an opportunity to offer prevention services, in addition to the existing program funds provided to Child, Youth and Family Services, would provide a significant opportunity to improve this over time. This investment in the future of the Innu children would have a positive effect on a significant portion of other social issues, and as the current fiscal year draws to a close, it is requested that Canada review the proposed Enhanced Prevention Framework Agreement once again. We note the majority of jurisdictions in Canada already have such an Enhanced Prevention Funding Approach in place, and we encourage the federal government to extend the program into this Province.

I am confident that by working together, as we have already, we can collectively advance the social and economic development of the Innu people of Labrador.

Sincerely,



Keith Russell

Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

c.c. Grand Chief Anastasia Qupee, Innu Nation
Chief Gregory Rich, Mushuau Innu First Nation
Chief Andrew Penashue, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
The Honourable Sandy Collins