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July 1st, 2017

Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
North Tower, 10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H4

Honourable Sherry Gambin-Walsh
Minister of Children, Seniors and Social
Development
2nd Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700; St. John's NL
A1B 4J6

By Email: minister@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

By Email: sherrygambinwalsh@gov.nl.ca

Dear Ministers:

On June 30 in the morning, we as the four Innu leaders from Labrador, along with Innu staff working on social health needs for our community, met with Minister Bennett to plead with you to commit to the Innu-requested funding of \$3.7 M for, among other things, the 5 placement facilities in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. Minister Bennett refused to give this commitment and raised a number of ostensible reasons, none of which we accept as being defensible reasons to refuse to commit. We were extremely disappointed and are only becoming more frustrated as the evidence of why we need to take immediate action to bring our Innu children home keeps mounting. The 5 placement facilities (to handle 26 or 27 children/youth, depending on sibling groups) include one Group Home in Sheshatshiu and one in Natuashish plus two EPHs in Sheshatshiu and one in Natuashish. The placement facilities will all be able to handle kids 0 and older (including newborns and toddlers).

On June 30, in the evening, Grand Chief Qupee received appalling and shocking information and photographic evidence (attached) from an Innu foster mother from Sheshatshiu who had, earlier that day on June 30, picked up two Innu children who had been in foster care in Roddickton. She picked them up at the St. Anthony airport, where they had had been brought to the airport by a social worker, in order to bring them back to Sheshatshiu where Innu foster care families were available. One of the toddlers, who is around 6 months old and who had been apprehended from a home in Sheshatshiu on May 26, over one month ago, was scratching his head intensely and upon examination the Innu foster mother found appalling evidence of many live lice and nits all over the baby's head. The Innu foster mother, in an email to me, said "I was appalled and shocked to see the 6 month old boy full of lice and eggs in his little head, literally the lice were dropping off his head".

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There were other witnesses to this, namely women from Natuashish who were also at the St. Anthony airport. The Innu foster mother brought the child back to Goose Bay on the plane and called the social worker in Goose Bay when she landed, who called back the Innu foster mother but by that point in time, it was necessary for the Innu foster mother to alleviate the obvious bad situation and intense discomfort of the baby. The Innu foster mother was on the highway from Goose Bay to Sheshatshiu when the phone call was returned by the social worker, and was obviously not able to accept the phone call from the social worker at that time.

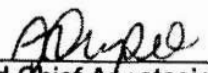
The Innu foster mother, when she arrived in Sheshatshiu, took the baby's clothes off and used the nit comb to remove nits and many live lice from the baby's head. The photo taken by the Innu foster mother of what was in the sink after she used the nit comb is attached. The Innu foster mother then took proper care of the infant and bathed him and washed his hair.

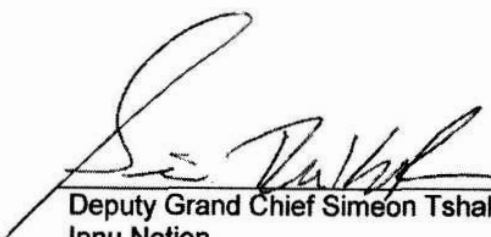
I am sending this information to the both of you because you both need to know, and you need to take action. Now. Nice words about future actions are not enough.

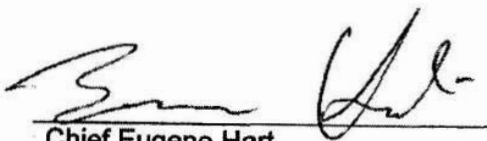
Minister Bennett, the EPHs for which we have sought funding from your department for 2017-18 includes care for our newborns and toddlers. This neglect by a non-Innu foster parent of this Innu child is unconscionable. Our Innu foster parents and caretakers in the EPH facilities for which we are seeking funding for from Canada would, guaranteed, treat Innu babies and toddlers with love and respect, and not neglect such an obvious problem as head lice.

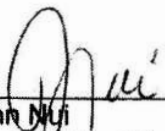
Minister Gambin-Walsh, we will discuss this next week when we meet with you and other members of the Provincial Cabinet. Roddickton is not a place where we want our Innu children to be brought, and we need to find near-term solutions as well as proceed with the inquiry we have requested of the Province. A full investigation into the homes in which Innu children have been placed in Roddickton, and the extent to which those homes are supervised given the discriminatory funding for protection as well as prevention, needs to be part of the discussion.

