



## **MI'KMAQ AND WOLASTOQEY CHIEFS CONDEMN CHANGES TO JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE:**

**March 25, 2025** – Last month, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) released an “Operational Bulletin” announcing and outlining operational changes to the Jordan’s Principle Initiative. Regional Chief Joanna Bernard called an Emergency Meeting with Mi’kmaq and Wolastoqey Chiefs. These changes raise serious concerns about the commitment and implementation of Jordan’s Principle for First Nations children. The changes also highlight ongoing systemic discrimination that First Nations children continue to face despite legal obligations under Canadian law.

“Indigenous children with special health, disability, and learning needs should be a priority. Delays, denials and funding cuts to service delivery to our children by Canada is NOT true reconciliation,” Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Joanna Bernard said.

Jordan’s Principle was created to ensure that no child is denied access to the services they need because of their First Nations status. By making unilateral decisions, there will be devastating impacts on First Nations children and families; Canada is ultimately failing its moral and legal obligations. ISC’s recent decision will also exacerbate an already overwhelming 135,000 recorded backlog of requests for crucial health, education, and social services.

“First Nations Peoples are once again in a situation where the Federal government is making important decisions about our own well-being without First Nation input, this time it is our children who will be suffering because of it,” said Wolastoqey Chief Ross Perley of Tobique First Nation. “Indigenous children with special health, disability and learning needs should be a priority. Delays, denials and cuts to service delivery for our children by Canada is not reconciliation.”

“Canada’s fiscal management is not the responsibility of First Nations children, and they should not suffer because of Canada’s mismanagement. The future of First Nations children should not be sacrificed because of budgetary mismanagement and constraints. ISC and Canada must be held accountable for their actions,” said Mi’kmaq Chief George Ginnish of Natoaganeg First Nation.

“Jordan’s Principle was created to prevent situations where First Nations children are being denied service from government agencies who have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure their needs are being met, but here we have the very body that was created for this sole purpose now denying children services,” said Mi’kmaq Chief Rebecca Knockwood of Fort Folly First Nation.

The Mi’kmaq and Wolastoqey Chiefs of New Brunswick urge ISC to withdraw this bulletin and mediate these issues based on a good faith and equal approach. It is crucial that Canada uphold its commitment to Jordan’s Principle so that First Nations children have the access to the services they need without delay or denial, regardless of jurisdictional disputes or funding responsibilities between federal and provincial/territorial governments. The Chiefs stand firmly against ISC’s one-sided decisions, which will have negative and long-lasting impacts to First Nations children and families.

“Our children are the future of our Nations. We must rise to change the systems that have been designed to suppress our people, so that they may thrive, flourish, and build our Nations for generations to come,” said Wolastoqey Chief Alan Polchies Jr. of St. Mary’s First Nation.

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