

Fox set to 'take on the country' to create day-care spaces [CA-ON]^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Northern Ontario's First Nations have a tough road ahead of them if they want to create new day care spaces within their communities.

"We're taking on the country on this one," said Ontario Regional Chief Charles Fox at the conclusion of the Ontario Special Chiefs Assembly. Fox explained that over the next month, he, his staff, and the First Nations will have to develop a strategy to encourage the other 600-plus First Nations from across Canada to agree to set aside any new child care funding towards new child care spaces.

Fox will make his plea during the AFN's special chief's assembly scheduled for Dec. 7 to 9 in Ottawa. "There is no budget for creating more spaces," Fox said. "We have to take on the rest of the country to affect that change." The issue was brought up through a resolution at the Ontario Special Chiefs Assembly held in Thunder Bay, Nov. 9 to 11.

During the second day of the assembly, Frank McKay, proxy for Cat Lake, moved the "Child Care Funding for Northern Ontario" resolution to obtain support from the chiefs for startup funding for child-care centres in the Sioux Lookout area. McKay's resolution was seconded by Chief Gary Allen from Nicickousemenecaning First Nation.

"The money allocated (for child care) goes to the existing child-care centres," McKay said.

The federal government's funding focus doesn't leave any money for creating new child-care centres. Twenty-one out of 24 Sioux Lookout area First Nations do not have child-care centres.

The first draft of McKay's resolution had called for new funding to be introduced under the First Nation Inuit Child Care Initiative for the creation, operation, and maintenance of child care facilities for Grand Council Treaty #3 and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. However, the wording of the resolution raised flags of caution for some southern Ontario chiefs who refused to support it.

"I'm very concerned that a resolution like this could be very divisive," said Chief Simon Fobister of Grassy Narrows during the resolution debate.

McKay agreed to rephrase the wording before presenting it again. "We're not talking about taking their funding away," McKay said afterwards. "We're talking about new funding."

Despite the initial opposition, McKay was able to find support for the resolution. McKay said he has been attempting to gain support for the creation of new child-care spaces for the past six years.

Fox also emphasized that child care is a national issue. "It's not a regional, provincial issue," Fox said. "People say it is, but it isn't."

Representatives from Treaty #3 and NAN will create a plan to gain more funding for child-care spaces within their respective territories & a plan that will have to be ready by early December.

- reprinted from Wawatay News

Region: Ontario^[2]

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