

**Briefing Note
Update on Davis Inlet**

Issue:

- Ongoing developments regarding plans for children and youth of Davis Inlet

Background:

- Discussions among the Province, federal government and Innu of Davis Inlet broke down December 6th, 2000. The Innu subsequently travelled to Ottawa and held a number of discussions with senior federal officials during the past week. These meetings resulted in an agreement between the Innu and federal government on December 13th, 2000.
- During the past week, Health and Community Services and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs have continued to plan for the eventual detoxification and treatment of children/youth at the former Grace hospital site.

Current status

- Full cooperation across government departments, the Health Care Corporation of St. John's, Health and Community Services St. John's, and Health Labrador Corporation has resulted in a comprehensive plan for the preparation of the former Grace hospital. To date, two full floors are being renovated to accommodate up to fifty children. In addition, the Grace nursing residence is being prepared to accommodate parents and staff from outside the province, including Innu staff.
- Following the agreement yesterday, contact was made with Davis Inlet and it was learned
 - approximately 85 children/youth have been identified as gas sniffers by the Innu;
 - 20 children are said to be "younger" and it was advised it is unlikely that these would travel to St. John's. Health officials are of the view that this can only be determined following assessment and may be a contentious issue;
 - 65 of these children/youth are considered to be chronic solvent abusers however 19 of them are currently out of the community in either correctional facilities, group homes or with relatives in Sheshatshin; and
 - of the remaining 46 children/youth, approximately 4 are between the ages of 22-29 years with approximately half of the remaining 42 under the age of 16 years. It is likely that approximately 45-50 children/youth will require placement at the Grace facility.
- It was also learned that Davis Inlet does not want the children/youth removed from the community until after the Christmas season however they were prepared to work with the Province to develop a safety plan.
- Further discussions this morning indicate the Innu leaders will return to the community from Ottawa this Friday or Saturday. They have agreed to have a community meeting to discuss the elements of the federal agreement and their plans for detoxification and treatment at the former Grace hospital. It is anticipated this meeting will be held on

Sunday or Monday.

- A small committee including Kevin Head, Healing Coordinator, Gerry Kerr, Consultant, Mark Nui & Luke Rich, Band Councillors has been formed to develop an action plan of Innu responsibilities related to the care and treatment of the children/youth in Davis Inlet. This plan will be presented to the Province sometime next week. It is unclear whether the discussion of this plan will be held either face-to-face or through teleconference however the Province has indicated its willingness to travel to Davis Inlet prior to Christmas. It is also unclear as to whether further negotiations regarding a shared response plan between the Innu and the Province will be required.
- It was indicated to Davis Inlet that a team of social workers would be prepared to travel to the community to begin the assessment process on January 3rd, 2001.
- The Innu have indicated concerns regarding the fourth draft of the voluntary care agreement for parental consent to remove the children as required under legislation. They have requested and the Province has agreed to a meeting with the Innu and their legal counsel sometime today or tomorrow.

Follow up action:

- The Province continues to ready the Grace in anticipation of the children/youth arriving early in the New Year. A number of contracts are being negotiated for the many support services required including 24 hour security, food services, housekeeping, laundry etc.,. This is an extensive undertaking taxing human and financial provincial resources.
- A plan has been developed for the hiring of youth support staff for one on one care which could total in excess of 300 staff. An orientation and training program for all staff is in the final stages of development. Again, this is an extensive and costly undertaking.
- Other professional staff including physicians, nurses, social workers and addictions specialists are being identified from within the Province and across the country.
- Costs associated with Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet are being tracked with a view to discuss a cost shared arrangement with Health Canada. To date, approximately \$250,000 has been expended on the Sheshatshiu initiative with all 21 children/youth still in care.
- Information sessions are scheduled with the Health Care Corporation and Health and Community Services, St. John's commencing tomorrow morning to identify available staff and impacts for their organizations. Other stakeholder groups as required will also be considered.
- To date, a significant number of offers of help from individuals and community groups have been received and is being coordinated through the Department of Health and Community Services.
- The Province awaits further contact and discussion with the Innu regarding next steps.

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December 14th, 2000