



OFFICE OF THE GRAND CHIEF

DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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Robert R McLeod, Premier
Government of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320,
Yellowknife, NT
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November 8, 2018

Dear Premier McLeod,

**Re: Report of the Auditor General of Canada – Child and Family Services-
Department of Health and Social Services**

I'm writing to express my disappointment and deep concern regarding the Report of the Auditor General of Canada tabled in the Northwest Territories Legislature, October 23, 2018. I understand, there exist serious deficiencies in the Department of Health and Social Services' delivery of child and family services in the Territories, some deficiencies worse today, than a review conducted four (4) years ago. I understand a thousand children per year, the majority of whom are indigenous, are at risk because of these deficiencies. This deplorable situation needs to be immediately rectified.

This report indicates to me that, adherence to accountability measures, standards and procedures as well as strategic leadership and oversight are lacking in this department. Although the department should be focusing on the people it serves, instead seems to be concerned with organizational changes such as creating large Health and Social Services Authorities. What is the use of having the Boards and Wellness Committees if there is no connection to the people they work for or serve? The current organizational structure looks to be very top heavy, a system like this means less resources and supports to the front line. Accountability in a system like this becomes diminished throughout the organization with less services and supports to clients, this is captured in the Auditor General's report.

Over the years, the composition of the Department of Health and Social Services has changed. What percentage of staff are northerners? As educational qualifications are raised to the master's level, more staff seem to be recruited from the south and less of our people are staying with the department. We need a Social Work Program that is made in the north for the north, producing graduates that are knowledgeable about indigenous world view, values and beliefs.

Dehcho First Nations would like to be involved in some capacity to rebuild a responsive, supportive family program that includes indigenous values and beliefs and one that is focused on prevention not intervention. Our First Nations' history highlights disenfranchisement and disempowerment. Therefore, we would like to see a First Nation led dialogue to support visioning, needs assessment and planning, an integrated holistic policy authority and funding for innovative service delivery and ideas.

We trust the GNWT is open to partnerships and input from the very people it serves. I look forward to your response

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gladys Norwegian".

Grand Chief Gladys Norwegian

Cc: Denendeh Chiefs

Glen Abernethy, Minister, GNWT
Health & Social Services