

Draft, December 7, 2000

Federal Government Position re Youth Solvent Abuse at Davis Inlet

Background

Chief Simon Tshakapesh has asked the federal and provincial governments for help with up to 80 children who are at risk due to solvent abuse in Davis Inlet in Labrador. This appeal came immediately following a similar request made by Chief Rich of Sheshatshiu to apprehend children from that community who are currently at risk. An agreement has been reached with Sheshatshiu regarding action that will be taken. This agreement evolved from the November 26, 2000 Communique developed in discussions with Industry Minister Brian Tobin and Premier Beaton Tulk.

On December 6, 2000 Chief Tshakapesh and Council met with federal and provincial officials to address the immediate needs of the Davis Inlet children. The talks broke down and an agreement could not be reached.

It is currently the position of Chief Tshakapesh that further talks with federal and provincial officials are futile and he will be seeking meetings with Ministers Nault and Rock before agreeing to any action.

Mushuau Innu Position

It is the position of the Mushuau Innu that before any action to deal with the needs of the children who are abusing solvents a wholistic plan be agreed to as they have no confidence that a "one step at a time" process will result in long-term success. They have tabled a 9 point Long Term Healing Plan, but have identified as their bottom line:

- assessment of the children in Davis Inlet by provincial social services as long as they are involved and consulted in the process;
- detox and medical treatment of the children followed by a comprehensive treatment program from solvent abuse at the Grace Hospital in St. John's;
- an adult treatment program in a facility near Davis Inlet to occur simultaneously with the youth treatment;
- a family treatment program to reintegrate the children and families after treatment; and
- a family and cultural renewal program.

The cost to the federal government to support this program can only be estimated at this time as it is not yet known how many children or families will need treatment and the detailed program development has not been done. Very preliminary estimates indicate that the overall cost to the federal government for these above activities for both Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu is \$2 million annually with one-time costs of \$1-1.5M for the assessment and treatment of the current children

in need of immediate treatment. These estimates assume cost sharing with the provincial government.

Province of Newfoundland Position

The province of Newfoundland is supportive of the Davis Inlet proposal and is prepared to share the cost of the proposed program. They continue to be prepared to work with Canada and the Mushuau Innu to come to an agreement so that the children can be placed in treatment and safe and secure environments.

Government of Canada Position

The federal position is outlined as follows:

- Canada is committed to supporting the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Innu in securing the safety of the affected children in Davis Inlet as a top priority. Now that the provincial child welfare legislation has been triggered, Canada is prepared to discuss how best it can support the provincial government and the Mushuau Innu in seeing the affected children assessed and treated in the appropriate way.
- Canada is committed to implementing the communique which resulted from the meeting of November 26, 2000 between Canada, the province and the Sheshatshiu Innu. Canada is prepared to apply the principles of the communique to Davis Inlet. In particular:
 - to work co-operatively with the Mushuau Innu to seek appropriate treatment options for the affected children as soon as possible - and to apply all necessary resources in accomplishing this.
 - to commit to register the Innu under the Indian Act.
 - the establishment of a regional detoxification centre for the use of the Sheshatshiu and the Mushuau Innu.
 - The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will discuss the funding of a social services co-ordinator to co-ordinate activities between federal, provincial and Innu agencies at Davis Inlet.
 - to agreement to develop with the province and Mushuau Innu a family-centered treatment program for parents and children.
 - Work with the Innu and the province to explore other necessary long term initiatives needed to repair the cultural and social fabric of the community in order that the affected children can return to a safe and healthy community.

- Canada is prepared to work with the Mushuau Innu to find ways to accelerate the relocation - and to solve the difficulties over the funding of the expanded school at Natuashish and to address the financial shortfall in housing funds at Natuashish.