

VIA EMAIL

113-2025-65

June 26, 2025

Dr. Dirk Huyer
Chief Coroner for Ontario
25 Morton Shulman Avenue
Toronto ON M3M 0B1
Email: dirk.huyer@ontario.ca

Dear Dr. Huyer:

I am writing to provide Ontario's 2025 ninth annual progress report on the Seven Youth Inquest (SYI) jury recommendations directed to the Province, consistent with recommendation 143.

Ontario continues to be committed to this important work to honour the lives of Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau and Jordan Wabasse.

Ontario wishes to recognize Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC), the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) and Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) for their ongoing efforts on behalf of their communities, students and families.

As of June 2025, Ontario has continued to make progress on the 61 recommendations directed to the Province — furthering work on in-progress recommendations and building on completed recommendations. Of the 61 recommendations directed to Ontario, 55 are complete. We recognize that marking a recommendation as “complete” does not signal that the work is finished, and the Province will continue to provide important updates to both “in progress” as well as “complete” recommendations. The six remaining “in progress” recommendations directed to Ontario are focused on systemic, long-term change across sectors, which will require continued collaboration with First Nation partners and other Inquest parties.

Key updates to in-progress and completed recommendations since the 2024 report back are outlined in the attached chart and some highlights are noted below.

Supports for First Nations Schools Off-Reserve and their Students

The Province continues to hear from Inquest education partners about the importance of dedicated, sustainable funding to maintain student safety, success and well-being and to assist the schools in supporting First Nations students 24-7 over the long-term.

In response, the Ministry of Education (EDU), is continuing to provide funding to NAN and NAN organizations through multi-year funding agreements. This includes \$800,000 per year from 2023–24 to 2025–26 to First Nation Inquest partners to support the implementation of education related Inquest recommendations; and \$3.2 million per year from 2023–24 to 2025–26 to NAN and NAN organizations, including First Nation Inquest partners, to support student safety and transitions. Funding provided has been tailored to community needs and supports a range of critical activities, including — but not limited to — memorial scholarships; hiring and retaining staff such as Transition Coordinators, Safety Managers, Curriculum Officers and Education After-Care Navigators; developing virtual learning courses; providing mental health supports; delivering student safety programming and call lines; offering land-based learning opportunities; and purchasing essential items to support student well-being.

In 2024–25, EDU also provided \$210,000 to support the First Nations School Support Program. This program will second a principal through Keewatin Patricia District School Board to support the capacity and development of educators and administrators in partnering First Nations operated schools, helping First Nations schools to support the success and well-being of First Nations students as they transition from remote and fly-in communities into provincially funded schools.

The Ontario Ministry of Health (MOH) continues to provide \$900,000 in annualized funding (\$300,000 to each SYI Education partner) to Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education (KOB), MECC and NNEC to deliver mental health supports to First Nations students.

Since 2009, Ontario's After School Program (ASP) through the Ontario Ministry of Sport (SPORT) has provided annual funding to the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario (MANWO) to support programming for First Nations youth in Grades 9–12 (ages 13–18) at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFCHS). As of 2023–24, ASP funding to MANWO increased from \$110,000 to \$143,000 annually.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) provided \$500,000 per year from 2023–24 to 2024–25 for the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). OYAP provides the opportunity for students to explore a skilled trade and begin an apprenticeship while completing high school. In 2023–24 this supported nine schools, including MECC, to provide OYAP to Indigenous students and in 2024–25 it supported eight schools in delivering OYAP.

In the 2024–25 school year, there were 362 students in First Nations secondary schools approved to participate in 18 Dual Credit programs with Cambrian College, Canadore College, Confederation College and Sault College, including 27 from Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School and 10 from the Matawa Education and Care Centre.

Ontario, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is providing \$8.7 million to Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services to build 58 units for Youth Transitional Housing, including support services, in Thunder Bay through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program (ISHP).

Supports for NAN Communities

Enhancing Connections: NAN and Provincial School Collaboration

EDU has continued to provide funding to support collaboration between First Nations schools, provincially funded schools, and identified opportunities to share information and expertise to support capacity building in NAN First Nations schools in 2024–25, including funding for the following initiatives:

- \$529,720 provided to NAN through the Education Partnership Program (EPP).
- \$5.5 million to support 38 Indigenous Graduation Coaches in 30 school boards to support Indigenous students' success as well as professional development opportunities for school board staff, including the two school boards in Thunder Bay, Lakehead District School Board (\$282,770) and Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board (\$141,385).
- \$800,000 to fund the Rapid Response Northern Schools Team (RRNST). This program operates out of Keewatin Patricia District School Board, who provide a team of pre-screened, highly trained and experienced staff to mobilize and deploy in First Nations communities in response to requests made by communities during times of urgent need.

Mental Health and Addictions (MHA)

Beginning in 2024–25, MOH is providing an additional \$7.2 million to NAN, including: \$3.6 million annually to NAN for enhancements to Crisis Response through the Indigenous Healing & Wellness Strategy (IHWS); and \$3.6 million annually for IHWS Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children.

