

BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT BY INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA IS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN

Ottawa, March 24, 2009 -

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is not currently managing its First Nations Child and Family Services Program to ensure that all First Nations children receive adequate support services, according to a report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled in the House of Commons today by Chair Shawn Murphy, MP.

Under its First Nations Child and Family Services Program, INAC provides funding to First Nations, their organizations, and provinces to cover the operating and administrative costs of the child welfare services provided to children and families living on reserves, as well as the costs related to First Nations children placed in care.

An audit by the Office of the Auditor General found that the formula used to fund these services is not based on the actual cost of delivering services, is not sufficiently linked to the costs of meeting provincial requirements and standards, does not reflect the current range of child welfare services, nor does it take into account the varying populations and needs of First Nations communities.

The Public Accounts Committee believes that continuing to use a flawed funding formula based upon a fixed percentage means that First Nations child and family services agencies are often underfunded, and First Nations children and their families do not receive the services that they need. The Committee recommends that INAC immediately change its formula to one based on need, as well as ensure that its program is managed to meet the best interests of First Nations children. "First Nations children are particularly vulnerable," said Mr. Murphy. "It is imperative that the federal government meet its responsibility to fund appropriate child and family services."

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