

Media Advisory

Our position on a tax break incentive for Aboriginal youth who complete high school

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- It's good news that the Canadian School Boards Association is looking for solutions to advance the retention of Aboriginal students. We applaud that the organization is taking its voice to a national stage and asking for solutions to help keep Aboriginal youth in school.
- The council believes that the tax incentive proposed by the Canadian School Boards Association will do little to help keep Aboriginal people in school.
- Aboriginal education will advance if the systemic issues that cause the barriers to education are addressed on a long-term basis (literacy, poverty, essential skills, role models and a revolving door of teachers on Canada's reserves).
- The funds from a tax incentive strategy should be redirected to the front end. Aboriginal people have the highest rate of return to education. Investments in education and training that are linked to real jobs will advance the success rate of Aboriginal students on a national basis. This is a good investment of tax payer dollars.
- Incentives and investments must encourage Aboriginal people to pursue post-secondary education. Jobs today require college, trades and university training. An unintended consequence of the tax incentive after high school is that Aboriginal people discontinue their educational pursuits.
- Solutions to Aboriginal education need to benefit the entire aboriginal community. We cannot create patch work solutions. We need to break the chain of dependency and help Aboriginal youth become independent workers. We need to help Aboriginal youth learn to deal with the realities of the workplace. We need to help them to budget and work within the mainstream workforce toward independence and better living conditions. The benefit of education is an engaging career.
- Alternatives to tax incentives could include:
 - greater investment in the K-12 system to attract talented teachers and to provide enhanced educational aids such as e-learning to improve the quality of education
 - implementing career education into the schools and instilling in youth the desire to enter the world of work
 - investment in areas (i.e., recreation, physical education, wellness) to address the growing obesity and diabetic problems facing many Aboriginal youth.
- Businesses and the government need to invest in literacy, social and education programs that ensure Aboriginal people have the food and tools they need to learn, the mentorship they need to succeed, and the opportunities they need to obtain secondary education and employment. Aboriginal people must be positioned as a solution to many of Canada's skill shortages and this requires an enormous shift in attitude among Canadian employers.
- We need to give Aboriginal people a reason to believe in themselves and their dream job. Reason to believe that they too can enjoy the lifestyle most Canadians take for granted every day. Aboriginal people have a long tradition of work and this work ethic must be reinforced. We also need to give employers a reason to believe in the Aboriginal workforce, and to this end, we are seeing much success.

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