

ECDC Deputation: EC8.4

Good Day, my name is Jeffrey Schiffer and I am the Executive Director at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Prior to this role I served as the Indigenous Affairs Consultant for the City of Toronto, and played a small part in supporting the launch of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs Office. I regret that I am not able to make this deputation in person, and am thankful for the opportunity to do so in writing.

I would like to provide comments on EC8.4, the report for action titled "Relationships with Toronto's Community-based Not-for-Profit Sector: 2018-2019 Update." This report recommends that Council adopt further commitments to strengthen the City's relationship with Indigenous led not-for-profits. It emphasizes the need for an explicit commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples that offers concrete opportunities to enhance engagement and further fund the priorities of Indigenous not-for-profits. These recommendations are commendable, and represent consistent efforts by so many in the Toronto Public Service to move our City's reconciliation portfolio forward in clear and measurable ways.

The report's section titled "Equity Impact" refers to both "equity seeking groups and Indigenous peoples." I use the word Aboriginal rather than Indigenous in this deputation because it is a legal term in the Canadian constitution that refers to three constitutionally protected Indigenous peoples in Canada: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. It should be noted that Aboriginal peoples should never be conflated in discussions about equity-seeking groups, as their constitutionally protected status and inherent right to self-determination makes them distinct in important ways. The City should strive to support both Aboriginal and equity seeking groups, but must take different approaches in doing so.

Ontario is the most populous province or territory when it comes to Aboriginal peoples. The 2016 census recorded 375,000 Aboriginal people in Ontario, 20% of whom reside in the City of Toronto. The Aboriginal population of Toronto is one of the oldest, largest and most diverse urban Aboriginal populations in Canada. It is a community that has been building urban Aboriginal organizations since the 1950s.

The Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples outlined in this report is commendable. Speaking from the perspective of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST), I would suggest that the recommendations go further to achieve innovation by means of recognizing the importance of land for Aboriginal people.

Over the last 30 years our organization has worked to reclaim space for Aboriginal peoples in Canada's largest urban centre. Today NCFST has 285 staff working across 18 service locations who deliver 101 programs to 7,000 unique community members annually. The transformative work our agency achieves is greatly supported by the fact that we own 11 of the 18 properties we deliver services in. Owning these properties allows us to offer innovative, sustainable and transformative services to the community grounded in culture. We can sing and drum as loud

as we want, smudge everywhere, hold ceremony at any time, and build in unique features like our lodge and green roof at our main site at 30 College St.

This is not the norm for Aboriginal organizations in Toronto. Supporting Indigenous not-for-profits to acquire their own property is the most effective way to affirm the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. It creates sustainable organizations equipped to implement the TRC's calls to action, and the City's Commitment to the Aboriginal community of Toronto. I respectfully recommend that the Economic and Community Development Committee consider the development of mechanisms for the City to support Indigenous not-for-profits to acquire property, and to recommend these processes to City Council.

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