

Information Note
Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Title: Labrador Social Issues

Issue: Identification of social issues in Labrador in preparation for the Premier's speech at the Combined Councils of Labrador Annual General Meeting.

Background and Current Status

Housing

- A concern in Labrador West is "Housing Affordability". Housing prices have increased 150-200% since 2005/2006 and have been largely driven by increased development in the iron ore sector.
- A shortage of housing that is affordable for higher income households is also presenting issues for recruitment of workers.
- In Labrador West, the town councils and other community groups are calling for an affordable housing initiative.
- In September 2010, a private consultant, EEM Inc., was retained by five local partners to conduct the Labrador West Community Needs Assessment - the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce, Hyron Regional Economic Development Corporation, IOC, Wabush Mines, and the Provincial Government (INTRD). The purpose of the Assessment is to comprehensively document mining sector hiring projections for the next two years and from this develop an action plan for ensuring that the required infrastructure is in place to support the expected growth of the region's primary economic engine. The Assessment has been received by the proponent and is currently under review and has not been released publicly. It should be noted Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) has not been involved with this process.
- Habitat for Humanity", in partnership with stakeholders in Labrador West, is planning to erect four new dwellings in the region during the upcoming construction season pending funding of \$360,000 from NLHC's Aboriginal Housing initiative.
- There are concerns on the North Coast over availability of housing. NLHC has a proposal for additional units in Hopedale that is the subject of a Budget submission. The Province, Indian and Northern Affairs and the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) are planning to collaborate to conduct a housing needs survey on the North Coast. Federal officials have suggested this might support a case for an increased block to the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) when their Fiscal Financing Agreement is up for renewal.

Health

- Site preparation for the new Labrador West Health Centre was completed in Fall 2008 and the extension of municipal services was completed in 2010. The foundations and structural steel are slated for completion in October 2010 with water tank and associated work being completed during the 2010 and 2011 construction seasons. The

tender for the construction of the 28 bed acute and long-term care facility was announced on October 29, 2010. The tender was awarded on February 14, 2011, for the main building package and completion of the facility has been awarded to Pomerleau Inc. for approximately \$55M.

- There have been calls for more long-term healthcare in Labrador West. However, the cost benefit analysis to date has not been conclusive. Three needs assessments have been completed in Labrador and the issue is that there may be a need, but the willingness to pay for the service is limited.
- On February 2, 2011, Health and Community Services (HCS) announced that in Spring 2011 a new satellite dialysis service will become operational in Labrador City.
- Hostel services are currently available at the Labrador Friendship Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; however, there is not enough space to meet demand.
- An addiction treatment facility has been identified as a need in Labrador by community stakeholders as there are significant addiction problems in all regions of the province. The Government has announced the facility will be located in Grand Falls-Windsor. Further, HCS has provided funding for a six month project for full time mental health and intake workers which will ensure that all requests for service are appropriately prioritized and services made available.
- Residents in the region are concerned that there is an inadequate amount of space at the chronic care facility at Forteau. Some residents requiring chronic care are in St. Anthony waiting for a bed at Forteau. It was suggested that adding 10 beds to the facility in Forteau would help.
- The community of Mary's Harbour would like the Mary's Harbour Seniors Facility to offer level 3 homecare. To upgrade would require nursing staff and other specialized services. Currently there are beds available in the facility that could be used for this purpose.
- Residents of the North Coast are concerned that pregnant women are often forced to leave their coastal communities one month before giving birth. They are advocating for additional support from Labrador-Grenfell Health.
- HCS has received a joint proposal from the NG and Labrador-Grenfell Health entitled "A Comprehensive Framework for Advancing Integrated Community-Based Mental Wellness Initiatives for Inuit in Northern Labrador." In recognition of the importance of collaborative engagement with Inuit and all Aboriginal peoples in the Province, the Government has created an Aboriginal Health Liaison and has committed to the development of an Aboriginal Health Policy Framework. The Province remains committed to engaging the NG in discussions regarding the devolution of provincial health services, particularly nursing stations, to the NG.
- The Province is working with Aboriginal governments and organizations, along with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, to further develop the Aboriginal Patient Identifier Strategy. This strategy is aimed at bringing together the

health information of Aboriginal peoples for examination/interrogation of programs and services as well as research. The Province is also working with the NG, Labrador-Grenfell Health, Innu First Nations and Health Canada to develop a mobile mental health team to develop addictions and other services to Aboriginal persons in remote areas. The Aboriginal Health Transition Fund also provides an important mechanism for NL to collaborate with the federal government and Aboriginal governments and organizations.

- At the Joint Cabinet meeting; it was reported that HCS, Labrador-Grenfell Health and the NG met on October 27, 2010 and agreed upon a plan of action respecting mental health and addictions with additional meetings planned for 2011.

