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Dear First Nations Leadership Council:

I am writing today to provide you with an update on the Comprehensive Review of BC Hydro (the “BC Hydro Review”), and next steps following that process. I would like to acknowledge the correspondence between myself and the First Nations Leadership Council (the “FNLC”) prior to the last election, propose next steps related to your input, and explore some areas for future collaboration.

The BC Hydro Review highlighted for the Province that further engagement with Indigenous peoples is needed regarding how to advance reconciliation and support Indigenous participation in the clean energy sector, including in relation to emerging economic opportunities in the broader low carbon economy. For this reason, I would like to invite the FNLC to collaborate with the Province on an Indigenous Clean Energy Opportunities Review.

Your previous correspondence sought to develop a coordinated process related to Indigenous engagement on the BC Hydro Review, with the FNLC supported by the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council (the “FNEMC”). Based on your thoughts, I would like to propose that the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (“EMLI”) and the FNLC form a governance structure, including an Executive Oversight Group co-chaired by myself and the FNLC and a Primary Working Group (the “PWG”) made up of FNEMC representatives and officials from EMLI.

The PWG could be responsible for carrying out engagement with Indigenous peoples across British Columbia and co-developing proposals and recommendations for actions that would advance reconciliation and enable Indigenous participation in the clean energy sector. Among other emerging opportunities, for example, this includes infrastructure ownership, bioenergy, renewable natural gas, hydrogen, EV charging, building retrofits, and cleantech innovation.

Another key topic that the PWG could co-lead engagement on is the development of an enabling regulatory framework for Indigenous utilities, as a follow up to the recent British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC) inquiry on the same matter. As you know, many First Nations have expressed a desire to operate their own utilities on their lands in accordance with their inherent rights to self-determination and self-governance.

The structure of the PWG and scope of the engagement process requires discussion. As a first step, co-development of a Terms of Reference will be important to ensure we have clarity and are able to achieve success. I welcome your perspectives and am open to a constructive dialogue.

I would also like to offer initial capacity funding to enable your organizations and FNEMC to engage on the development of a partnership agreement, including a governance structure and Terms of Reference. As part of reaching agreement to collaborate on this engagement initiative, I also propose we co-design an engagement process budget to inform further capacity funding agreements for Indigenous leadership, other Indigenous organizations, and individual Nations, to engage as the co-led engagement process is implemented.

I truly believe that there is a broad range of opportunities for productive collaboration under the proposed engagement within a new governance structure. I hope that the FNLC is amenable to the proposal to collaborate on this engagement and look forward to discussing these ideas further at our upcoming meeting with Minister Rankin on May 27th.

Thank you again, and I look forward to further collaboration.

Sincerely,



Honourable Bruce Ralston
Minister,
Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation