



JOHN FRASER, MPP/DÉPUTÉ

Ottawa South / Ottawa-sud

May 14, 2020

Dear Minister Elliott & Minister Smith,

I am writing on behalf of the Best Start Program, an initiative led by Health Nexus, a health promotion organization providing bilingual communication and education resources for expectant and new parents as well as vulnerable communities across the province.

Best Start has been providing support, evidence-informed resources and regular communications to 150,000 expectant and new parents annually for 25 years, targeted to those living in Northern, Francophone and Indigenous communities in Ontario.

Cuts to Best Start funding ended as of March 31, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures to stop the spread of the virus has added additional physical and mental stress to new families. Health Nexus has seen a dramatic rise in the use of their online resources while in physical distancing measures have been in place. The cancellation of Francophone and Indigenous health resources is particularly troubling given existing barriers to information and services.

Health Nexus is requesting \$1 million in emergency funding to continue the Best Start program in 2020-21.

It is my understanding that there has been some discussion between Health Nexus, MOH and MCCSS of plans to align maternal and child health services under the MOH, however these details have yet to be determined.

Understanding that this is a difficult time for everyone in the province, especially expectant and new parents, I support Health Nexus' request and encourage MOH and MCSS to work with the organization to ensure the continuation of these important resources.

Sincerely,

John Fraser
MPP, Ottawa South