

Speaking Notes
Chief Charles Weaselhead
March 13, 2008
Statistics Canada – Strength in Numbers

- Since it seems to be the theme for the day's conference, instead of getting into politics, I'll be starting with a few statistics:
- On Reserve First Nation Population has been growing, on average by about 1.6% per year over the 1996/97 to 2005/06 fiscal year.
- Over the same period, Financial Transfers to First Nations in Canada have increased by 2.39%.
- In the province of Alberta over the same period, inflation was measured at 2.44%.
- If you Subtract Inflation and Population Growth from the Average increase in funding, the result is a Real Per Capita funding loss of 1.65%.
- As noted by this morning's presenters, First Nations' communities have a very young population. This has a definite programming impact, and an expensive one.
- Inflation in specific government sectors, particularly wage inflation in Education, and Operational Maintenance of schools and other facilities are way above the general inflation trend.
- With continued funding shortfall impacts continuing to strain On-Reserve education, it is reasonable to expect continued poor outcomes in High School attainment, employment, and income.
- The 2006 highschool completion data is no surprise. Still about 62% of young adults on Reserve have yet to obtain a high school diploma. This places First Nations' outcomes at the same level of highschool completion as other Canadians in the year 1981.
- I would suggest that this is a direct result of the current funding shortfall.

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- Albert Einstein was once asked, “What is the most powerful force in the universe?” After thinking about it for a few moments he answered: “Compound Interest.”
- He was right. The compound effects of yearly shortfalls, has a dramatic effect over time.
- Over 20 years, at a 1.65% funding shortfall, the net result is a greater than 35% funding shortfall in the current year, and an accumulated debt owed to each First Nation of 3.5 times their current budget, plus interest. If you wonder why so many of our First Nation’s governments are in co-management, third party management, or outright receivership – this may be a clue.
- Now, all of these conclusions are based on the initial assumption that Funding to First Nations in 1996/97 was fair in the first place. Judging by outcomes from back then, and now, we know this is not the case.
- It is not just a fiduciary obligation to provide equitable funding to First Nations. The Crown is obligated to ensure that these funding arrangements have an end result of creating an Equitable Quality of Life.
- Now I want you to consider the macro-economic model:
- \$633,000,000 was the total expenditure of the DIAND Alberta Region in 2004/2005, serving a total on-Reserve population of First Nations 58,778.
- The Alberta Region was funded \$10,766 dollars per capita of on-Reserve members, and transfers to First Nations totalled \$10,410 per capita of on-Reserve Members the region paid for its administrative overhead of \$21,000,000.

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- Given the substantial obligation of First Nations to members living off-Reserve, (primarily through job training and post secondary funding), even fewer benefits than \$10,410 per capita are being delivered on individuals on Reserve lands.
- By comparison, all levels of government within the borders of Alberta collected and redistributed \$15,383 per capita in the 2004/2005 fiscal year.
- This verifies the funding shortfall that has occurred slowly over time. The current fiscal disparity is about 35%.
- If this funding trend continues into the future, we can generally expect continued negative outcomes.
- It was noted that, regardless of the place of origin or family history, highschool completion rates have a much greater effect on employment and income than almost any other indicator.
- The benefits of making the appropriate investments into First Nations' communities are clear. The Centre for the Study of Living Standards released a very interesting report regarding this critical highschool completion indicator, and its link to employment, income and productivity.
- I will cite their work directly as follows:
- In 2017, using the medium growth projection for Aboriginal and the General population, the Aboriginal population is projected to make up 4.0 per cent of the Canadian population.
- Aboriginal Canadians are projected to account for 29.8 per cent of the annual natural population increase (births minus deaths) in Canada over the 2011-2017 period.
- The potential contribution of Aboriginal Canadians to the total growth of the labour force between 2001 and 2017 is projected to be up to 7.4 per cent.

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- If Aboriginal Canadians were, by 2017, able to increase their level of educational attainment to the level of non-Aboriginal Canadians in 2001, the average annual GDP growth rate in Canada would be up to 0.036 percentage point higher, or an additional cumulative \$71 billion (2001 dollars) over the 2001-2017 period.
- This concludes the quote from the Centre for the Study of Living Standards.
- For the federal crown to continue in the current funding mode is not just an abrogation of the Royal Proclamation, Treaties, the Constitution of Canada, Aboriginal Right, and more basic human rights, it is an enormous opportunity wasted for all Canadians.