

CABINET SECRETARIAT NOTE

HCS2003-018
LAA2003-012
SPC2003-020

Establishment of a Provincial/Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Board to oversee the development and operations of an Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Agency

Summary of Proposal

This Submission seeks authority for the Ministers of Health and Community Services (HCS) and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs (LAA) to negotiate the establishment of a Provincial Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Board to facilitate the delegation of responsibility for Child, Youth and Family Services to the Innu and to address the need for increased services in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish.

Social Policy Committee Recommendation

The Social Policy Committee recommends approval of the Ministers' Submission subject to consultation by the Departments of Health and Community Services and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs with: (1) the Women's Policy Office on the role of women in the broader capacity-building process; and (2) Treasury Board Secretariat on the negotiation of the financial arrangements for the establishment of the Board.

Secretariat Comment

1. This Submission, which proposes the establishment of a Provincial/Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Board to facilitate the delegation of responsibility for Child, Youth and Family Services to the Innu, is consistent with overall policy direction regarding devolution of services to the Innu.

2. In September 2002, the Province entered into an initial one-year bilateral agreement with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) for the provision of child youth and family services in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet/Natuashish. Subsequently, the agreement was extended to March 31, 2004 to allow time for the development of a plan for the devolution of the Child and Family Services program to the Innu. (MC2003-0104 refers.) The associated Cabinet Submission anticipated that the devolution process would begin later this year. The current Submission addresses the plan for devolution.

3. The proposed Board would include representatives from LAA, HCS, Health Labrador Corporation and the Innu. The federal role is not finalized but could be one primarily of funding and/or ex-officio representation. The Board would oversee the development of an Innu Child Youth and Family Services Agency, and, over time, operational funds would flow directly to the Innu Agency. Health Labrador Corporation (HLC) would continue to provide services until the Innu Agency develops full service delivery capacity, with the service and funding arrangement shift evolving over time in a phased manner. HLC would continue to receive federal funding as long as it had any Innu children in care.

4. The proposed bilateral Board would coexist with the current HLC service delivery model to facilitate capacity building so the Innu can take over provision of these services. (Other jurisdictions' experiences with similar delegation processes indicate that full devolution of services can be achieved in three to five years.) This approach could also enhance staffing levels and help address service needs, as once the agency is established, it becomes eligible for additional INAC funding for development purposes, and can also make a case for additional INAC staffing dollars based on the recent studies of this issue.

5. After considering a range of alternatives, HCS and LAA consider the establishment of a Provincial/Innu CYFS Board to be the best way to help enable the Innu move towards delivery of these services.

6. Some informal consultation with the Innu has already taken place, and LAA and HCS will engage in formal consultation once this proposal is approved. LAA advises that preliminary discussions with federal officials have been favourable. HCS has consulted with the executive of HLC and obtained their support.

7. The Women's Policy Office notes that the role of Innu women should be considered in both the development of the proposed Board as well as the ongoing process of capacity-building in Innu communities. Women have the primary role in caring for children and family, particularly in the Innu culture, and their perspectives on priorities may be different than their male counterparts. Currently, women are not well represented in organizations such as the Labrador Innu Association that take the lead in decision-making with the provincial and federal governments. WPO considers that unless a concerted effort is made by the Province in a transitional capacity development phase, women are unlikely to have a voice or a role and the supports they need once the devolution of services ultimately takes place.

8. Cabinet Secretariat notes that the establishment of a bilateral Provincial/Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Board to oversee the development and operation of an Innu Child, Youth and Family Services Agency will provide needed resources and supports in the development of a capacity-building strategy to enable the devolution of child, youth and family services to the Innu, and is consistent with other initiatives to support the devolution of social programs to the Innu, such as income support and education services.

Treasury Board Consultation Treasury Board Secretariat notes that, while there are no new funding requirements associated with this proposal relative to the level of provincial grant funding presently provided to Health Labrador Corporation, there is the prospect of the Corporation foregoing potential savings/cost reductions, at least in the short to medium term, if the federal funding is flowed directly from the Province to the proposed Board. The Secretariat is concerned that the Submission's model for flowing the federal funds will create additional difficulties with the management of HLC's financial situation.

Action Required Approve the SPC recommendation.

ST/RR
May 13, 2003