June 27, 2012

RE: Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together

Dear First Nations Chiefs,

I am pleased to announce that the Government of Ontario is embarking on a series of discussions and engagement activities regarding the modernization of child care in Ontario. These engagement activities will support the government’s 2011 election platform commitment to “work with partners to modernize Ontario’s child care system and support centres as they transition to offering affordable care to families with younger children.” Additionally, the engagement activities will complement the government’s investments in child care announced on April 20, 2012 as part of the 2012 Ontario Budget.

The province is committed to leveraging the experience and insight of our partners as we modernize our system of early learning and child care service and program delivery, and work towards a high quality, more accessible and coordinated system that better supports children and families.

The attached discussion paper introduces a conversation about child care modernization and sets out the government’s long-term vision for child care. We are seeking input from First Nations on targeted medium-term objectives that will help us to achieve that vision over the next three years.

While the discussion paper identifies overarching issues related to child care, we have heard and acknowledge that there are issues and concerns that are unique to First Nations, including:

- Funding issues related to the provision of child care in First Nations communities;
- The need to include and promote culture and language in First Nations child care programs;
- The need for enhanced and sustained engagement on child care issues impacting First Nations;
- The need for tripartite discussions including First Nations, the province and the federal government.

The paper aims to capture some of the key child care issues identified and expressed by First Nations individuals and organizations from across the province, notably the recognition that culture and language are critical aspects of quality early learning and child care. However, as this discussion paper is designed to speak to the entire child care system in Ontario, I encourage you to bring the unique perspectives of your communities to my attention.
Over the next three months, you will be able to provide written feedback on the content of the discussion paper via Ontario’s Regulatory Registry Website at http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry or by regular mail addressed to:

Child Care Modernization
% Early Learning Division
Ministry of Education
900 Bay Street, 24th Floor Mowat Block
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

I encourage you to share this information with your communities. I invite all interested parties to provide feedback on the objectives and discussion questions, as well as in any other areas related to early learning and child care not included in the paper. The advice we receive will help to inform the next steps towards the modernization of child care in Ontario.

The Ministry of Education will also be engaging directly with the Social Services Directors of the Provincial / Territorial Organizations and the Independent First Nations. We will be looking to this group for advice on ways to deepen engagement with First Nations as we proceed with child care modernization initiatives.

I look forward to continued collaboration as we work together to modernize the early learning and child care system in First Nations communities.

Yours truly,

Laurel Broten
Minister

c:  Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse, Chiefs of Ontario
    Lori Jacobs, Executive Director, Chiefs of Ontario
    Chiefs Committee on Social Services members Chiefs of Ontario
    Social Services Coordination Unit Chiefs of Ontario
    The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
    First Nations Child Care Supervisors/Administrators
    Lois Mahon, Executive Director, Child Care Resources
    Alan Ozawanimke, CEO, Mamaweswen the North Shore Tribal Council Secretariat
    Karen Ingebrigston, Executive Director, FIREFLY
    Robert Ross, Administrator, Pathways Health Centre for Children
    Norma Albert, Administrator, Stepping Stones Support Services Program

Attachment:

Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together Discussion Paper