AFN Special Chiefs Assembly
December 9-11, 2008 Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 61/2008

SUBJECT:	CANADA'S COST-MANAGEMENT MEASURES REGARDING NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS (NIHB)
MOVED BY:	Doug Kelly, Proxy, Shxw'ow'hamel First Nation, BC
SECONDED BY:	Chief Marcel Balfour, Norway House Cree Nation, MB
DECISION:	Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The Non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program is not meeting the health needs of First Nations, and is not addressing health inequities nor measurably improving health;

B. There are many examples of inequities faced by First Nations attempting to access basic health services, compared to other Canadians, for example:
   a. Since the 1990s, cost management measures are leaving many patients without care or necessary medicine. Such measures include the de-listing of benefits; reductions in pharmacy services costs (mark-up and dispensing fees); changes to eligibility for benefits; the enforcement of low cost pharmaceutical alternatives (generic drugs); and more prior approvals for medications and some dental services.
   b. First Nations routinely need to travel to access health services. Mileage rates for First Nations patients are set lower than the real costs of transportation, and on average, 39 cents less per kilometer than Treasury Board rates.
   c. First Nations suffer higher rates of dental issues, yet NIHB pays only 90% of the fee schedule for providers, like dentists, leaving patients to pay the difference. If the First Nation client cannot afford to pay the difference, he or she may go without treatment.

C. First Nations deserve equitable health access to health care as other Canadians, yet sometimes Health Canada makes decisions to deny access by those without professional health training, which is similar to the American experience of HMO's or health maintenance organizations;

D. Canadians may not be aware of the inequities and access barriers; and

E. The Health and Social Secretariat of AFN has raised the issues of funding and access inequities with NIHB, but the NIHB policy of cost containment continues to negatively impact the health of First Nations citizens.

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. Chiefs-in-Assembly support the development of a National Leadership Action Plan on Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) that would include a strategy and public awareness campaign about funding, jurisdictional and access issues faced by First Nations.

2. Chiefs-in-Assembly encourage First Nations regions to consider undertaking action in 2009-10, using a Leadership Action Plan, to raise awareness about the health funding and access inequities.

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