

22 July 2020

Dear Honourable Minister Lametti,

I am writing on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada to express our support for, and to urge action on, your government's commitment to pass legislation to create a framework to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration).

For over forty years, MCC has worked to build right relations between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada, to reflect on our own colonial history, to listen deeply to Indigenous voices, and to advocate for concrete policy change in Canada. As an organization committed to working towards reconciliation as part of our Christian faith, we believe that our relationships with Indigenous peoples are in deep need of healing. We are once again offering our support for legislative implementation of the Declaration. This support for legislation is a critical element of our collective responsibility for reconciliation and part of our affirmation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Call to Action #48.

Our support for such legislation is framed and shaped by the following considerations:

- The TRC refers to the Declaration as a *framework for reconciliation* in both Call to Action 43 and 48. Legislative implementation of the Declaration will move Canada from noble words of apology and aspiration to cooperation with Indigenous Peoples and will affirm justiciability of Indigenous rights. This is critical for the integrity of reconciliation and collective commitments made to upholding the TRC.
- As you are aware, Bill C-262 was passed by the House of Commons in the last Parliament. The bill had the wide support of Indigenous communities, was the subject of extensive debate in a Parliamentary committee (including testimony from 71 witnesses) and had the active support of many faith and civil society groups, including many MCC supporters and constituents. We are pleased to hear that your government considers Bill C-262 to be the floor for implementation legislation in this Parliament and will support that principle vigorously.
- Both COVID-19 and the minority Parliament pose challenges to the quick introduction and passage of the proposed legislation. Public spotlights on systemic racism, along with the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities, however, underline the urgency of measures to protect Indigenous rights in law. Therefore, we urge you to honour your government's commitment to the legislation as a high priority. Please make every effort to bring this legislation to Royal Assent in advance of the next election.

- Any co-development efforts focused on Indigenous support for the legislation must include clear commitments to community-based implementation, both during the legislation creation process and once legislation is in place.

We ask you to consider the above points carefully as you take steps to introduce the promised legislation. Furthermore, we commit to clear public witness in favour of legislation built on the floor of Bill C-262. Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can effectively support the rapid passage of this legislation.

As an organization dedicated to reconciliation, we commit to walking this path with you and to holding you and your government colleagues in our prayers.

Sincerely,



Rick Cober Bauman  
Executive Director  
MCC Canada

CC:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations

The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services

The Honourable Rob Moore, Official Opposition Critic for Justice, Conservative Party of Canada

Alistair MacGregor, Critic for Justice, New Democratic Party

Rheal Fortin Critic for Justice, Bloc Quebecois

Jamie Schmale, Official Opposition Critic for Crown-Indigenous Relations, Conservative Party of Canada

Gary Vidal, Official Opposition Critic for Indigenous Services, Conservative Party of Canada

Jagmeet Singh, Critic for Crown-Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Services, New Democratic Party of Canada

Sylvie Berube, Critic for Crown-Indigenous Relations, Bloc Quebecois

Jo-Ann Roberts, Leader Green Party of Canada