



Press Release

Ministerial Mandate Letters - Promising Initiatives, but Flawed Approach to Indigenous Policy

December 18th, 2019 (Ottawa, ON) – On Friday, December 13th, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau released mandate letters for federal ministers, outlining their priorities over the coming parliament.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is encouraged by some priorities, such as establishing benefits-sharing agreements on natural resource revenue, and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDIRP), Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) inquiry calls to justice. However, CAP cautions the government that these mandate letters continue to perpetuate flawed approaches towards Indigenous peoples.

These mandate letters focus solely on relationships with select National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs), to the exclusion and detriment of off-reserve communities and those without Indian status or band memberships. This approach has so far failed to include the majority of Canada's Indigenous population in program development and service delivery. By adopting this approach, the government contradicts its own Sustainable Development goal plans to "Consult with National Indigenous Organizations" to implement policy collaboratively.

"The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' mandate is to work with government to implement the priorities laid out in these mandate letters," said CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand. "Off-reserve and non-status Indigenous peoples represent approximately 80 per cent of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and are an essential partner for drafting and implementing good faith policies and legislative responses to meet those needs."

The "CAP-Daniels" Supreme Court decision confirmed that the federal government has responsibility for all Indigenous people, including Métis, Southern Inuit and non-status, off-reserve populations.

Reconciliation is a process that the government of Canada has committed to fully implement. As such, Canada's Indigenous policy must be inclusive, barrier-free, and ensure that all Indigenous peoples are represented. True reconciliation will only be achieved if the government's priorities include all Indigenous People, regardless of residency or status.

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The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, approximately 80% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.