

Ministre des Services
aux autochtones



Minister of
Indigenous Services

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H4

JUN 14 2019

The Honorable Kevin Sorenson, M.P.
Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Sorenson:

As I committed to in the Government's Response to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' November 2018 report entitled "*Report 5, Socio-economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves – Indigenous Services Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*," I am pleased to provide a progress report regarding the negotiation of regional education agreements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seamus O'Regan".

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, P.C., M.P.

c.c.: Ms. Angela Crandall, Clerk of the Committee

Progress Report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the Negotiation of Regional Education Agreements

Introduction

In early 2018, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report on the Socio-Economic Gaps on First Nations Reserves. The audit sought to determine whether Indigenous Services Canada satisfactorily measured and reported on Canada's overall progress in closing the socio-economic gaps between on-reserve First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PACP) studied the Auditor General's findings and on November 17, 2018, tabled the Fifty Fourth Report, entitled "Report 5, Socio-Economic Gaps on First Nation Reserves – Indigenous Services Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada". In its report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts concluded that Indigenous Services Canada has not satisfactorily measured Canada's progress in closing the socio-economic gaps between on-reserve First Nations people and other Canadians; that it has not adequately reported on this progress; and that it has not made proper use of data to improve education programs.

The Committee put forward three recommendations to ensure that programs will reduce the socio-economic gaps between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians. This report is intended to respond to the second recommendation that directly pertains to the development and negotiation of regional education agreements with First Nations:

Recommendation 2 – Regarding the collection, use and sharing of education data concerning First Nations' peoples living on reserve

"That Indigenous Services Canada provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts: 1) a first progress report on regional education agreements that have been reached or are being negotiated, and on their content by 15 June 2019; 2) a second progress report on the same subject by 30 June 2020; and 3) a final report on all of the regional education agreements that have been reached and on national education targets for kindergarten to Grade 12 by 30 June 2021."

The Government tabled its response on February 27, 2019, in agreement with the PACP report and has committed to providing all reports requested by the Committee by the recommended deadlines. This first report represents the progress that has been made on reaching and negotiating regional education agreements, as requested in Recommendation 2 above.

Background

Indigenous Services Canada funds elementary and secondary education for First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve; provides post-secondary education financial support for First Nations and eligible Inuit students; and provides support to

post-secondary institutions for the design and delivery of university and college level courses that respond to the education needs of Indigenous students.

In 2016 and 2017 the Department worked closely with First Nations representatives to design and implement an engagement process on elementary and secondary education on reserve. This process culminated in the co-development of a First Nations policy proposal that was ratified by Chiefs-in-Assembly in December 2017 through the Assembly of First Nations Resolution 65/2017.

Based on this policy proposal, the Department has established a new policy framework to transform First Nations elementary and secondary education on reserve. Beginning in 2019-20, the Department is implementing a new formula-based funding approach aimed at ensuring students attending First Nations schools are supported by predictable base funding that is more directly comparable to funding in provincial education systems. This new approach aims to create a more financially stable environment for First Nations education, enabling better quality and more consistent supports for students, schools, educators, communities and First Nations education organizations – conditions that help improve student outcomes.

Transformation also includes an expanded effort to support the regional and local diversity of First Nations education approaches and implement the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education through the development and negotiation of regional education agreements. Regional education agreements do not prescribe a specific service delivery model, but are tailored to the particular local or regional context and the goals and priorities of First Nations. The development and negotiation of regional education agreements between First Nations and Indigenous Services Canada encompass four key areas:

- comprehensive funding arrangements, covering all federal support for First Nations elementary and secondary education;
- clear and defined roles and responsibilities of First Nations and First Nations education organizations, including applicable service standards;
- mutual accountability mechanisms with clear objectives, performance indicators and reporting expectations for both the Government of Canada and First Nations education system participants; and
- cooperation with provincial education systems to manage the costs associated with on-reserve students who attend provincial schools and for reporting to First Nations and the Government of Canada.

The mutual accountability component of regional education agreements supports a shift toward First Nations-led performance measurement and accountability approaches that align with the education goals and objectives of their communities. This shift recognizes that First Nations should set their own success objectives and indicators to measure the progress of their students, and be primarily responsible for managing data collection and performance reporting.

Completed Transformative Education Agreements

Even prior to the co-development of the new policy framework for First Nations elementary and secondary education, Indigenous Services Canada has worked with First Nations at the regional level to develop and implement transformative education initiatives. This includes the creation of school systems and educational authorities with interested First Nations.

