

500 11 2005

Ms. Moira Hennessey
Assistant Deputy Minister
Regional Health Operations
Department of Health and Community Services
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
P.O. Box 8700, West Block, Confederation Building
St. John's, Newfoundland
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Dear Ms. Hennessey:

I am writing in response to your letter to Health Canada's Regional Director General, Olga Massicotte, dated September 16, 2005, regarding funding for the nursing station in the Innu community of Natuashish, Labrador. She has referred the matter to me. I apologize for the delay in responding.

As you are aware, this issue has been discussed since the relocation of the Mushuau Innu to Natuashish in December 2002. On May 15, 2003, correspondence was sent from then Minister of Health, the Honourable A. Anne McLellan, to the Minister of Health and Community Services for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. In the letter, the Minister states the provision of insured health care services to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the Innu, is a provincial responsibility and remains so, even after Innu registration under the Indian Act.

Regarding your reference to the Mushuau Innu Relocation Agreement (MIRA), Health Canada has been providing funding levels equivalent to those generally available to other First Nations of similar size and circumstance since 1998. Health Canada's policy has been consistent since 1979 when the federal government set out the *Indian Health Policy* that recognized that the provisions of primary care health services were the responsibility of the provinces. However, Health Canada agreed to continue with the existing primary care services it was providing, until provisions could be made to devolve this to the province.

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Registration and reserve creation for the Mushuau Innu does not obligate Health Canada to begin to provide those services when the province has an established history of serving that population.

It is my understanding that the Grenfell Labrador Regional Integrated Health Authority has been operating out of the Mushuau Innu Health Commission facility, free of charge, since the relocation. Health Canada contributes to the overall operation of that facility as well as providing public health nursing and other ongoing health programming in the community. Also, the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy, has enabled us to provide additional services, focussed on capacity development, in some priority areas such as maternal and child health, addictions and mental health programming. Meanwhile, the treatment nursing services and other insured services continue to be provided to Mushuau Innu through provincially funded means.

There have been several federal-provincial meetings to discuss greater collaboration and coordination between our governments when it comes to the Innu of Labrador. I am keen to see that work continues and to ensure that, together, we provide the Innu with an excellent standard of care and the support necessary to build healthy, vibrant communities.

Thank you for writing, and please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,



Ian Potter

cc. Olga Massicotte, Regional Director General
Sarah Archer, Regional Director (First Nations and Inuit Health Branch)