



OFIFC

**Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres**

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OFIFC OUTGOING MAIL	
Date Sent	Oct. 31/14
Sent Via	mail
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October 31, 2014

- Atikokan Native Friendship Centre
- Barrie Native Friendship Centre
- CanAm Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor
- Council Fire Native Cultural Centre Toronto
- Dryden Native Friendship Centre
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre Midland
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Indian Friendship Centre Sault Ste. Marie
- Ininew Friendship Centre Cochrane
- Kapuskasing Friendship Centre
- M'Wkwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre Owen Sound
- N'Amerind Friendship Centre London
- N'Swakamok Friendship Centre Sudbury
- Ne'Chee Friendship Centre Kenora
- Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre Sioux Lookout
- Nogojwanong Friendship Centre Peterborough
- North Bay Indian Friendship Centre
- Odawa Native Friendship Centre Ottawa
- Parry Sound Friendship Centre
- Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre
- Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre
- Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre
- Thunderbird Friendship Centre Geraldton
- Timmins Native Friendship Centre
- United Native Friendship Centre Fort Frances

**Honorable David Zimmer
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Suite 400 – 160 Bloor Street E.
Toronto, ON M7A 2E6**

**Honorable Reza Moridi
Minister – Minister's Office
3rd Floor – 900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2**

Dear Ministers Zimmer and Moridi:

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is writing you to outline our position on increasing accessibility of provincial employment supports provided for urban Aboriginal people in Ontario through our member Friendship Centres. The OFIFC is moving forward in building strategic alliances with NOSDA and its membership in order to support the OFIFC's ongoing advocacy regarding the expected integration of Employment Ontario (EO) and Ontario Works (OW) as well as the delivery of EO and OW by Friendship Centres. Currently, the existing suite of provincial employment supports available through Employment Ontario's (EO) Employment Service and Ontario Works (OW) are not meeting the needs of multi-barriered clients, including urban Aboriginal people.

Employment Ontario's Employment Service Delivery Sites are geared towards the general public and do not necessarily have staff with the training, resources or capacity to provide culturally informed and appropriate services to the multi-barriered urban Aboriginal population in need of EO services and employment supports. This conforms to 2008-2010 data from the Ministry of Training and Colleges Universities (MTCU) which shows that urban Aboriginal people are accessing EO programming in low numbers.¹

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¹ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Employment Ontario Presentation: Commitment to Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs and Services [Powerpoint Slide #12]. July 2010.

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Ministers Zimmer and Moridi

The Provincial Government has acknowledged the need to prioritize the coordination of employment and training services across the province to improve effectiveness for job seekers and employers. Specifically, this would include the integration of EO and OW supports. However, there has been little recognized movement in the area of Employment Services and Training Integration (ESTI).

In an effort to improve the level of service integration urban Aboriginal people receive when accessing EO's Employment Service, the OFIFC continues to advocate for services to be run directly out of the Friendship Centres. NOSDA and the OFIFC are committed in ensuring that EO services are delivered in ways that meet the needs of urban Aboriginal multi-barriered clients and that these EO services are delivered through Friendship Centres. This level of integration should promote further coordination between EO, Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and overall Friendship Centre programming as well as support increased numbers of urban Aboriginal people accessing and benefiting from EO's Employment Service in a wholistic, culturally competent space.

Both the OFIFC and NOSDA members have concerns with the existing service delivery model for provincial employment supports as the current system has been unsuccessful in responding to localized labour market issues. In part, these challenges have emerged because CMSMs and DSSABs have not been granted enough responsibility in regards to planning, despite being a more accountable level of government than the MTCU-created Local Planning Boards. In order for all 47 CMSMs/DSSABs to have the option to deliver Employment Ontario programming, a greater level of planning responsibility is required.

The OFIFC and NOSDA are hopeful that we can work collaboratively to ensure that these concerns are addressed in the future integration of EO and OW and the delivery of EO services to urban Aboriginal people. We look forward to hearing from you on the points raised in this letter and to your Ministry's engagement of the OFIFC, member Friendship Centres and NOSDA in pushing the agenda of Friendship Centre delivery of EO services forward.

Sincerely,



Sheila McMahon
President

Cc: Deborah Newman, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities
David de Launay, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
Gary Scriptnick, NOSDA Chair
Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, OFIFC