



July 28, 2016

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

I am writing to you today regarding your government's approach to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Specifically, I am seeking clarification of the government's current plans for implementing the *Declaration* and am offering to engage in a dialogue on developing options for consideration by Canada and First Nations.

First Nations were elated when your government elaborated on your previous commitments by offering its unqualified support for the *Declaration* at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) felt the statement was constructive when read as a whole, particularly the government's commitment to fully adopt and implement the *Declaration* in partnership with First Nations.

The concept of partnership is especially important. It means that no decisions on how best to adopt and implement the *Declaration* are made without the full and effective participation of First Nations. All options should be considered by First Nations and Canada together, as full partners.

The AFN had been eagerly anticipating working with the government on a comprehensive strategy to implement the *Declaration*, including development of a national action plan, consistent with Operative Paragraph 8 of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document.

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Your government has committed to “implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), starting with the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*”. TRC Call to Action #43 specifically calls on the federal government to “fully adopt and implement” the *UN Declaration* as “the framework for reconciliation”, and Call to Action #44 calls on the government of Canada to develop a national action plan to achieve the goals of the *Declaration*.

Further, the government is aware that First Nations have consistently called for legislation as one of a range of tools to implement the *Declaration*. This call was expressed most recently by a resolution of the Chiefs-in-Assembly passed at our Annual General Assembly. The call of First Nations for a legislative option is reasonable and consistent with the government’s mandate and with the Calls to Action of the TRC. Contrary to media reports, a legislative option does not suggest immediately codifying the entire *Declaration* into Canadian law.

It is our belief that the best path forward is one of respectful dialogue. First Nations and the Crown should discuss best approaches for implementing the *Declaration*.

The AFN strongly recommends that First Nations representatives and Crown delegates work together over the next few weeks to jointly propose ideas, which can serve all of our purposes. Dialogue and informed analysis will reveal that many of the proposals surrounding implementation are not mutually exclusive, but rather are mutually reinforcing.

Sincerely,



Perry Bellegarde
National Chief