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Dear First Nations Leadership Council:

I am writing to thank you for sharing your confidential technical scoping/concept paper regarding the provincial secretariat that is identified as one of my mandate commitments. I appreciate receiving your early thoughts on this matter. They will help inform our work to develop a proposal for a secretariat to support the alignment of provincial policy and legislation with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) for Cabinet consideration.

Your paper references concepts and elements that I am now exploring. I am doing my own investigation into the best purpose the secretariat could serve, what actions it should oversee, coordinate or be responsible for, and how the placement of the secretariat may support the necessary transformation of the legislative process to ensure the successful implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act). Of importance to me are the potential forms, functions, and accountabilities of the secretariat. It is early in my mandate and I am continuing to seek advice, research options, and approaches.

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I believe it is critical that government establish the appropriate structures, processes, and pathways to ensure that provincial legislation and policies that affect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples are aligned with the UN Declaration. I believe the secretariat will be part of these necessary strategies and actions to ensure our success in meeting the obligations and opportunity presented by the Declaration Act. Therefore I see the core scope and initial priority for the secretariat to be to provide government-wide oversight and guidance on legislative alignment with the UN Declaration. I value and appreciate the insight and scope you have provided on the secretariat's mandate; these will be useful perspectives as I continue my research.

I concur that for the secretariat to be effective it will need to be established with a centralized role to ensure integrated, cross-government alignment and accountability. I continue to explore and consider different options and models to achieve this necessary purpose of the secretariat.

The principles you propose are helpful considerations for me and I agree that the secretariat must be credible with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, and have the appropriate competencies and composition in form to support its intrinsic functions.

I have not yet turned my mind to the implications of the secretariat on the Province's relationship and collaborative relationship with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). In the meantime, as you are aware, I have have offered to schedule regular meetings with FNLC. These regularly scheduled meetings would be in addition to the leadership meetings that include the Premier. Having regular and ongoing meetings between you – the elected representatives of the FNLC – and me will provide consistent opportunities for us to communicate on a variety of priorities including the secretariat. If you agree with this suggestion, I also propose that we convert the existing joint core working group to a technical working group that would support our regular meetings. The provincial representatives would remain the same, working directly with your technical representatives. I look forward to hearing your views on these suggestions.

Again, thank you again for sharing your concept paper regarding the secretariat. It will help inform my ongoing research, and I look forward to our ongoing discussions.

Sincerely,



Murray Rankin, QC
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

CC: Doug Caul, Deputy Minister
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Jessica Wood, Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation