

Elise concerned for Inupiat Health board

Notes from Elise:

I guess the snow outside my window is nature's way of telling me the summer is now in the past and winter is anxiously knocking on the door. Winter is always a busy time here. It will probably be twice as hectic this year due to our difficulties with our federal contract.

Cutbacks, decreased funding and the uncertainty of the final federal budget, have all led to delays in negotiations. So, it looks like it will be well into winter before we really have any idea of what money we'll have and what programs we can run.

Perhaps my most serious concern is the potential threat to our Inupiat Health Board's funding. Due to new priorities set by Area Office, there is a real danger of losing the money needed to keep the Board active on a quarterly basis. This means the consumer of health services on the North Slope would lose their strongest advocate.

Over the years that the IHB has functioned, its members have worked hard to become the kind of informed consumer that is critical to the spirit of Public Law 638.

They have learned how to speak for their people and

their villages in a manner that demands respect and attention. They have provided my department with invaluable insight into how effective our programs are in reaching the people. And they have learned how to disagree with themselves and with my department in a positive and productive manner.

Consumer boards can be a strong, viable and critical asset to any program that offers a service.

My sincere hope is that we can protect its integrity and financial status and continue to enhance its functions throughout the next contract year.

