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POSITION STATEMENT

TO: First Nations-in-Assembly

FROM: First Nation Leadership in Ontario

RE: AFN Draft Resolution 01 - Unilateral Education Programming Decisions by Indigenous Services Canada

First Nations in Ontario cannot support the AFN draft resolution #01 titled Unilateral Education Programming Decisions by Indigenous Services Canada. Despite numerous attempts to reconcile differences we conclude that this resolution cannot be amended to accommodate the position of First Nations in Ontario.

First Nations in Ontario agree that Canada must make every effort to align programs and funding with the recommendations of First Nation rights holders and refrain from making unilateral decisions. However, the AFN Chiefs Committee on Education is **not** the sole voice of First Nations rights holders for all of Canada. First Nations in Ontario no longer participate at the AFN committees on education because the Chiefs Committee on Education has made recommendations to Canada that do not respect our position in Ontario. Our position is to protect the educational supports we have built for our learners.

First Nations in Ontario agree that any **new** funding to support First Nations education must be regionally allocated using an equitable funding methodology that is collaboratively developed. However, our collective efforts should not be wasted on internal disputes over under-funded federal programs. We must work together to advocate for the adequate, sustainable and predictable funding that meets the needs of our learners. It is not our role to fix the mess that Canada has made in education funding. However, it is our role to hold Canada to its commitment and obligations to us through Section 35, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA) passed in 2021. That is where we should be focusing our efforts.

We disagree with the preference for the simplistic base plus per capita regional allocation methodology because it does not adequately serve the diversity of needs within the Ontario region – specifically the needs of remote and fly-in communities and the fact that most of our learners attend First Nation schools and require more funding support than those attending provincially run schools.

The application of the simplistic base plus per capita regional allocation methodology for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program resulted in a 32% loss in funding for the well-

established 9 First Nation post-secondary institutes in Ontario. This resulted in a loss in staffing and programming to support our learners. Similarly, had ISC followed the AFN recommendation to move all components of the Education Partnerships Program to base plus per capita funding the longstanding partnerships established in Ontario would have experienced a 35% loss in funding.

In order to protect the programming and supports we have taken decades to build, we collectively agree we cannot support this resolution as written. Unfortunately national consensus cannot be built on this resolution.