Education

- The new College of the North Atlantic Labrador West campus site is shared with the health care facility. The College will be capable of holding 250 students with a project budget of \$22M. Currently, site development and services package are complete. Construction of building exterior is underway with a project substantial completion date of June - July, 2011 and building occupancy scheduled for September 2011.
- Stakeholders are concerned that the new College facility will not have a student residence. Currently, most students are from the local area, but residents in the region would like to promote the College as a Mining School of Excellence. A residence could attract outside students.

Child Youth and Family Services

- The Department of Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) is currently developing a new provincial organizational model to address systemic issues, improve service delivery for children, youth and families and better support frontline staff across Newfoundland and Labrador. A steering committee has been established to focus on the Labrador region. The committee includes Provincial ministers from the Departments of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs (LAA) and HCS, CYFS, as well as leaders from the Innu Nation (IN), NG and NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC). The committee will ensure that the new structure recognizes Labrador's unique circumstances. The inaugural meeting was held in Happy Valley-Goose Bay November 18, 2010. A sub-committee of the Steering Committee is currently being established to research and develop proposals for service delivery models for Labrador.
- CYFS has provided support and funding to increase the number of regulated child care spaces in Labrador as follows: An infant room in the College of the North Atlantic demonstration child care centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (6 spaces)
 - Through the Capacity Initiative:
 - An agreement with NG resulting in expansion of services in child care centres located in Nain (5 new spaces) and Hopedale (5 new spaces); and anticipated expansion in Postville (10 potential spaces), Makkovik (14 potential spaces), and Rigolet (10 potential spaces);
 - In Labrador West, an expansion of services in an existing child care centre (16 new spaces); two new projects in development (120 potential new spaces); and two additional projects being considered (48 potential new spaces);

- In Sheshatshiu, funding for a Project Coordinator to do exploratory work regarding child care needs in the community; and
 - In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, funding for development of an after school program which closed in 2010 due to a shortage of qualified staff.
- The development of spaces in Labrador is difficult due to available facilities that are suitable for regulated child care services, and recruitment and retention challenges of qualified Early Childhood Educators.
 - The systemic issues within the in-care and child protection program are provincial in scope and therefore apply to Labrador including the need to stabilize the workforce and workloads, improve training and documentation, implement quality improvement processes and develop an approach to complex cases as well as upgrade information technology used in the program.
 - As of January 31, 2011, 31% of all children in care were from Labrador-Grenfell region (with most from Labrador itself). Of specific concern to residents is the number of aboriginal children placed in foster care outside their communities and culture which stems from the lack of appropriate foster and other placement options in this region. The Department has established a Steering Committee including IN, NG and NCC to design a service delivery model for Labrador and a new culturally inclusive foster care training package has been developed in partnership with NG representatives and will be piloted on the coast.

Child Care Services

- CYFS is providing support to increase the number of child care spaces in Labrador through the Capacity Initiative, including funding to a non-profit group in Labrador West to expand their license to include after-school programming.
- Currently there are two childcare projects in Labrador West that are in development but not licensed.

Justice

- At a side table meeting of the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy the Province reiterated its commitment to work with the federal government and the Innu to negotiate Community Tripartite Agreements (CTAs) under the federal First Nations Policing Program, subject to the Federal Government being in a position to do so, and reinvesting any savings from the resultant shift in the funding formula into policing and justice services in the communities, in consultation with the respective Band councils.
- Public Safety Canada advised the Department of Justice on February 9, 2011, that the federal portion of funding available for the CTAs will be reduced by 19% across the country for 2011-12 resulting in a reduction in the Federal amounts payable to the Province by \$491,620. The Minister of Justice is writing the federal Minister of Public Safety expressing his concerns with this decision and requesting that he reconsider. The Department of Justice is examining its options around potential impacts in delivery of policing services to the CTA communities of Nain, Hopedale, Rigolet and Makkovik.

- The relationship between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Simeon Tshakapesh (Chief of Mushuah Innu First Nation (MIFN)) has been deteriorating since his election to office. In the past year, Chief Tshakapesh has made complaints of excessive force by RCMP members and requested that specific members not serve in the community. There have been complaints that the RCMP have been too aggressive in enforcing the alcohol ban while on other occasions the complaint has been that the RCMP was unwilling to enforce the ban. Chief Tshakapesh has also made overtures to third parties that he wished to replace the RCMP with the RNC in Natuashish.
- On February 11, 2011 Chief Tshakapesh advised the RCMP that the band has a housing shortage and that he is evicting the RCMP from two of the six houses which are currently used by the RCMP in Natuashish. The RCMP was advised that it had until March 31, 2011 to vacate one residence and April 30, 2011 to vacate the second residence. Although the RCMP has not yet received written notice, the level of policing services would likely be affected should the evictions take place. Police officers are more effective and have more ownership if they live in the community where they police. The RCMP and Department of Justice are examining options in response.
- Despite a strained relationship the RCMP continues with its commitment of serving the community and fully engaging in community events and continues to engage Chief Tshakapesh and the Band Council in a constructive way.
- The issue of overcrowding at the Labrador Correctional Facility in Happy Valley-Goose Bay has been voiced by community stakeholders.
- Following several references to the removal of the circuit court at the November 2010 Main Table meeting, Labrador-Grenfell Health's Regional Director for CYFS-Innu Zone wrote to Chief Judge Pike to encourage that every serious consideration be given to bring Provincial Court proceedings which involve Sheshatshiu Innu back to the community of Sheshatshiu. Justice officials have advised that they will leave the issue to Chief Judge Pike at this time.

Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy

- At the February 8, 2011 meeting of the Main Table of the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS), Grand Chief Riche and Chiefs Tshakapesh and Benuen announced the Innu's withdrawal from LICHS, and provided a brief overview of a proposal the Innu are developing. The proposed "Innu Round Table" (IRT) appears to have the same objectives as LICHS, to promote the healing and well-being of the Labrador Innu, and will focus on capacity development and programming and services, with a view to eventual devolution of appropriate social programming. Accordingly, the IRT will likely require exceptional federal funding, as did LICHS, but would be an Innu-led forum to discuss Innu problems, with the support of the governments as needed. The IRT would include officials from provincial departments who already comprise LICHS or its subcommittees.
- The proposed IRT appears to be a response to the recent federal termination of special LICHS funding, which has been converted to regular A-base federal funding. The Innu view this as a move by the Federal Government to make the Innu "normal", like any

other First Nation, whereas the Innu feel that they deserve special and extraordinary attention, funding and support above and beyond typical federal funding for First Nations on Reserve. However, the Innu publicly stated that the dissolution of LICHs and proposed creation of the IRT were due to the Innu's dissatisfaction with the Main Table process, which is viewed as a government-led process to address Innu problems, rather than an Innu-led process.

Solvent Abuse in Natuashish

- At the November 2-4, 2010 Main Table meeting of the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHs), MIFN Chief Simeon Tshakapesh alerted provincial and federal officials to 60 children in Natuashish who have been abusing solvents (primarily gasoline). Since that time community agencies, Labrador- Grenfell Health, provincial and federal government departments have been working cooperatively to address community and individual issues.
- The MIFN has hired a number of people to patrol the community to seek out youth who are sniffing. Once youth are identified they are brought to the safehouse or home to parents/care givers. The MIFN is also placing an increased emphasis on recreational and similar community-based activities, describing the need for an "Innu led response to an Innu-led problem". The local hockey rink is open on a 24/7 basis, the MIFN purchased 70 sets of equipment for community members' use, and the MIFN is pursuing the construction of a new recreation centre.
- Labrador-Grenfell Health reports that the community remains stable. Community based support remains. Counselors continue to assess/work with clients and families at the community level. CYFS continues to work with the individual children assessed as being in need of protection and their families, as well as the community and community leadership generally. Children who have left the community for treatment remain in those programs, and more children are slated to go to treatment.
- On February 8, 2011, the Chiefs of the Sheshatshiu and MIFN met with the Federal Health Minister. At this meeting, the MIFN provided the Minister and her officials with a first draft of "Proposal of Mushuau Innu First Nation - Treatment Model for Border Beacon / Natuashish." Although MIFN continues to refine this proposal, the current draft asserts that the federal government's "Western "Model for Medical Treatment"" is not appropriate, and calls on the federal government to fund and support a Treatment Model "that includes addressing cultural, spiritual, psychological and educational needs." The MIFN has not yet provided an estimate for the costs required to support the proposal.

Women's Issues

- The Women's community in Labrador is concerned that there has been a delay and no announcements regarding the status of a women's correctional facility for Labrador as identified in Barry Fleming's 2009 Citizen's Advocate Report. Women are also concerned about the inappropriate sentencing happening by Judges with respect to male violence against women, the lack of media about the crimes happening in Labrador against women as well as the lack of proper court facilities in coastal communities where trials are held in bars and women must meet their lawyers in washrooms or share a porch with their offenders. The women's community in Labrador has also written the

Chief Justice on the need for training for Judges and is not satisfied with his response on this matter.

- In October 2010, the women's shelter operated by the Hopedale Women's Shelter Committee was condemned and closed for use. The now closed shelter served approximately 29 women and children annually. Women's Policy Office (WPO) estimates that of the 310 women currently living in the community, one half of these women and their families are expected to require the use of the facility. The estimated cost of building the facility is \$835,000, not including the land that the town will contribute. Labrador-Grenfell Health has \$500,000 in reserve for the project and the Shelter Committee has submitted a letter to the Minister of Health and Community Service requesting that the HCS provide the remaining funds needed.

Action Being Taken:

- Information will be forwarded to the Premier's Office in preparation for the Combined Councils of Labrador Annual General Meeting.

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Ministerial Approval: Received from Minister Hickey

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