



CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

Chiefs of Ontario Winter Priorities

Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day, *Wiindawtegowinini*

February 2018

Dear Leadership:

The month of January was extremely busy, from the final approval by 97 per cent of First Nation communities to establish the Sovereign Wealth Fund, to the National Emergency Meeting on Child Welfare. The weeks and months to come will be even busier. This letter is to inform you of the critical issues that we intend to prioritize over the coming months.

Number one is working towards ending the child welfare crisis. On February 1, 2018 the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled on COO's request for additional "immediate relief" against discrimination and inequitable funding for First Nation children. The CHRT ruled that Band Representative Services and First Nations' children and youth mental health services should be funded retroactively to January 2016 and in the future. Canada says that it has agreed to comply with the CHRT rulings. The next step will be further implementation of the CHRT orders to be discussed at an All Ontario Chiefs meeting with Ministers Jane Philpott, Carolyn Bennett and Michael Coteau, **to be held on Tuesday March 20th. Further details will be provided as they are made available.**

On January 31, 2018, I presented the Chiefs of Ontario provincial Pre-Budget Submission to Finance Minister Charles Sousa in Ottawa. We must continue to press for more provincial and federal funding to end the multiple crises affecting far too many of our Peoples – child welfare, suicide, housing, and water. More importantly, we must finalize long-term fiscal transfers to our communities and PTOs so that we do not have to go hat in hand every year seeking line item funding for services and programs.

The federal government will be delivering its Federal Budget on February 27th. A new fiscal relationship with the federal government will be the foundation on which to build happy, healthy communities. Reliable, long-term funding will allow us to reclaim our sovereignty and nationhood. We will reclaim our languages and cultures. *We will secure a better future for our children.*

Chiefs, another relationship that has become important in terms of the communication is the Assembly of First Nations *Fiscal, Joint Priorities*, as well as the *Law and Policy* tables. At the March 26 Joint Priorities meeting in Ottawa, I will be reiterating our position on regional priorities. COO is currently working with the Institute on Governance (IOG), which includes consulting with our leadership, on how best to move forward in reclaiming our nationhood. The COO-IOG newsletter is an outreach tool for our leadership to be directly involved in developing a new Nation to Nation relationship between First Nations and the Crown.

This past week in Toronto, I chaired the First Nation Health Transformation Summit. The Summit addressed the various health crises affecting our Peoples, and also examined the best ways towards establishing our own health authorities. Closely related to this is the work I am doing as co-chair of the AFN National Task Force on Cannabis.

First Nations have called for the repeal of the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. The AFN now has the opportunity to facilitate discussion with First Nations in conceptualizing, elaborating, designing and implementing a re-envisioned engagement process for the review of the current Act. The AFN held a Water Symposium last week that will be the beginning of that dialogue on how that should be accomplished.

Last week, federal omnibus legislation – Bills 68 and 69 – were introduced to update environmental, fisheries and energy legislation. First Nations were consulted but were never fully involved in the final co-drafting of this legislation. We have a number of concerns on how our lands and waters will still be impacted by major projects. We have been re-assured that our fisheries and ecosystems will be further protected. In the weeks to come, COO will provide a detailed analysis of this comprehensive legislation.

On February 14th, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that the government will be introducing a new “recognition of Indigenous rights” framework and legislation for First Nation, Metis and Inuit. There will be extensive consultations beginning now until next spring. I have stated that First Nations – the Treaty rights holders, community members and Residential School survivors -- must be fully and completely involved in the co-drafting of this legislation. *There will be nothing done about us without us.*

There are so many other priorities from climate change to the final restructuring of the Chiefs of Ontario. In the weeks to come, there will be more information provided such as the March 27-29 Women in Leadership Summit in Ottawa. I urge you to visit the new Chiefs of Ontario website for updates, and continue to engage with its Legislative Blog. As a means of more concise and effective tracking, we have developed a landscape document that is being distributed to leadership, Tribal Councils, and PTOs.

Chiefs, you’ve given us direction to address the significant funding gap in Ontario. As a result, we’ve begun to lay out the process to address our needs. In early spring, there will be a Summit to discuss the Ontario Fair Share on fiscal transfers and investment with leadership, the province, the federal government, and other First Nation organizations. Further details on date and location will be provided.

We continue to achieve results that effectively serve the Chiefs, by strengthening our relationship with the Political Confederacy and sister organizations on provincial and federal issues. It is essential we continue to collaborate through a spirit of unity and respect for the diversity of our First Nations.

In the weeks to come, I will be visiting many of your communities. I look forward to seeing you at the 12th Annual COO Health Forum in Toronto, February 27 to March 1. Together, we will continue to work towards securing a better future for our children and our Peoples.

Isadore Day, Wiindawtegowinini
Ontario Regional Chief