

NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release
December 8, 2010*

BC FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN NOT “INVESTMENT READY”

Victoria – British Columbia’s First Nations Delegated Agencies, known collectively as the First Nations Directors Forum met, with representatives from Indian and Northern Affairs BC Region and from Ministry of Children and Family Development on the same day as Canada’s Human Rights Tribunal continued to hear testimony on the underfunding of on reserve child and family services. Rather than addressing these funding inequities, both levels of government continue to leave vulnerable children in BC at risk.

Currently delegated agencies are funded by the federal government to meet the province’s expectations in regards to child and family service delivery through an archaic formula that is a deficit based system rather than focussing on the prevention of child abuse and maltreatment in First Nations communities. Despite the promises of prevention funding, the agencies are at the mercy of the federal government and its funding policies. When pressed in regards to the enhanced prevention dollars for BC, INAC BC Region stated that Ottawa does not see BC as “investment ready”.

Investment readiness seems to speak to the funding policy where the delegated agencies are expected to create new accounting systems and bill the federal government on the actual cost for children in care rather than based on the 1989 Directive paying agencies a daily per diem for the children in their care. Per diems allowed agencies some flexibility in terms of agency and community identified priorities. Actuals for maintenance of children in care leave the agency with no discretionary funding commencing April 1, 2011. As a result, the future and viability of many of the provinces 23 First Nations agencies and agency programs hangs in the balance while INAC fails to provide a meaningful plan of action to back up their verbal assertions that no delegated agencies will be negatively affected through this transition.

BC’s First Nations child and family service agencies continue to scramble to create business plans, reorganize accounting systems, continue to deliver programs and services, and prepare to meet the new expectations within the unrealistic timelines imposed by the federal government. And, as child welfare is a provincial responsibility, MCFD remains silent.

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