British Columbia – *The British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement (July 2018)*

Description	Reporting Framework
<p>Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee signed the British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement in July 2018, renewing the Tripartite Education Framework Agreement that was signed in 2012.</p> <p>The new Agreement expands federal and provincial funding commitments for First Nations education and solidifies a tripartite governance relationship aimed at addressing the unique needs of First Nations students in British Columbia.</p> <p>From a results perspective, the Agreement reinforces a First Nations-led performance measurement and accountability framework that includes specific measures for reading, writing and numeracy, language and culture supports at First Nations schools, as well as student progress in the context of Individual Education Plans.</p> <p>The First Nations Education Steering Committee will provide annual public reporting to First Nations communities that is also accessible to Indigenous Services Canada.</p> <p>The Agreement also supports joint efforts to monitor student achievement data in order to inform policy and practice in the interest of improving student outcomes.</p>	<p>The First Nations Education Steering Committee is committed to collect, aggregate, and provide data on the following performance indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of students who meet or exceed grade level expectation for reading for grades K5-7, writing for grades 2-7, and numeracy for grades K5-7; • student attendance rate of school-age students; • teacher/student ratio; • student/computer ratio; • level of connectivity; and • administration of standard learning assessments. <p>The First Nations Education Steering Committee is also committed to collect, aggregate and provide data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of First Nation students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in place; • number of First Nations Students who are meeting the goals of their IEP; • number of First Nation students receiving Language and Culture instruction; • number of hours of instruction in language provided to First Nation students; and • number of hours of instruction in culture provided to First Nation students. <p>Under the Agreement, each participating First Nation reports to the Department directly on its year-over-year nominal roll student count.</p>

Alberta – The Maskwacis Education School Commission (March 2018)

Description	Reporting Framework
<p>Established in March 2018, the Maskwacis Education School Commission is a First Nations-led education authority that provides aggregated service delivery to four Cree communities in Alberta.</p> <p>Similar to the School System in Manitoba, the Maskwacis Education School Commission produces an annual report after every school year that is provided to its participating communities as well as Indigenous Services Canada.</p> <p>Overall, the School Commission reports on a range of education performance measures, including student attendance and retention, percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of Alberta standards for reading, writing and numeracy, and graduation/school completion rates.</p>	<p>Under the agreement, the Maskwacis Education School Commission is committed to report on the following performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of Alberta standards for reading, writing and numeracy; • student attendance, retention, credit attainment, graduation and school completion rates; • annual education staff information form, teacher and student ratio and teacher credentials; • level of IT connectivity for each school; and • 5-year school Assessment Reports. <p>Under the School Commission Agreement each participating First Nation reports to the Department directly on its year-over-year nominal roll student count.</p>

Alberta – Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council Education Authority (March 2019)

Description	Reporting Framework
<p>In March 2019, Indigenous Services and the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council successfully negotiated an agreement to create the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council Education Authority.</p> <p>This new Education Authority is providing aggregated service delivery to five communities in Alberta and has modeled its reporting and accountability structures after those used by the Maskwacis Education School Commission.</p> <p>The Education Authority will account for the percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of Alberta standards for reading, writing and numeracy as well as student attendance, retention, credit attainment and graduation/school completion rates.</p> <p>The Education Authority is committed to producing an annual report to its participating communities, which will also be provided to Indigenous Services Canada.</p>	<p>Under the agreement, the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council Education Authority is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create, and make public, a multi-year planning document that describes student performance measure benchmarks of the organization; • develop appropriate approaches to student evaluation and performance measures in order to report on progress to participating First Nations through an annual community report. The community report is to include, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the percentage of students who meet or exceed Government of Alberta standards for reading, writing, and numeracy; and ○ student attendance, retention, credit attainment, graduation and school completion rates. <p>Under the Education Authority Agreement each participating First Nation reports to the Department directly on its year-over-year nominal roll student count.</p>

Manitoba – The Manitoba First Nations School System (July 2017)

Description	Reporting Framework
<p>Established in July 2017, the Manitoba First Nations School System is a First Nations-led education authority. Similar to a school board or school division, it provides aggregated education services to ten participating First Nations and generates economies of scale in terms of procurement, service delivery and aggregated data collection and reporting.</p> <p>Every school year, the School System produces an annual performance report for its participating communities, which is also provided to Indigenous Services Canada in alignment with the School System’s funding agreement.</p> <p>Overall, the School System tracks and reports on various performance measures, including student attendance and retention, progress in reading, writing and numeracy, and graduation/school completion rates.</p>	<p>The Manitoba First Nations School System is committed to report on the following performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of students who meet or exceed provincial standards for reading, writing and numeracy (grades 3, 7, 8 & 12); • student attendance, retention, credit attainment, and graduation/school completion rates; • annual education staff information form, teacher/student ratio and teacher credentials; • level of IT connectivity; and • school assessments reports. <p>Under the Agreement each participating First Nation reports to the Department directly on its year-over-year nominal roll student count.</p>

Regional Education Agreements Under Development

Indigenous Services Canada is presently developing and negotiating other regional education agreements with other First Nations and First Nations education organizations. Negotiations with the following partners are well advanced and nearing completion:

- Sunchild First Nation (Alberta);
- Athabasca Dene First Nation (Alberta);
- Lac La Ronge Indian Band (Saskatchewan); and
- Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (Saskatchewan).

The Department is also supporting exploratory discussions with fifteen other First Nations and First Nations education organizations in Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

Indigenous Services Canada will be in a position to report in greater detail on these evolving regional education agreements when it submits the next progress report for the period of April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020.