

To Council

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**Assembly of First Nations**

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**Assemblée des Premières Nations**

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February 28, 2014

The Honourable Bernard Valcourt, PC, MP  
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada  
10 Wellington – Room 2100  
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H4

Dear Minister Valcourt

As a result of discussion and decision at our National Executive meeting on February 27th, 2014 convened at Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, we together seek confirmation from you on a number of matters related to process and commitments moving forward with regard to First Nation education. As you know well, education has been prioritized within our Nations for decades and it is essential to all of us, individually as regionally elected First Nation leaders, as well as collectively as the National Executive, that there is full mutual respectful partnership recognizing that First Nations themselves have inherent and Treaty rights and responsibilities and sacred duties to our peoples and to our children.

With this in mind, the National Executive seeks clarity with regard to Canada's commitment to working with First Nations. The National Executive reminds Canada of the Honour of the Crown, the standards of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership set out under the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and those specifically relating to education that affirm the right of indigenous peoples to establish and control their education systems consistent with their languages and cultures (articles 14 and 15) as well as the respective duties related to consultation and accommodation pursuant to section 35 of the Constitution Act. Based on Canada's commitment expressed on February 7th, 2014, we have both the imperative and opportunity to affirm and clarify next steps fully consistent with our respective rights, responsibilities and obligations.

We note that as part of the announcement, the Government of Canada affirmed Canada's agreement to work together with First Nations on the new approach including securing a statutory guarantee of funding and support for First Nation control of First Nation education. The national Executive and all First Nations want to ensure that every First Nation will have the opportunity to engage, to build and to advance their approach to education reflective of the principle of First Nation control on First Nation education and respectful of their inherent, aboriginal and treaty rights. The expressed commitments of Canada to 'work together' with First Nations and to 'collaborative development' are very important and we seek to fully understand with you the meaning of these commitments.

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Second, the National Executive seeks clarity that existing agreements including Memorandums of Understanding undertaken by Canada will be honoured by Canada. It is our view that moving forward must mean that new approaches driven by First Nations and regions are not hindered or halted but are now in fact enabled and supported to succeed through new investment and clarity from Canada on the support for the principle of First Nation control of First Nation education.

Third and finally, the National Executive seeks clarity on the new investment. First Nations have pressed for a guarantee of resources that addresses chronic inequities and instability. Further, the National Executive seeks clarity that the investment is in fact new and secure within Canada's fiscal framework. First Nations also require access to transition resources and supports to begin the process of advancing their education systems and solutions. As we have said, and as you have also stated Minister, our children must not wait – our children deserve our full support and we must do all that we can to nurture and support their success right now.

As the National Executive, we would appreciate an immediate response to these important matters. This dialogue and clarity is essential for all of us to truly work together. There is no higher duty than that we have to our children and this necessitates all effort to be absolutely certain that we are taking all steps necessary to ensure full and meaningful communication, engagement and dialogue.

Sincerely,

Executive Committee  
Assembly of First Nations

*No meeting request.*

