

Advocacy Update - Thunder Bay Family Network - April 8th, 2019

Saturday afternoon Sharon Bak, President of Thunder Bay Family Network (TBFN), met with local OPSEU reps and family members to solidify plans for advocacy and fundraising efforts in the Northwest related to changes in autism services. We can confirm that on April 18th at 4pm a kick off event will occur at the OPSEU building located at 326 Memorial Avenue in Thunder Bay. We encourage all families affected by these changes to attend. Starting April 23rd a road show will begin and this group will be holding events in Fort Frances (April 23), Kenora (April 24), and Dryden (April 25) at Minister Rickford's constituency offices. A wrap up event will held in Thunder Bay on April 26. Times to be announced.

What we need now is for families to share their stories with us in written form and these will be presented to our local MPPs and profiled on our website and Facebook page. TBFN will respect privacy if a family does not wish to have their names publicized online. We also need as many families as possible to request meetings with Minister Rickford during this time in all locations. Please share this information with others and let's spread the message across the Northwest. Fundraising through bake sales will occur at each event with all proceeds going to TBFN and used to continue to support all families who have a loved one with a developmental disability.

We continue to advocate for face to face consultation with families in the Northwest for all matters related to developmental services. Minister MacLeod has not yet responded to our letter requesting information on the plan for remote/rural/First Nations families, which she referenced in her original announcement.

This is a time for action and for all families to raise their voices. We are normally a quiet bunch up here but we can no longer sit back and allow decisions to be made without true consultation in the North. Together we can have an impact and we ask for your support in sending a strong, northern message to the government.

Our planned hashtags for this campaign will be #togethertowin (OPSEU), #familiesknowbest, and #truenorthstrong Even if you can't be with us on these days, we encourage you to engage on social media and show our elected officials that our northern families matter. TBFN has a Facebook page and is also on Twitter (@TBFamilyNetwork).

We are grateful for the support of our local MPPs (Judith Monteith-Farrell and Michael Gravelle), OPSEU, and the Northern Ontario Autism Alliance. But most of all we are indebted to the many families who have bravely reached out to engage with us, share their stories, and participate in the campaign. This initiative must be led by families and we will support you all the way!!

For all questions or media inquiries, please email sharon@tbfn.ca