



OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

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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'Wiwedong 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

September 28, 2015

Carol Layton
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Transportation
Ferguson Block, 3rd Floor
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Dear Deputy Layton,

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) is writing to voice our serious concerns with the Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Study (NOMTS). As you may know, the OFIFC is a provincial organisation representing the collective interests of twenty eight member Friendship Centres in cities and towns across Ontario. The OFIFC administers a number of wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives which are delivered by local Friendship Centres in areas such as justice, children and youth, health, family support, long term care, healing and wellness, education, and employment and training.

Representing a network of twenty eight member Friendship Centres in Ontario, the OFIFC is Ontario's largest off-reserve Aboriginal service delivery structure. The OFIFC and Friendship Centres are dedicated to achieving greater participation of urban Aboriginal people in all facets of society. Friendship Centres are not-for-profit organisations which are mandated to serve the needs of all Aboriginal people regardless of legal definition, providing thousands of Aboriginal people with culturally-sensitive and culturally-appropriate services in urban communities.

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Recognising that 84.1 percent of Aboriginal people in Ontario live off-reserve, and that Aboriginal people represent almost one-third of northern Ontario's population, urban Aboriginal engagement in the Ministry of Transportation's (MTO) NOMTS is a necessity. The NOMTS must also recognise the linkages between poor transportation systems and the increased levels of poverty experienced by multi-barriered urban Aboriginal people. Without a provincial transportation strategy, the Government of Ontario will be stalled in fully realising its goal to end poverty, as articulated through the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). In fact, the NOMTS, if conducted meaningfully, could play a substantial role in initiating provincial dialogue on a public transportation strategy and, as a result support, the realisation of the PRS.

The OFIFC also understands that the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) has expressed concerns with the current NOMTS to your Minister, in particular on the inter-city bus modernisation engagement. Both the OFIFC and NOSDA agree that the NOMTS must recognise the fact that in northern Ontario, transportation infrastructure is social infrastructure.

The OFIFC has made numerous requests for meaningful engagement with the NOMTS to your officials, with an initial agreement regarding its importance. However, a recent teleconference with your officials has demonstrated that meaningful engagement will not take place with Friendship Centres and our communities in the current process without intervention. As it stands, urban Aboriginal engagement with the NOMTS is dependent on participation in public meetings and the need for urban Aboriginal specific engagement to be explicitly identified in these meetings, and even then will likely be impeded by budgetary constraints.

The OFIFC is disappointed by the dismissiveness and inflexibility in the current NOMTS process. Specifically, statements made to the OFIFC indicated that relationships have been built with First Nations and Métis groups, and as a result urban Aboriginal organisations and Friendship Centre communities should not expect to be engaged at the same level. The OFIFC recognises that while these other groups have been engaged with your Ministry over a longer timeframe; implementing a lesser, or non-existent engagement strategy with urban Aboriginal people, more broadly means that the NOMTS will not be reflective of the vast majority of Aboriginal people in Ontario.

The OFIFC is asking for your commitment to a process that respects Friendship Centres' role in communities and the OFIFC's role in representing the collective interest of our members. The OFIFC is committed to ensuring that the NOMTS reflects the unique challenges and needs of the urban Aboriginal population, and is hopeful that meaningful engagement can be reached with your Ministry through the NOMTS.

Page 3
September 28, 2015
C. Layton

Should you wish to schedule a meeting to discuss this further, please contact Brandie Ferneyhough at 416-956-7575 or by email at bferneyhough@ofifc.org.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Maracle
Executive Director

cc: Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Iain Angus, Chair, NOSDA
Fern Dominelli, Chair, Chief Administrative Officer Group, NOSDA
Chris Stewart, Executive Coordinator, NOSDA
Juliette Nicolet, Policy Director, OFIFC

Encl.: OFIFC Leave Behind

