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Deputy Minister
Health and Welfare CanadaSous-ministre
Santé et Bien-être social Canada

MAVIS

July 26

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

For Mr. Jean Charest

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SUBJECT: Solvent abuse at Davis Inlet, Labrador**PURPOSE:** To provide an update on the situation at Davis Inlet**BACKGROUND:**

National and international attention was drawn to the longstanding problems of substance abuse at Davis Inlet as a result of two incidents: a house fire on February 14, 1993, which killed six children and the near death of six other children from gasoline sniffing on January 26th of this year.

On February 3, 1993, Minister Bouchard announced the federal government was accepting the cost of treatment for the chronic gas-sniffing children of the community. Subsequently, the federal government, through INAC and HWC, accelerated efforts to deal with the problems resulting from the social and economic conditions in the village, including developing a response to the community's wish for relocation. As a result, the federal government provided emergency funds for several community services and announced the appointment of Mr. Ross Reid to lead federal negotiations with Newfoundland and the Innu.

CURRENT STATUS:

1. **Children In Care:** Of the 16 children placed in treatment at Poundmakers Lodge in February 1993, 14 are still in a camp on the Saddle Lake reserve and 2 are in the Adolescent Treatment Centre in St. Paul. The treatment program will finish at the end of August. While the children have responded well to the program and have reached a remarkable degree of recovery, they are not cured. Rather, they have reached a state of physical and emotional health which will have to be sustained through support from their families, peers and community. The training and aftercare programs outlined below are designed to accomplish this.

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2. **After-Care:** An after-care program has been designed by Poundmakers whereby its staff will be present in Davis Inlet to prepare the families and the community for the children's return. It is proposed to have counsellors from Poundmakers, as well as elders, teachers and family members spend possibly up to two months with the children in the country in Labrador as a transition before reintegration in the community. In the intervening period, improvements to housing, water and sanitation will have been made as well as a start on a two-year program of skills upgrading. In the month of November 1993, follow-up sessions are planned for both the youth and the 30 adults who have gone through the Poundmakers program.

3. **Sexual Abuse Allegations:** Two individuals in Davis Inlet have been charged and more are being investigated. The results could be very damaging to the community if proper intervention is not in place to support the victims and the accused. The department is providing support by paying for three adults from Davis Inlet to be with the children at Poundmakers during the period when charges are being laid and by funding several community-based workers to be provide advice and assistance to community members and leaders. The children in Poundmakers are coping well so far.

Also under consideration by the Province is a "diversion program" whereby the accused, rather than being sent to trial and possibly jail under the non-Native justice system, would be permitted to be judged under a Native justice system and, if necessary, undergo some sort of healing program.

4. **Skills Development:** Fundamental to Davis Inlet's rebirth as a healthy community is the people's capacity to assume their parental responsibilities and social roles and to be in charge of their own future. Governments are responding to the community's holistic approach and self-reliance by funding a three-year program of life and occupational skills development. Both will start within weeks; financing will come mostly from CRTC, supplemented by INAC and WNC, with a minor participation by the Province. Life skills will deal with training for addictions problems, family values, group dynamics, culture and community participation and leadership. Occupational skills training will be attached to the requirements of house construction and maintenance, access to water, improved sanitation and fire protection, appropriate economic development, delivery of programs and relocation. The total cost this year could be \$1 million.

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3. Departmental Involvement:

- a. The undertaking by Mr. Bouchard to provide treatment for the children has been more than amply met. In addition to the 18 children and 30 adults who have been treated at Poundmakers, family members and interpreters have been brought to Alberta to support those in treatment. The 1992/93 portion of the cost was about \$200,000. The final cost of treatment could be up to \$2 million. The costs of aftercare follow-up are now being calculated.
- b. In addition to the regular budget allocation to Davis Inlet in 1992/93, HWC provided an additional \$30,000 for an addictions specialist and \$33,000 for strengthening the local addictions counselling program. (In 1992/93, DIAND provided additional funds of about \$225,000.)
- c. The 1993/94 MKNAP budget has not been finalized for Davis Inlet but it will be an enrichment of past years.
- d. The department has promised to support the health components of the community resource team. As well, the community's original 7-point plan calls for a family and cultural renewal centre, which the department is being asked to fund. Tripartite (federal/Newfoundland/Innu) negotiations are underway to formalize, among other things, the federal and provincial commitment vis-a-vis these two initiatives.

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