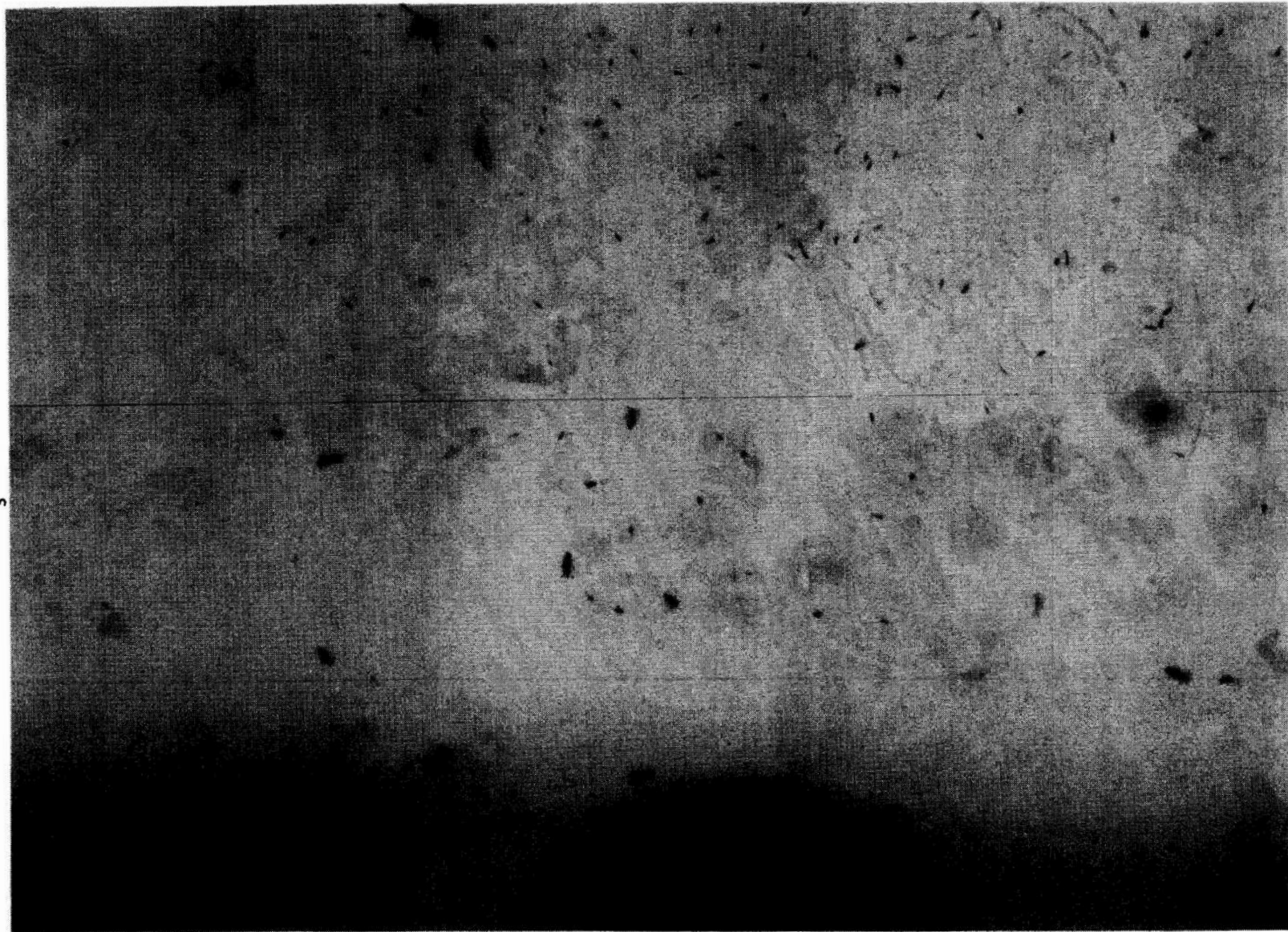
Nin,


Grand Chief Anastasia Qupee
Innu Nation


Deputy Grand Chief Simeon Tshakapesh
Innu Nation


Chief Eugene Hart
Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation


Chief John Nui
Mushuau Innu First Nation



From: Anastasia Qupee <aqupee@innu.ca>
To: <minister@aadnc-aandc.gc.ca>, <sherrygambinwalsh@gov.nl.ca>
CC: Simeon Tshakapesh <stshakapesh@gmail.com>, John Nui <tshannui@gmail.com>...
Date: 7/1/2017 12:46 PM
Subject: Neglect by Non-Innu Foster Parents
Attachments: July 1 17 letter to Ministers.pdf

Dear Ministers,

I am attaching a letter signed by all Labrador Innu Chiefs to bring to your attention an issue that is of utmost concern to us.

Minister Bennett, this situation speaks to our children's very real and immediate need for support from your department.

Minister Gambin-Walsh, we look forward to our discussion with you on this next week.

Nin,

Anastasia
Grand Chief