



June 4, 2018

Dear Senator:

The Assembly of First Nations calls on you to support Private Members Bill C-262 – *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in its current form. Bill C-262 represents a clear opportunity for Parliament to act on its international human rights obligations and commitments in a simple and pragmatic way.

Bill C-262 provides a legislative framework to plan, support and advance implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)*. The purpose of this Bill is to oblige the federal government to work with Indigenous peoples to develop a national action plan; and to have accountability and visibility in working with us to identify, and then make, the changes needed in federal law, policy and practice.

Indigenous leaders, in and outside of Parliament, have worked hard to get to this moment with the support of First Nations and Canadians across Canada.

A decade has passed since the UN General Assembly adopted the *UN Declaration*. It is time for a full and meaningful dialogue and joint action with First Nations to ensure full and effective implementation of the *UN Declaration*. Bill C-262 provides a framework for doing so in a way that is principled, systematic, cooperative, transparent and accountable. This approach deserves the support of all Parliamentarians, all Parties and all Canadians.

The AFN urges the Senate to consider and pass Bill C-262 as expeditiously as possible, and we urge you to stand up for the human rights of Indigenous peoples by voting in support.

Sincerely,

Perry Bellegarde
National Chief

c.c.: AFN Executive



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Assembly of First Nations Calls on the Senate of Canada to Pass Bill C-262 (the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act)

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration)* was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 after decades of discussion and examination. It has been affirmed eight times by consensus resolutions of the UN General Assembly. No country in the world opposes the *Declaration*.

The *UN Declaration* sets out minimum standards for the survival, dignity, security and well-being of Indigenous peoples globally, including First Nations in Canada. It affirms that Indigenous peoples' rights are human rights. The *Declaration* is a consensus international human rights instrument. Canada has repeatedly expressed its unqualified support for the *UN Declaration*. It is now time to develop a plan for implementation.

The *Declaration* does not create new rights; and Bill C-262 does not create new rights. Bill C-262 advances implementation of the *Declaration* in Canada. It responds to Calls to Action #43 and 44 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that call upon federal and other governments to adopt the *Declaration* as "the framework" for reconciliation.

Bill C-262 is about providing momentum for implementing the *Declaration* in Canada. It provides a framework for Canada to get on with working with First Nations - as Canada has committed itself to do.

A decade has passed since the UN General Assembly adopted the *Declaration*. It is time for a full and meaningful dialogue and joint action with First Nations to ensure full and effective implementation. Bill C-262 provides a framework for doing so in a way that is principled, systematic, cooperative, transparent and accountable. This approach deserves the support of all Parliamentarians, all Parties and all Canadians.

Adopting Bill C-262 is not only a necessary act of reconciliation, Canada needs to demonstrate its human rights leadership at home.



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In this regard, it is worth noting that:

- Article 38 of the *Declaration* provides that States, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, shall take the appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to achieve the ends of this Declaration.
- Operative paragraph 8 of the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, adopted by consensus, commits Canada to cooperate with Indigenous peoples, through their own representative institutions, to develop national action plans to implement the *Declaration*. Bill C-262 would ensure this happens.
- In 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern at Canada's lack of an action plan. The Committee further recommended that Canada implement the *Declaration*, and adopt a legislative framework.
- The Assembly of First Nations supports Private Members Bill C-262 – the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (AFN Resolution 97-2017).

First Nations leadership in and outside of Parliament have worked hard with our allies and supporters in all regions of Canada to get to this moment. The Assembly of First Nations calls on each Senator to stand up for the human rights of Indigenous peoples by voting in support of Bill C-262 in its current form; and for the Senate to ensure the Bill is adopted within the current session.

As we celebrate the 70th year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which Canada played such a key role in its drafting and adoption, it is time for Canada to again show leadership and pass Bill C-262 to show its commitment to the human rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada.