

## SPEAKING POINTS

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE - DECEMBER 13, 2004

### BACKGROUND

- ABORIGINAL CHILDREN REPRESENT 30% TO 40% OF ALL CHILD WELFARE PLACEMENTS (SOME 22,000 TO 28,000 CHILDREN) IN CANADA.
- IN SOME FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES MORE THAN 10% OF THE CHILDREN ARE IN CARE; 12 TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

AS OF MARCH 31, 2003, 5.19% OF ALL CHILDREN RESIDING ON RESERVE (8,220 CHILDREN) WERE IN CARE OUT OF THEIR PARENTAL HOMES COMPARED TO THE CANADIAN AVERAGE OF 0.8%.

- DESPITE THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON PREVENTION SERVICES IN CURRENT LITERATURE ON CHILD WELFARE, THE CURRENT FUNDING FORMULA WHICH WAS DEVELOPED IN THE MID 1980S ONLY PROVIDES FOR LIMITED FUNDING FOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES.
- QUALIFIED ABORIGINAL SOCIAL WORKERS ARE LEAVING FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES AS THE AGENCIES ARE UNABLE TO OFFER COMPETITIVE SALARIES DUE TO LIMITATION OF THE FUNDING FORMULA NAD A FREEZE ON COLA PAYMENTS TO FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES SINCE 1995.
- THE LACK OF IN-HOME FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AT RISK AND INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO

SERVICES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES, AND INAC, AS IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE OVER REPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN THE CANADIAN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM.

- FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES ARE THREATENING TO WITHDRAW FROM SERVICE DELIVERY BECAUSE THEY CANNOT DELIVER PROVINCIALY MANDATED SERVICES WITHIN THEIR CURRENT BUDGETS.
- PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE WRITTEN TO MINISTERS OF INAC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS INDICATING THAT INAC IS NOT PROVIDING SUFFICIENT FUNDING TO PERMIT FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES TO MEET THEIR STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS UNDER PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION.

PROVINCES MAY REFUSE TO RENEW THE MANDATE OF FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES, OR ENTERTAIN REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL OF NEW AGENCIES, DUE TO THE INADEQUACY OF AGENCY BUDGETS.

SHOULD PROVINCES ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DELIVERY OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ON RESERVE, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL MOST LIKELY END UP PAYING MORE THAN IT DOES CURRENTLY.

- PROVINCIAL CHILD ADVOCATES HAVE WRITTEN TO ME ASKING WHAT ASSISTANCE THEY CAN PROVIDE INDIAN AFFAIRS TO FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JOINT, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS AND GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES POLICY REVIEW COMPLETED IN JUNE 2000.
- FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES ARE FRUSTRATED THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA HAS MADE NO NEW INVESTMENT IN FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES FUNDING SINCE THE COMPLETION OF THE JOINT NATIONAL POLICY REVIEW IN 2000.

### THE PROPOSAL

- THE FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PROPOSAL IS AN INTERIM MEASURE TO BEGIN TO REINVEST IN FIRST NATIONS CAPACITY WHICH HAS BEEN RESTRAINED FOR ALMOST A DECADE.

DURING PROGRAM REVIEW INDIAN AFFAIRS FROZE COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE PAYMENTS TO AGENCIES WHICH HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON STAFF SALARIES AND OTHER COSTS.

AS A RESULT, AGENCIES HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN PAYING PROVINCIALY COMPARABLE SALARIES (WHICH HAVE NOT REMAINED FROZEN), OR RESTRICTING THE RANGE OF PROGRAMMING THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE.

- THIS PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE SHORT TERM FINANCIAL PRESSURES OF THE DEPARTMENT IN FUNDING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES, GIVEN THAT THIS PROGRAM IS GROWING AT A RATE THREE TIMES THE RATE OF GROWTH OF THE ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET FOR CORE PROGRAMS.

FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES WAS A \$365M PROGRAM IN 2003-2004 AND IS EXPECTED TO GROW BY AT LEAST \$20M IN 2004-2005.

- THIS REQUEST IS FOR FUNDING TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION WHILE RESEARCH IS BEING UNDERTAKEN ON PROVINCIALLY COMPARABLE FUNDING LEVELS.

FOR EXAMPLE, RESEARCH IS UNDERWAY TO DETERMINE COMPARABLE WORKLOAD INDICATORS AND FUNDING LEVELS FOR SALARIES, PREVENTION SERVICES, AND ADJUSTMENTS FOR COSTS FOR OPERATING IN NORTHERN AND REMOTE AREAS OF CANADA.

WORK WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE COMPLETED ON CLARIFYING THE JURISDICTIONAL (FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL ) RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS THAT ARE IN THE CARE OF AGENCIES.

- I PLAN TO RETURN TO CABINET WITH A BUSINESS CASE FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, PRIOR TO AUTHORITIES RENEWAL IN MARCH 2006, WITH A FULLY COSTED AND COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES THAT IS

CONSISTENT WITH PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS.

## LINKAGES

- THE PROPOSAL BUILDS UPON ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE CANADA/ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE HELD ON APRIL 19, 2004, AND REINFORCES THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S COMMITMENTS IN THE AREAS OF LIFELONG LEARNING, HEALTH, AND HOUSING. ACTION ON THESE THREE AREAS WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES. ALTERNATIVELY, HAVING SAFE AND HEALTHY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IMPROVES READINESS TO LEARN, AND INCREASES THE PROBABILITY OF GREATER ATTACHMENT TO THE WORKFORCE, LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.
- THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE OCTOBER 2004 EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND NON-ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, BY STRENGTHENING CANADA'S SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS, PROMOTING HEALTHIER ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, AND CARING FOR CHILDREN.

## CONCLUSION

- THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA NEEDS TO SIGNAL TO FIRST NATIONS THAT IT IS SERIOUS ABOUT RESPONDING TO WHAT HAS BECOME IDENTIFIED BY FIRST NATIONS AS A FUNDING CRISIS IN FIRST

NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES.

- AN INTERIM INVESTMENT OF NEW FUNDING WILL HELP NARROW THE GAP IN FUNDING BETWEEN AGENCIES ON AND OFF RESERVE.