Internet Connectivity

In 2024–25, EDU provided \$201,900 to NAN to support the ongoing implementation of Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), including the procurement, delivery and installation of Starlink internet connectivity kits to student learning hubs and homes in 42 NAN communities. These projects, originally set to expire in December 2025, have been extended until March 2026.

The Province has committed nearly \$4 billion to bring reliable high-speed internet access to every community across the province, including First Nation communities. As of June 2025, approximately 132,000 homes and businesses have been connected to high-speed internet.

Ontario has also finalized agreements worth approximately \$2.8 billion for 277 projects to enable high-speed internet access and improved cellular connectivity across the province. Projects include:

- Matawa Rapid Lynx project, a two-phased project to construct hundreds of kilometres of fibre-optic telecommunications cable to link remote Matawa First Nations.
- Whitesand First Nation: Co-funded with the federal government, this project will build a new fibre line from Whitesand First Nation and Gull Bay First Nation to Thunder Bay to provide high-speed internet access to 575 homes and businesses.
- Project backhaul will also enable connectivity for future Ring of Fire developments. The updated target completion date is March 2026.
- SWIFT 2.0 Saugeen First Nation sub-project: SWIFT is providing specific and tailored supports to the First Nation to lead this sub-project, which will benefit 1,375 premises.
- Chapeau Cree First Nation: This yet-to-be-announced project will bring wired high-speed internet access to 63 homes and businesses in this First Nation community.

Office of the Chief Coroner Initiatives

On August 1, 2024, following discussion with NAN, the Office of the Chief Coroner implemented a Northern Coroner Team with a goal to have coroners attend in communities in the remote North, where scene attendance has been absent in the past. The primary focus has been on the most remote, fly in First Nations communities (and Moosonee). The team of 15 coroners from across the province are available for one week time periods to respond to deaths that require investigation. The attendance rate has been over 80 per cent with positive feedback from families, communities and police services.

Broader Provincial Supports and Investments

Education

In 2024–25, EDU provided \$3.25 million in funding to support Indigenous languages revitalization programs with the objective of growing the number of Indigenous languages programs and speakers in Ontario.

EDU continues to provide funding to support a dedicated Indigenous Education Lead in each school board through the Indigenous Education Lead Component of the Indigenous Education Supports Allocation (total of \$148.3M for 2024–25). Funding is available to school boards through the Core Education Funding to support: Indigenous Education funding within the Classroom Staffing Fund and Learning Resources Fund which is limited to expenses that support the academic success and well-being of Indigenous students, as well as build the knowledge of all students on Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.

EDU has released several recent changes to curriculum that continue to support enhanced Indigenous-focused mandatory learning. In 2024–25 new mandatory learning related to Indigenous cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions was introduced.

Justice

The Ministry of the Solicitor General (SOLGEN) is providing approximately \$1.68 million annually from 2024–25 to 2026–27 allocated to First Nations police services through the First Nations Mobile Crisis Response Team Grant program.

Since October 2023, coroner schedules are required in all regions of the province. This ensures the availability of a coroner to respond to deaths reported for investigation.

Information Sharing and Training

In collaboration with the Ministry of Public Business Service Delivery and Procurement (MPBSDP), the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and MOH, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation (IAFNER) has provided funding support for several key initiatives, including:

- \$1 million in funding to Chiefs of Ontario (COO) for the establishment of the First Nations Data Table (FNDDT). Launched in November 2024, the FNDDT consists of Chiefs and senior representatives from seven ministries. It serves as a forum to collaborate on data sovereignty, develop enterprise-wide data governance standards, and address the collection, storage, access, analysis, and reporting of First Nations data.

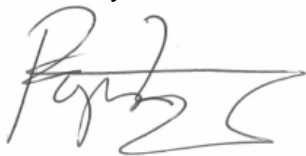
As an additional step in fulfilling recommendation 139, which calls for enhanced public service training in intercultural competency, human rights and Indigenous knowledge, IAFNER has invested approximately \$70,000 to provide nearly 200 OPS staff with licenses to the First Nations Information Governance Centre's OCAP® training.

In response to Recommendation 17, which emphasized the need for clear, accessible pathways to provincial programs and services, IAFNER launched the Indigenous Programs and Services Finder (IPSF). This digital platform, hosted on Ontario.ca, helps Indigenous individuals, communities and organizations more easily navigate provincial government supports. By offering comprehensive, up-to-date information on services related to safety, security, justice and culturally safe health and well-being, the IPSF supports Indigenous youth and their families in accessing the resources they need to thrive.

In 2024–25 the Anti-Racism Directorate invested \$500,000 as part of the Indigenous Relationship Building initiative. This funding supported Indigenous research, community led engagements, and culturally informed Indigenous led projects to address anti-Indigenous racism.

Ontario will continue to work across government and with other Inquest parties to identify further opportunities to meet the needs of students in an effective, sustainable way that is aligned with the spirit of the Inquest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raj Dhir', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Raj Dhir
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation