

SPEAKING NOTES FOR PRESS CONFERENCE FOR
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S
2009 BOOK APPEAL

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Media Studio

Queen's Park

Good Afternoon,

I am here today to tell you about an important initiative I have launched to collect brand new books for aboriginal children in the fly-in First Nation communities in the north of our province.

I am very pleased to be joined by Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation who I am going to ask to tell you more about the fly-in First Nation communities.

So, what is the book drive all about?

Only **brand new** books for youth up to age 14 will be collected, with the intention of refreshing libraries in these communities with the same choice of current titles and contemporary books that young people in other corners of the province will be relishing during the summer.

How can people contribute?

As in the past, new books can be dropped off at any Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment throughout the province and, within Toronto, at any Toronto Police Service division.

And, Land Forces Central Area (Department of National Defence) will help pack, sort and transport books.

The academic and education community are, once again, joining us in getting the word out to school principals, teachers, board administrators, directors of education, students and their parents about the opportunity to contribute a new book and make a difference.

I am grateful to the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the Ontario Principals' Council, The Catholic Principals's Council of Ontario for ensuring the message is out there in the education community.

What are the timelines?

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S ABORIGINAL *SUMMER*

READING BOOK DRIVE will last until Sunday, June 21st, the first day of summer and National Aboriginal Day.

And, perhaps, most importantly, why are we doing it?

As I stated in my installation speech, I remain committed to the Aboriginal Literacy programs initiated by my predecessor, the Honourable James K. Bartleman who worked with Grand Chief Stan Beardy to establish libraries where none existed, twinned aboriginal and non-aboriginal schools, established summer reading camps and implemented an extended reading program, all of which are ongoing.

By adding new books to this mix, children in the fly-in

communities will have a chance to be as excited as others

about ideas they explore when they read what their contemporaries other parts of the province are reading, about characters and situations in novels that might seem improbable but which inspire them nonetheless and about biographies that tell about real life role models who have faced adversity and who have overcome.

Without books, children cannot truly become literate.

Without books, they cannot dream great dreams, learn about the world outside their own small community, or imagine their place in that world.

And, all of this is bound to help children in fly-ins who do not have access to the same educational, economic, social, health, goods, services or other amenities as others in other parts of the province.

As I am sure the Chief will tell you himself, the socio-economic conditions in these communities are dire. The cost of living is very high and the income level is low.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that young people in these remote communities are, on average, four to five years behind in reading and literacy skills.

Like Mr. Bartleman before me, I believe giving a child the opportunity to read at a very early age is one of the most precious gifts a child can be given.

I am committed to the Aboriginal Youth Literacy Program because at its heart it is, in fact, a program of ACCESSIBILITY, where accessibility is defined as that which enables people to fulfill their potential.

As a former education reporter and writer, I understand the importance of instilling in children a love of reading.

I cannot over-stress how important it is for children to have access to books, other than school text books, if they are to thrive.

Those of us who live in southern Ontario take the availability of public libraries and book stores in every town and city for granted. For First Nations communities, living in isolated stretches of Northern Ontario there are no book stores or public libraries and books are a luxury.

Ontarians have wholeheartedly embraced the book drives and responded generously in the past. The book drives have become synonymous with the Lieutenant Governor's Office in Ontario.

I am grateful to DK Publishing who has already made a commitment to donate 2,000 books, with a value of \$30,000. That will get us well on our way towards meeting and, hopefully surpassing, the 40,000 brand new books we collected in our 2008 book drive.

The compassionate response by Ontarians to previous book appeals has had wonderful results. Bridges have been built between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. The hopes and dreams of countless aboriginal children have been nurtured, not just by the books themselves, but also by the knowledge that they have not been forgotten, that people in other parts of the province care about them.

I, therefore, appeal to Ontarians of all ages that while they are out preparing for the pleasant, fun-filled summer season ahead, that they consider buying a children's book or two and drop it off to an OPP detachment across Ontario or to a Toronto Police Service Division throughout the Greater Toronto Area.

I am confident that, once again, Ontarians will open their hearts and contribute to this great cause.

A number of representatives from our partner organizations are present here today and if anyone is interested in knowing who they are, I would direct to Peter Aylan-Parker who can assist in that regard.

And now, it is my pleasure to call on Grand Chief Stan Beardy, the Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

Thank you.