



September 20, 2017

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
OTTAWA ON K1A 0H8

Dear Minister:

Thank you again for attending the Annual General Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in Regina this summer and sharing your thoughtful address and valuable time. As always, your presence and leadership were much appreciated. We were very pleased to hear you confirm again the need for a legislative framework to support implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) in your address to Chiefs-in-Assembly.

I look forward to working together on the jointly identified priority to “work in partnership on measures to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including co-development of a national action plan and discussion of proposals for a federal legislative framework on implementation” (joint commitment in the AFN-Canada MOU on Joint Priorities). This commitment is consistent with the August 2017 report on Canada by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well as the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

There is significant support among First Nations across the country for an approach that is at least as strong as MP Romeo Saganash’s Private Members Bill C-262; and there is also significant support among non-Indigenous Canadians. I also recall very vividly the vote in the House of Commons in 2015 on the predecessor Bill, C-641 and I was heartened by the strong non-partisan support for that Bill.

.../2

Support for the Declaration continues to grow throughout Canada and at all levels. In August 2017, the City of Montreal endorsed this human rights instrument without qualification. Also, in collaboration with First Nations, the new BC government is committed to adopting the Declaration. I believe there is a broad consensus that your government should develop a Bill in partnership with Indigenous peoples that would build on Bill C-262.

In addition, Bill C-262 will come up for second reading this fall. In order to jointly develop a suitable government Bill while building trust and consensus among First Nations, I strongly encourage the government to support C-262 at second reading and allow it to move to the committee process. Work and discussions on the content of a government Bill that goes beyond Bill C-262 can proceed and hopefully reach a successful conclusion.

In all of this, we encourage you to work in partnership with First Nations on an approach to a legislative framework that will support the full and meaningful implementation of the Declaration. We need a principled approach that is consistent with the minimum standards of the Declaration and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Working together, I believe we can achieve strong results.

Sincerely,


Perry Bellegarde
National Chief

c.c.: AFN Executive Committee