



Press Release

COVID-19 Response an Atrocity Against Urban Indigenous Peoples

April 22, 2020 (Ottawa, ON) - Over a month ago, on March 18, Prime Minister Trudeau promised COVID-19 emergency response funding for Indigenous communities. Today, urban Indigenous communities, such as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' (CAP) constituents, have been told that they will not receive necessary funding to help the most vulnerable members of Canadian society.

"This is an atrocity – people have been waiting over a month, and now they're being told no help is coming" said CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand. "There is no way these funds will meet even the most basic needs for off-reserve and non-Status Indigenous communities. This isn't the first time the Government of Canada used disease and neglect to get rid of inconvenient Indians, but it's the first to do it while talking nonstop about reconciliation."

In crisis when help is needed most, announcements of token funding such as \$250,000 to CAP's communities prove the government's neglect and discrimination against off-reserve and non-Status Indigenous people. CAP joins off-reserve groups across Canada, denouncing the results of the Indigenous Community Support Fund competition.

"This is a choice Trudeau made to sacrifice most of Canada's Indigenous people for political favors." said CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand, "\$290 million was given upfront to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), and the Metis National Council (MNC), three groups that represent a minority of Indigenous people. Meanwhile hundreds of non-Status and urban Indigenous groups must compete for only \$15 million. This was headed for disaster from day one, which we told government a month ago when it was announced."

The total announced funding for Indigenous needs during the COVID-19 pandemic equalled \$305 million. Of that amount, \$290 million is allocated to the three "Distinctions-Based" organizations, the AFN, ITK, and MNC, who collectively represent approximately a third of the total 1.6 million Indigenous people across Canada.

All other organizations serving off-reserve, non-Status, Métis and Inuit peoples were made to compete for the remaining \$15 million. While the three "Distinctions-Based" groups have already announced programs available to help their memberships, other Indigenous organizations have only begun to receive confirmation or denial of their funding applications as of today.

"Justin Trudeau has broken his promise, and betrayed Indigenous people across Canada" said CAP National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin. "Communities that were struggling with health, housing and poverty are now facing collapse and death."

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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, over 80 per cent of Indigenous people live off reserve.