



The Hon. David Lametti P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice
House of Commons
Algonquin Territory
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

September 21, 2020

Dear Minister Lametti,

I am writing on behalf of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) to express our support for your government's commitment to pass legislation to implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) in Canadian law.

CPJ is a national organization of members inspired by faith to act for justice in Canadian public policy. We believe that federal policy can and must serve the public good. Our research, policy analysis, education, and advocacy work are grounded in an understanding of the sacredness of creation and the dignity of all people. From this perspective, the central role of government is to promote the well-being of citizens and residents, and the flourishing of the Earth.

Along with many other faith communities and faith-based organizations, CPJ has affirmed the Declaration as a *framework for reconciliation*, in [response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #48](#). Parliamentary action for legislative implementation is a critical element of the collective responsibility of citizens, civil society, faith communities, business and government for reconciliation. Therefore, we stand at the ready to support legislative implementation of the Declaration.

Our support for such legislation is informed by four key considerations:

- Bill C-262 (An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) was passed by the House of Commons in the last Parliament. That bill had the wide support of Indigenous communities, was the subject of helpful debate in a Parliamentary committee (including testimony from 71 witnesses), and had the active support of many faith and civil society groups. We are pleased to hear that your government considers Bill C-

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262 to be the floor for implementation legislation and will support that principle vigorously.

- Both COVID-19 and the minority Parliament pose challenges to expeditious introduction and passage of the proposed legislation. Public spotlights on systemic racism further underline the urgency of measures to fully honour 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.
- As discussed in a meeting of faith group representatives in May 2020 with your staff members Jesse McCormick, Olivier Jarda and Marc Tremblay, we encourage your careful attention to the pitfalls of rights recognition language and ask you to ensure community-based implementation. This will be critical during the legislative development process including any co-development efforts focused on Indigenous support for the legislation, and indeed, once legislation is in implementation phases. Detailed attention to responsiveness in this manner is critical for robust and meaningful legislation.
- The TRC refers to the Declaration as a *framework for reconciliation* in both Calls to Action 43 and 48. Legislative implementation of the Declaration will move Canada from noble words of apology and aspiration, to active and justiciable Indigenous rights. This is critical for the integrity of reconciliation in this place called Canada.

Minister Lametti, we ask you to consider the above points carefully as you take steps to introduce the promised legislation. Furthermore, we commit to you our clear and vigorous public witness in favour of legislation that indeed is built on the *floor* of Bill C-262. Please do let us know how we can effectively support the expeditious passage of the legislation.

Sincere thanks for your time and consideration,



Willard Metzger
Executive Director

Cc: The Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Trudeau
Jamie Schmale, MP; Rob Moore, MP
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party; Randall Garrison, MP
Sylvie Bérubé, MP; Rhéal Fortin, MP