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For Immediate Release

### **Opposed to BC Liberal Government Aboriginal Child Welfare Legislation**

The leaders of the Sto:lo Tribal Council (STC) sent a hard-hitting letter to Tom Christensen, Minister of Children & Family Development (MCFD), telling him to shelve a plan to introduce legislation legitimizing the operation of a string of Aboriginal Child Welfare Authorities across B.C. The STC leaders say that both the proposed legislation and the Regional Authorities were ideas cooked-up behind closed doors with a select handful of paid professional advisors and then suddenly sprung on the B.C. Aboriginal community this week.

“The Authorities, like the Fraser Region Aboriginal Authority based in Abbotsford, are nothing more than a pale imitation of the MCFD. Victoria deliberately pursued a slash and burn policy on the Ministry budget between 2001 and 2004. The MCFD budget is not yet fully restored and the newly appointed Child & Youth Officer for B.C., Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, has only been on the job a short while. It makes no sense to forge ahead with the Regional Authorities until Ministry budgets are strengthened and greater guidance from Ms. Turpel-Lafond becomes available”, said Grand Chief Doug Kelly of the Sto:lo Tribal Council.

The STC Tribal Chief for Child & Family Services, Tyrone McNeil, said “The Minister is wrong to pursue his proposed legislation. His plan to do so is strongly opposed by B.C.’s aboriginal community. Neither the legislation nor the Authorities have our good house keeping seal of approval. Turning over the job of child protection to under funded and hastily cobbled together Regional Authorities and aboriginal agencies is recipe for failure and more heartache in the aboriginal community. I know the majority of First Nation, the Métis and urban organizations are four square behind our opposition to the legislation and the Authority here in the Fraser Valley.

“Let’s be perfectly clear on this issue, we are calling on Minister Tom Christensen to shelve the proposed legislation and carry-out proper consultation with us over aboriginal child protection in B.C. before the Authorities are legitimized by legislation”, said McNeil.

For more information, please call Grand Chief Doug Kelly at 604-798-1436 or Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil at 604 798-1509.