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For Immediate Release

Budget 2019-20 focuses on program enhancement and implementation of key strategic initiatives

The Nunatsiavut Government's 2019-20 balanced budget, handed down today during a sitting of the Nunatsiavut Assembly in Hopedale, will see increased investments in order to implement several key strategic and priority initiatives, as well as to enhance program and service delivery to Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.

“As a government we need to have the necessary capacity to move forward on a number of initiatives, including the implementation of a housing strategy, energy and food security plans, and the development of new initiatives around language and culture,” says Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology Minister Tyler Edmunds. “This financial plan will also enable us to enhance programs and services for children, youth and families as we continue to implement the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement. We are confident this financial plan will allow us to make continued progress on a number of fronts while, at the same time living within our fiscal means.”

Of the \$112,450,000 million budgeted for the 2019-20 fiscal year, which begins April 1, a total of \$58 million is received under the Fiscal Financing Agreement (FFA), which is negotiated between the Nunatsiavut Government and the governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador. The FFA ensures funding is provided to the Nunatsiavut Government for the provision of programs and services to Inuit and other persons living in Inuit communities, at levels reasonably comparable to those generally prevailing in communities of similar size and circumstances in Labrador.

The FFA allows the Nunatsiavut Government to carry over unexpended funds from previous years to be used for longer-term projects and initiatives. Currently, there is a total of \$21 million of internally-restricted funds, of which \$13.1 million relates to housing initiatives, \$4.5 million for education programs and services, \$1.9 million for economic development, and \$1.5 million for a new Department of Health and Social Development office building in Hopedale.

Other sources of revenue include projected personal income tax of \$4.2 million, and Goods and Services Tax (GST) of just over \$3 million – both of which are received through agreements with the Government of Canada. The budget includes investment income of \$6.2 million, as well as about \$300,000 from access fees collected from fishers utilizing Nunatsiavut Government fishing licences.

Housing

Last year the Nunatsiavut Government received committed funding for 10 years from the Government of Canada for housing initiatives. This year's allotment is \$7.5 million, which, along with internally-restricted funds for housing, brings the budget allocation for 2019-20 to \$22 million.

The largest obstacle to building new housing units in Nunatsiavut is the severe shortage of developed land. The Nunatsiavut Government will work with each of the five Inuit Community Governments to ensure there is adequately developed land.

All Labrador Inuit communities depend on environmentally unfriendly and costly diesel for electricity. This year's budget sets aside funds to carry out action items outlined in the Nunatsiavut Energy Plan that was approved in 2017.

A policy analyst position was approved during the 2018-2019 fiscal year to assist with the implementation of the Nunatsiavut Housing Strategy and other housing-related issues. Funds have been reflected in the 2019-2020 budget to maintain this position.

Children and Families

The budget will see the creation of a new management position within the Department of Health and Social Development to ensure the delivery of quality and effective programs and services to children, youth and families. As well, a permanent position will be created to act as a key point of contact with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for all matters related to child protection, intervention, and cultural continuity planning for children in care.

The Government of Canada, through the FFA, continues to provide funding for health and social programming related to mental wellness and healing, suicide prevention, diabetes prevention, and tuberculosis prevention and elimination, etc.

Language, Culture and Tourism

The Nunatsiavut Government places a high priority on the revitalization, promotion, maintenance and enhancement of Inuktitut and cultural expression at every life stage. Funds have been appropriated in the budget to allow the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to begin the first steps towards the development of a comprehensive language strategy. Funds will be used to hold a language summit to learn from Labrador Inuit and language specialists from other Inuit regions on how to address language gaps and needs in Nunatsiavut.

Another position has been created to continue language programs within Nunatsiavut, including the OKâlaKatiget Society's Inuktitut radio hour, Inuaggualuit Language Nest, the Interpreter/Translator annual workshops and the Inuktitut Master-Apprentice Program.

The Illusuak Cultural Centre in Nain is expected to be completed this year. The budget sets aside funds to complete landscaping and to install a fire-suppression system, as well as to hold events around the official opening of the facility.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Spanish flu, a total of \$200,000 will be provided to enable up to 150 descendants of those families impacted by the disease to travel to the former village of Okak for a four-day event planned for this summer.

The budget will also support a second Tourism Development Officer position to assist with the implementation of the Nunatsiavut Tourism Strategy. As well, funds have been appropriated to ensure the continuation of the Hebron Ambassador Program and the Hebron Restoration Project.

Food Security

The Nunatsiavut Government is committed to finding ways to address high levels of food insecurity in all Labrador Inuit communities. A Food Security Strategy is expected to be completed and approved this year. The budget will see the creation of two new permanent positions in Nunatsiavut to assist with the implementation of the strategy and related programs and services.

Land and Natural Resources

Work has begun on Imappivut, a marine plan for Nunatsiavut aimed at protecting Labrador Inuit interests in the ocean environment and to support healthy ecosystems and the wellbeing of Nunatsiavummiut. Funding has been appropriated for 2019-2020 to continue to move this initiative forward.

Based on input from Labrador Inuit through the Community Lands and Resource Committees, funds will continue to be appropriated to inspect various sites on Labrador Inuit Lands with potential environmental concerns.

The Fishery Fund is an internally restricted fund composed of access fees received from fishers. The Renewable Resources Division of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources is in the final stages of developing a formal plan that will guide the use of the Fishery Fund.

Funds have also been set aside to continue with a base-line study to allow for community-based monitoring of water, fish and seals and associated analysis, as well as an expansion of current monitoring program to include other species within the Lake Melville ecosystem.

Investments in Our Employees

The Nunatsiavut Government values the work of its civil service in delivering quality and successful programs and services to Labrador Inuit. As such, salaries will increase by two per cent in both the employee and casual divisions.

To help address the administrative burden associated with growth of programs and services, additional positions will be created in the Legal Services and Finance and Information Technology divisions.

“This year’s financial plan is about growth and progress,” says Minister Edmunds. “It will allow us to continue to make advancements in a number of key priority areas, effectively and efficiently, improve the quality of programs and services offered to Labrador Inuit, and to continue making sound investments to protect our land, our culture, our language, heritage and identity.”

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