



February 7, 2014

Letter to all Chiefs:

I know everyone is considering today's announcement and wondering what this means for the future of First Nations education.

First, it is important to highlight the investments in our children and our schools to respond to what we have all been pressing for over decades: eliminating the gaps, ending the 2 percent cap and establishing a reasonable, stable and fair rate of growth now and in the long-term. This is what is referred to as “A-based funding” – funding not subject to discretionary annual contribution agreements, bureaucratic claw-backs and delays. There are also investments to support the transition to and building of systems – supporting that work which is underway and enabling others to take this on. And finally there are investments to build schools.

To support these investments and clearly recognize First Nations jurisdiction – including describing how to fulfill federal responsibility as outlined in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Treaty of Niagara entered into by First Nations 250 years ago and subsequent Treaties – a new legal framework is needed. This is a tool to hold Canada to its commitments and secure a strong and stable future for First Nations kids. It is proposed that a new Bill be drafted, responding to our conditions to be jointly developed and based on the direction of First Nations, consistent with the conditions set out in Resolution 21/2013, *Outlining the Path Forward: Conditions for the Success of First Nations Education*. This would be a *First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act*.

According to the direction of leadership, this framework would explicitly and clearly respect aboriginal and treaty rights, and recognize the importance of education grounded in our languages and cultures. Most importantly this Act would only provide an enabling framework through which it would be up to First Nations to determine their options – to jointly discuss and develop regulations, to build and bring into force systems or to advance First Nation control in a way that best responds to their communities' needs, interests and rights while equipping our kids with the quality education they deserve, that will nurture them and unleash their potential.

Obviously there is much detail that must be discussed and the government has committed to doing this together with First Nations. This is not the end of the journey but rather just the beginning and we arrive here thanks to the strong advocacy, resilience and determination of the educators and leaders that went before us. I recall the many times that we have been so close to making major change and reform for our children, only to be pushed back before we achieve a final commitment. I believe we cannot let this happen again.

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I am committed to honouring our mandates and directions for over forty years to finally achieve this recognition and relationship with Canada on the matter of education that respects First Nation inherent and Treaty rights - and is consistent with articles 14 and 15 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizing our right to control our education systems and arrive at arrangements through mutual respect and partnership with Canada.

I look forward to discussing these developments with you and working together to advance this important work.

Respectfully,



Shawn A-in-chut Atleo
National Chief