

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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Open Letter to Minister Carolyn Bennett Re: Concrete Next Steps to Develop an Independent Claims Process

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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July 6, 2018

Dear Minister Bennett,

On June 28, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Joe Wild attended the UBCIC's Chiefs Council meeting in Richmond, BC (*x^wməθk^wəyəm*, Musqueam Territory). Mr. Wild assured the UBCIC Executive, member Chiefs, and delegates that you are committed to working towards an independent specific claims process. He also confirmed that you stressed the importance of developing an independent process to Prime Minister Trudeau at a recent "take stock" meeting, and that you strongly recommended submitting a memorandum to Cabinet in the fall seeking authority to move forward on developing this process with Indigenous Nations.

To date your government's progress on substantive claims reform has been slow and inconsistent, despite numerous public commitments, a damning report from the Office of the Auditor General, and repeated calls from Indigenous Nations to eliminate Canada's conflict of interest in assessing claims against itself.

Given Mr. Wild's recent remarks to UBCIC's membership, our expectation is that your government will now take the necessary concrete, practical steps to jointly develop with Indigenous Nations an independent process for the resolution of specific claims. We anticipate that this work will begin when the House of Commons resumes its business in the fall.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has concluded, fair and timely claims resolution is an essential component of reconciliation; Indigenous Nations, along with numerous government committees and independent reviews have repeatedly underscored the need for an independent claim resolution process. Your government's public commitments to reconciliation, implementation of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the renewal of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Nations require that you take immediate steps to work in full

partnership with Indigenous Nations to develop an action plan to realize a truly independent specific claims process. We await your confirmation that this work is indeed finally underway.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Robert Chamberlin
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC:

Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General
BC Specific Claims Working Group
Union of BC Indian Chiefs Council
National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations
AFN Chiefs Committee on Lands, Territories and Resources
BC Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit