

Today's News - Thursday, November 23, 2017

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Premier Kathleen Wynne and Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day released this joint statement following the fourth annual Chiefs of Ontario Leaders in the Legislature event in Toronto:

“For the past three days, over 25 Provincial Cabinet Members and First Nations Chiefs from across the province met to discuss our shared interests, the challenges we face and the collaborative steps we are taking to move forward on our journey toward reconciliation. Generations of oppression and abuse have created systemic inequality for First Nations people. These are complicated, multifaceted issues — but by actively coming together to create more opportunities and more fairness, we are addressing them. Events like the Leaders in the Legislature are part of an ongoing process to rebuild — or, in some cases, build for the very first time — strong partnerships based on mutual trust, respect and fairness between Ontario and First Nations communities. The productive conversations at this year’s forum surrounded three overarching themes: safe communities and cannabis; community well-being and lifelong learning; and environment, energy and infrastructure. We discussed Ontario’s plans for the largest policing transformation in a generation, focusing on community safety and well-being. This includes the opportunity for First Nations communities to establish their own police service boards under provincial policing legislation, better enabling the provision of culturally responsive practices for the communities they serve. Acknowledging the unique challenges for Ontario and the Chiefs of Ontario, we shared our thoughts on the safe and sensible regulation of the use and distribution of recreational cannabis. This is an issue that is closely related to building healthy and safe communities, whether it’s addressing concerns about health impacts on communities or exploring how First Nations communities could participate in retail and distribution. We agreed that all parties, including Canada, have much more work to do with First Nations immediately and into the future, engaging and consulting First Nations on implementation of cannabis programming. And we talked about our plans to develop resources responsibly and equitably as partners. We share the desire to develop projects together in a way that uses traditional knowledge to protect land and water for future generations, and to make progress on negotiating resource revenue sharing arrangements for forestry and mining. We only have to think about the impacts that historical mercury discharges into the English and Wabigoon Rivers have had on Indigenous Communities to understand why we need to be vigilant about protecting the environment and working in partnership with First Nations. As an example of Leaders in the Legislature activities, the presentation of a four corner table process highlighted the value in bringing together all four orders of government — First Nations, municipalities, the province and the federal government — in order to promote community safety and eliminate the racism and violence encountered by far too many First

Nations people in urban areas. In the weeks and months to come, there will be more four corner table national engagements, with a report to be presented in July 2018 at the Assembly of First Nations' Annual General Assembly in Vancouver. The work to rebuild trust and community is ongoing and sometimes difficult, but the progress we are making is real. We still have so much to do in order to bring about real and lasting change for this generation, our children and our grandchildren. Today, we recommit to taking the necessary steps to strengthen our government-to-government relationship and, most importantly, create more fairness and opportunities for First Nations communities across Ontario."

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Also Today:

- Ontario is taking a historic step in recognizing the unique role of Indigenous Institutes have in the province's postsecondary education system with the introduction of new legislation that, if passed, would transfer key functions and oversight to Indigenous people. Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, were joined by the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, chiefs, leaders of Indigenous Institutes and students from across the province in Toronto today to mark this important step on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The legislation, if passed, would recognize Indigenous Institutes as a unique and complementary pillar of Ontario's postsecondary education system and support the independence and sustainability of the institutes in Ontario's system. It is also another important step on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The changes would create a framework for ongoing collaboration between Ontario and Indigenous Institutes and would support a strong, independent Indigenous Institutes sector, overseen by an Indigenous controlled and governed council. The council would provide quality assurance for postsecondary diplomas, certificates and degree programs offered by Indigenous Institutes. The proposed legislation is the result of joint policy co-creation between the Indigenous Institutes, represented by the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, and the government. Indigenous Institutes and Ontario are committed to continue working in the spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect to enhance educational opportunities for Indigenous students, and to support their success in Ontario's highly skilled workforce.

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Our government's plan to build a stronger, healthier Ontario includes historic new investments in health care, including free medications for everyone 24 and under through OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare, providing free tuition to over 210,000 students and on-the-job learning opportunities to help land a great job, helping 100,000 kids access quality, licensed child care and making it more affordable for families, making everyday life more affordable by reducing electricity costs by 25 per cent on average through our Fair Hydro Plan, and taking action to

make housing more affordable for homebuyers and renters through our Fair Housing Plan.