



Dr. Dirk Huyer
Chief Coroner for Ontario
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
25 Grosvenor Street, 18th Floor
TORONTO ON M7A 1Y6

Dear Dr. Huyer:

I am writing to inform you of the progress we have made together with First Nation partners in responding to the Seven Youth Inquest, at the three-year anniversary mark of its recommendations.

I provided a second-year anniversary update to you last year, detailing how Indigenous Services Canada worked collaboratively with First Nation partners to put in place concrete activities to respond to the Inquest recommendations and to support student safety and well-being. This marked a significant achievement because the Inquest partners reached a point where we were strategically working together to implement student supports before crises arise.

During the course of the last year, we have had more time to review and refine these activities, while considering First Nation partners' priorities going forward. Our partners have indicated that the additional student supports implemented, including in-school mental health and wellness supports, increased accommodation rates, specific staff and student training, and prime worker and on-call worker salaried positions, have helped make a material difference in student safety, retention, well-being, and ultimately achievement.

Indigenous Services Canada has continued to work with Matawa First Nations Management to renovate the new Matawa Education and Care Centre. On March 8, 2019, the Department provided approval of funding in the amount of \$16,475,083 to complete the renovation and construction of the Matawa Education and Care Centre. The Northern Nishnawbe Education Council feasibility study is well underway as well, and a final draft is expected to be completed in fall 2019. It is the strength of the relationships built together through collaborative work at the Education Table that has made all of the work to date possible. The Government of Canada is continuing to work with First Nation parties to the Inquest to sustain this work.

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Between the April 2018 and the May 2019 Nishnawbe Aski Nation-led Inquest Education Table meetings, the Government of Canada worked in collaboration with First Nation partners on a number of systemic changes informed by the Jury's recommendations. On January 21, 2019, Minister O'Regan and National Chief Perry Bellegarde announced the implementation of a new policy and funding approach for First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education, effective April 1, 2019. The implementation of this approach concluded three years of collaborative work at the national level with the Assembly of First Nations to co-develop a policy framework for funding First Nation K–12 education that is responsive to student needs.

In Ontario, the Chiefs of Ontario mandated the Ontario Technical Table on the Interim Funding Approach to provide technical advice on the regional implementation of the formula. Nishnawbe Aski Nation played a pivotal role, and helped develop an Ontario-specific approach based on provincial comparability, with built in enhancements for remoteness and language and culture. The impact is that educators in Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory have over \$50 million in additional annual funding to support their students. The new approach introduces increased control and flexibility in making education decisions for First Nations by moving away from a reliance on proposal-based funding and toward a stable, reliable, and predictable model that keeps pace with student needs.

The Inquest Education Table was used in Ontario to directly inform the development of the interim funding formula. Critical supports put in place as a part of safety plans for students who leave their home communities for school are now factors in the formula. These include increased rates for boarding homes to help support innovative projects and placement quality, as well as local and seasonal transportation supports. The interim funding formula also includes funding to help sustain on-call worker and student support worker services initially implemented only on a short-term basis. Indigenous Services Canada is partnering with Nishnawbe Aski Nation to review existing supports, and make specific recommendations on best practices for administering support services to students in private home placement going forward.

Indigenous Services Canada continues to support First Nation parties in addressing the health related Inquest recommendations through Choose Life and Jordan's Principle. Through Choose Life, students have access to increased mental health supports and professional services, land-based healing, Elders, technology to maintain family and social connections, and student and staff training and capacity building.

Budget 2018 announced the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. These funds can be used to expand and increase Early Learning and Child Care services and programming for children and families. This includes the

Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve and First Nations Inuit and Child Care Initiative programs, as well as day care or other early learning and child care services. Activities may include, but are not limited to, activities that aid in the design, development, delivery, and management of culturally appropriate early learning and child care services and programming.

In the past year, Indigenous Services Canada allocated funding to enhance and expand community mental wellness and addiction services and capital investments for treatment centres serving Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, the Department supported the development of safe sobering sites, enhanced culturally based treatment services, addictions counsellors for students, and facilitated referrals to specialized resources and external community agencies as required. Process changes have increased the availability of mental health counsellors and expanded health coverage to include land-based healing, land-based detox, traditional healers, and Elders. The Government of Canada will continue to work with the First Nation parties to the Inquest at the Inquest Education Table, and the First Nation members of the Ontario Technical Table on the interim funding approach to ensure that the critical lessons learned through the Inquest inform continued systemic change.

Support through Choose Life and Jordan's Principle, enhancements to mental wellness and addiction services, and changes to Non-Insured Health Benefits have also provided necessary supports for students. The changes anticipated to the delivery of health services within a First Nation directed health system as Nishnawbe Aski Nation continues with its Health System Transformation Project also have potential to support these recommendations.

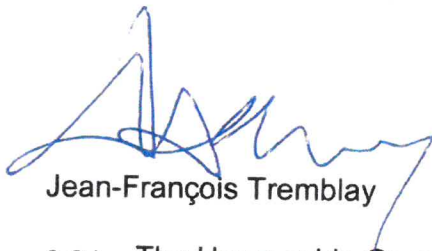
While the progress to date is notable, there is still more work to do in continuing to address important issues raised by the Inquest recommendations. The Government of Canada acknowledges the call from the political table meeting for sustained funding for the Inquest. Indigenous Services Canada will be hosting another work-planning session with Inquest partners in July 2019 to assess work to date and map out priorities and next steps in the context of the positive systemic changes to education and health frameworks that have taken place alongside the collaborative Inquest response work over the past three years.

With the creation of Indigenous Services Canada, there is greater opportunity to move toward integrated, holistic service models. The First Nation partners of the Inquest table are leaders in these endeavors for First Nation students attending school off reserve.

Given this, and the sustained support for Inquest partners and real systemic change in education and health system transformation in recent years described above, the Department supports a move away from annual reports that are focused on the past and the granular structure of the reports. Rather, the Department commits to shift of focus to forward-looking, holistic, sustained system-based engagement and discussion with partners in the context of new education and health systems and funding on a longer-term, thematic basis as the way forward. I would welcome your views on how best to shift into a post-recommendation relationship based on your observations over the past three years.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to you, your office, the presiding Coroner, Dr. Eden, and the jury, for the efforts made to draw attention to what can be done to avoid these tragedies, and moreover, for setting in motion the development of strong relationships forged by the Inquest partners that are underpinning meaningful change.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-François Tremblay

c.c.: The Honourable Greg Rickford, P.C., M.P.P.
The Honourable Stephen Lecce, M.P.P.
The Families of Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Jethro Anderson,
Curran Strang, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau, and Jordan Wabasse,
c/o Mr. Jonathan Rudin, Aboriginal Legal Services
Nishnawbe Aski Nation member First Nations
Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Northern Nishnawbe Education Council
Keewaytonook Okimakanak
Matawa Learning Centre
His Worship Bill Mauro
Ms. Sylvie Hauth

Enclosures

- 1) Themed Annual Progress Update
- 2) Recommendation-by-Recommendation Annual Progress Update