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For Immediate Release

Changes to Inuit Child First Initiative

The Department of Health and Social Development (DHSD) is advising of positive changes to the approval process for the Inuit Child First Initiative (ICFI). These changes ensure DHSD is responsibly delivering programs and services in a sustainable manner until Nunatsiavut Government (NG) is ready for the long-term approach of administering the ICFI, which aligns with NG's vision of Inuit self-determination.

The ICFI was established to assist families in navigating and accessing services and support for their child's medical, mental health and educational needs. It ensures Inuit children have access to the essential government funded health, social and educational products, services and supports they need when they need them. All caregivers of Inuit children between the ages of 0-18 and are recognized by an Inuit Land Claim Organization, no matter where they live in Canada, can request funding through ICFI.

NG is now responsible for reviewing all applications to Indigenous Services Canada from Nunatsiavut Beneficiaries residing in Newfoundland and Labrador. This ensures services and supports are administered within the legislative authority of NG, and in the spirit of the Labrador Inuit Constitution.

Best Interests of Children (2.4.22): A Labrador Inuit child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child, which is to be decided by an institution of Labrador Inuit government, court or tribunal.

Water, Food, Health Care and Social Services (2.4.23): Every Labrador Inuk has the right to have access to water, food, health care and, if unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social services. Every Labrador Inuk has a responsibility to provide for his or her own well-being in accordance with his or her abilities, to be a self-sustaining, productive member of Labrador Inuit society in accordance with his or her abilities, to share food and shelter with those Labrador Inuit who are in need, and to protect children, the elderly and those Labrador Inuit who are vulnerable or helpless.

The revised program approach will be delivered through the lens of substantive equality, which aligns with the intent of our constitution and creates opportunity to correct inequalities that exist in order to work toward equality in outcomes. The ICFI says some Inuit children may need supports that are beyond the mainstream in order to account for existing inequalities.

NG has Child Service Workers in the Nunatsiavut region and Happy Valley Goose-Bay, in addition to a Regional Child Services Program Manager who can assist with services and supports for Nunatsiavut Beneficiary children through an application process.

For more information, please call 1-855-572-4453.