

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

July 31, 2023

Honourable Arif Virani
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
Via email only: Arif.virani@parl.gc.ca

RE: BC-Specific Process for the Implementation of the UNDA Action Plan

Dear Minister Virani,

The BC First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is pleased to welcome you to your new role as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. The FNLC is a collaborative political working relationship between the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), the First Nations Summit (FNS) and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

The FNLC has been working closely with your department on the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration Act* (UNDA) and would like to invite you to meet with us to discuss implementation of the Letter of Understanding (LOU) between the Department of Justice and the FNLC, the FNLC Priorities Paper for the implementation of the UNDA and our proposed budget submission to adequately support the creation of a BC-Specific process for the implementation of the UNDA NAP, as per Canada's commitment to co-develop and implement the Action Plan in partnership with First Nations.

Collectively, the FNLC advocates on behalf of the 204 First Nations in BC. The Executives are elected by the Chiefs of the First Nations in BC respectively at each of the three organizations, and the mandate and work of the FNLC are collectively directed by Nations through resolutions passed at the three political organizations.

On January 12, 2023, the FNLC met with your predecessor, Minister Lametti, on the renewal of a bilateral process with the FNLC on implementing the UNDA. On February 16, 2023, the Minister sent an LOU to the FNLC, committing to establish a BC-specific bilateral process with the FNLC to identify priorities and actions for UNDA implementation and to set out our mutual commitment to working together. This bilateral process is to consist of a Political Table, consisting of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and the FNLC, and a Technical Table, with senior representatives of the FNLC and Canada. The FNLC would like to meet with you to confirm this commitment and to establish the Political and Technical tables.

In alignment with the LOU and the BC-specific bilateral process, in May 2023, the FNLC submitted the FNLC Priorities Paper on the UNDA National Action Plan. The Priorities Paper contained principles and priorities developed based on direction and input from First Nations in BC. It also called on Canada to acknowledge that resource and capacity strains can make participation in co-development processes exceptionally difficult for First Nations communities who are already grappling with extraordinary demands. In order to ensure that the voices of all of our First Nations communities in BC are heard, it



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

is essential that the Government of Canada provide capacity funding and resource support. Without these measures, there is no feasible way to co-develop or action any of the priorities and principles within the Action Plan. We look forward to discussing these principles and priorities with you.

The proposed budget, attached to this letter, will advance engagement and feedback directly from First Nations in BC related to implementing the Action Plan for the UNDA. UBCIC, FNS, and the BCAFN passed resolutions in relation to Bill C-15, which called for improvements to the Bill, support and ongoing efforts to ensure recommendations flowing from First Nations in BC are advanced and included in the legislation and action plan and numerous pathways to ensure resources for capacity for all First Nations in BC to be adequately engaged in the UNDA NAP process.

BC is particularly well suited for this work, as demonstrated by our collective efforts with the Province of BC in developing and implementing the DRIPA Action Plan. The FNLC was able to work collaboratively with the Provincial government to jointly draft the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, as well as currently collaborating on the Action Plan associated with this legislation, the FNLC was able to consider and meet the diverse and intersectional needs of the 204 First Nations by engaging directly through in-person meetings (multiple Chiefs meetings annually), meeting with partners First Nations organizations and a significant number of communiques.

The effective participation of First Nations in the implementation of the UNDA Action Plan is critical to its success and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the priorities and perspectives of First Nations in BC are represented in the work to come.

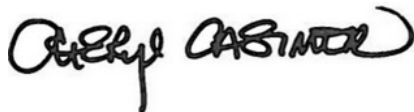
The FNLC is not a rights-holding entity, and engagement with the FNLC is not a proxy for and does not fulfill the obligations of the Government of Canada to consult and cooperate with all First Nations in BC.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please reach out to BCAFN Senior Policy Analyst, Matthew Norris (Matthew.Norris@bcfn.ca) to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT



Cheryl Casimer



Robert Phillips



Hugh Braker

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Don Tom



Chief Marilyn Slett

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Appendices:

1. February 16, 2023, Department of Justice Letter of Understanding with the FNLC;
2. May 2023, FNLC Priorities Paper
3. July 25, 2023, Proposed Draft Budget for UNDA-NAP Bilateral Table