

Ministry of Education
Minister Responsible for
Early Years and Child Care
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Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation
Ministre responsable de la
Petite Enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Édifrice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



May 4, 2017

Clarise Henrickson
President/Chair
Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association

Dear Ms. Henrickson,

I am pleased to share with you important information from Ontario's 2017 Budget regarding our government's commitment to expand access to culturally relevant child care and early years programs for First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families.

In September 2016, our government announced a major child care expansion plan to help 100,000 more children in Ontario aged 0-4 access high-quality licensed child care. This commitment will begin in 2017 and roll out over five years. It will double the current provincial capacity of the 0-4 age group, creating spaces for about 40 per cent of children province-wide. As announced on April 26, 2017, and in the provincial 2017 Budget, we are moving forward immediately to deliver on this historic commitment, beginning with providing 24,000 more children up to four years old with enhanced access to child care in 2017-18. This includes an investment of \$200 million in 2017-18 to increase accessibility and affordability of licensed child care throughout the province.

I am also pleased to share with you further details regarding my ministry's early years commitments under *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, which was released on May 30, 2016. The *Journey Together* sets out the province's plan to work with Indigenous partners to help address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings and Calls to Action. It includes a commitment to help increase the number of off-reserve licensed child care spaces and culturally relevant programming for children and families, to be delivered by Indigenous organizations working with service system managers. On reserve, we have committed to work closely with First Nation partners to enhance existing provincially-funded child and family programs on reserve, and to make culturally relevant child and family programs available in more communities.

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The Ministry of Education will invest up to \$93.5M in new funding over the next two years for these *Journey Together* early years commitments. This includes:

- Off reserve – Up to \$70M over the next two years (including capital investments) for child care and child and family programs delivered by Indigenous-led organizations, with ongoing annual operating funding of up to \$30M beginning in 2018-19; and
- On Reserve – Up to \$23.5M over the next two years for new and enhanced child and family programs delivered by First Nations, with up to \$12M in ongoing annual operating funding beginning in 2018-19.

Since the release of the *Journey Together*, ministry officials have been working with your organizations to co-develop a plan for moving forward with these early years commitments. Locally, Indigenous organizations and service system managers have been partnering over the past several months to assess needs and develop program proposals. We recognize the collaboration occurring locally and shared dedication to this important work, and look forward to receiving the needs assessment and program proposals by the submission deadline of September 29, 2017.

These investments in the early years are an important element of our provincial commitment to working with our partners to build a strong and prosperous future for Indigenous children and families in Ontario. I look forward to ongoing partnership with Indigenous and service system manager partners, as we continue on the journey towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and communities.

Thank you,



Indira Naidoo-Harris
Minister

Resources:

- www.ontario.ca/childcare
- www.ontario.ca/page/quality-child-care-more-families
- www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/FamilyPrograms.html

Cc: Lori Drazenovich, Coordinator, OAHSA
Hon. David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Hon. Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Hon. Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education
Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister of Education
General Managers/Commissioners, CMSMs and DSSABs
Children's Service Managers, CMSMs and DSSABs