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For Immediate Release

## **Budget 2017-18 aims to improve quality of life and wellbeing of Labrador Inuit**

The Nunatsiavut Government's 2017-18 balanced budget focuses on commitments outlined in the Labrador Inuit Constitution.

"We have made a commitment under the Labrador Inuit Constitution to secure our rightful place as a distinct, self-governing indigenous people within Canada, and to assert our inherent right to self-governance and the right to continue determining our political, social, cultural and economic institutions and our relationships with other people and other governments," said Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology Minister Darryl Shiwak in delivering the government's financial plan today in Hopedale. "As a government, we remain focused on improving the quality of life for our people, and to improving social and economic conditions in our communities. This year's budget will allow us to make further strides in achieving these goals."

Of the \$93.4 million budgeted for the 2017-18 fiscal year, which begins April 1, a total of \$65.4 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. Other sources of revenue include personal income taxes and Goods and Services Tax (GST), received as part of tax agreements with the Government of Canada, and income earned on investments.

### **Quality of Life**

Housing continues to be a top priority for the Nunatsiavut Government. This year's budget sets aside funding to continue research on adequate designs for housing in a sub-Arctic environment, to research and prepare a report on housing delivery models based on best practices throughout the country, and to continue with major and minor housing repair programs.

The Nunatsiavut Government provides annual funding to enable Torngat Regional Housing Association to carry out its mandate to provide affordable housing in each of the five Inuit communities. A total of \$2.6 million will be provided to TRHA this year, an increase of about four per cent from 2016-17.

Funds have also been set aside for the implementation of solar and other sources of alternative energy, as outlined in the Nunatsiavut Energy Security Plan released earlier this year.

In an effort to address food insecurity, the Department of Health and Social Development will continue to employ a food security coordinator and provide funding for programming. As well, funding has been budgeted to secure moose from Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland, providing a valuable source of country food for Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement. Further research will also be conducted on the Davis Strait polar bear population and the Torngat Mountains caribou herd.

### **Wellbeing of Labrador Inuit**

In an effort to improve the wellbeing of Labrador Inuit, the Nunatsiavut Government is committed to ensuring it has adequate facilities to operate effectively and efficiently. As such, this year's budget sets aside funds to secure office and programming space in Hopedale for the Department of Health and Social Development. Land for a new office complex is in the process of being procured, with plans to design, tender and construct the facility this year.

The Department of Health and Social Development will receive \$22.4 million in 2017-18 from the Government of Canada, to provide essential funding for mental health and addictions, non-insured health benefits, suicide prevention and programming for elders and youth, etc.

The Nunatsiavut Government remains steadfast in its commitment to preserve and promote Labrador Inuit language and culture, says Minister Shiwak.

"We have a unique language and culture, and it is imperative for us to honour our identity in our communities as well as on the national stage," he said. "We are committed to preventing the erosion of our language, our culture and our identity."

To achieve this goal, the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism will continue to promote and support regular projects, including the Inuttitut radio hour and the Labrador Inuttitut Training Program. The department will also begin the development of an Inuttitut master apprenticeship program and a digital outreach and oral history initiative.

The Illusuak Cultural Centre in Nain is in the final stages of construction, with funds being set aside to continue with the design and fabrication of exhibits, and for the operation of a café and gift shop.

The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism will also continue to support Nunatsiavut artists by moving forward with the development of an arts strategy.

### **Valuing Employees**

The Nunatsiavut Government values the work of its civil service in delivering quality and successful programs and services to Labrador Inuit, says Minister Shiwak. As such, salaries will increase by two per cent in each of the next three years in both the employee and casual divisions. This is the first salary increase in these divisions since 2014. Salaries for management division employees will also be adjusted for the first time since 2011. As well, funding will be increased for employee training programs.

Remuneration levels will also increase for elected officials.

“We have made tremendous progress since the signing of our land claims agreement 11 years ago,” notes Minister Shiwak. “We continue to provide quality programs and services, effectively and efficiently, to our people and our communities, and we continue to make sound investments to protect our land, our culture, our language, heritage and identity. This year’s budget will allow us to build on the progress we have made.”

**Media Contact:**

Bert Pomeroy  
Director of Communications  
(709) 933-3777  
(709) 896-8582  
[bert.pomeroy@nunatsiavut.com](mailto:bert.pomeroy@nunatsiavut.com)