

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Media Statement

June 20, 2019

Death of Bill C-262 a clear step backwards for reconciliation

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver: The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) consisting of the executive members of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS) and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is deeply disappointed with the apparent death of Bill C-262, *An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration (the UN Declaration) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The FNLC sees a troubling irony that the final nail in the coffin for this critical bill will come tomorrow, on National Indigenous Peoples Day, when Parliament recesses for the final time prior to the federal election in October. The failure to pass C-262 is a clear step backwards for reconciliation across this country.

Bill C-262, a private members bill put forward by NDP MP Romeo Saganash, was adopted by the House of Commons more than a year ago but stalled during the Senate Committee review stage resulting in delay after delay preventing the bill from receiving royal assent before tomorrow's deadline.

The *UN Declaration*, which provides the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and human rights of Indigenous peoples and framework for reconciliation, has been voted on and approved on four occasions by the United Nations General Assembly. Canada ratified and endorsed the *UN Declaration* without qualification. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has trumpeted his government's support of the *UN Declaration* on many occasions including in his February 14, 2018 statement in the House of Commons; "*We endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without qualification, and committed to its full implementation, including government support for Bill C-262*".

The federal government has already expressed commitment to implement the *UN Declaration* in several pieces of legislation including Bill C-91: *An Act respecting Indigenous languages* and Bill C-92: *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families*.

Despite the death of Bill C-262, the *UN Declaration* has status of customary international law and is fully applicable to Canada without requiring statutory implementation—although the proposal for a national plan in Bill C-262 would have been important for concrete and meaningful progress. The *UN Declaration* remains a valuable human rights instrument which is guiding better understandings of Indigenous peoples' human rights and assisting to improve relationships and respect through various other legislative enactments.



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The BC Cabinet approved the Commitment Document in 2018 and in follow-up the FNLC is working actively with the Government of BC to co-develop provincial legislation supporting the implementation of the *UN Declaration* in BC following BC commitments in the 2019 Throne Speech which stated;

"This year, government has begun working with First Nations to make sure they are full participants in decision-making that affect their rights and lands. B.C. will be the first province in Canada to introduce legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, legislation co-developed with the First Nations Leadership Council and other Indigenous organizations. This legislation will form the foundation for the Province's work on reconciliation, mandating government to bring provincial laws and policies into harmony with the Declaration."

The FNLC will continue to work vigorously with governments at all levels, national, provincial and municipal, to fully implement the *UN Declaration*. In the lead up to and following the October federal election, the FNLC will be advocating for all parties to endorse a renewed *UN Declaration* implementation in support of this critical human rights instrument. Support for the *UN Declaration* must be recognized as a non-partisan issue that is critical to achieving true lasting reconciliation across Canada.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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