



The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
The House of Commons
Ottawa Ontario
K1A 0A6

December 16, 2015

Minister Bennett:

We write to extend our congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and indeed, to offer our commitment to you to be constructive partners in the fulfillment of your important mandate. Building on a lengthy history of Indigenous Justice and ministry work, our churches have been moved by the sacred proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As believers in Christ-the-Reconciler we have been touched and convicted that the journey of reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours is ours as churches and ours as people living in this place called Canada.

We know that this journey of reconciliation is one of learning, building relationships, healing and, most certainly changing public policy. The Centre for Public Dialogue appreciated interaction with you in your critic role in the last Parliament. In this era of promise we are eager to continue policy conversation with you and Indigenous people in the interests of reconciliation and justice. We note with appreciation the Prime Minister's public commitment to Nation to Nation relationships and its specific reflection in the mandate letter to you as Minister. We celebrate your mandates to implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: to convene a public inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women; to remove the 2% cap; to make Indigenous control of Indigenous education a reality; and to approach consultation with Indigenous people under a frame of respect, partnership and cooperation. Through partnership with Indigenous people and related research, the Centre for Public Dialogue has engaged each of these threads of reconciliation. We know full well that your mandates are challenging and will require energetic commitment and public will over the long term to succeed. Church groups like ours seek to partner in building that public will and hope to provide constructive input for the challenges ahead.

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue is a place of conversation, learning and action on God's call to justice, peace and reconciliation. We are a ministry of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, a denomination of 255 churches and ministries and across the country. We enjoy full partnership with the Regional Synod of Canada of the Reformed Church in America, and invest deeply in the major ecumenical organizations in Canada.

As Reformed Christians we have a time-honoured tradition of prayer and work (*ora et labora*). We commit to consistent prayer for you in your sacred tasks of reconciliation. As we pray we also commit to listen carefully to our Indigenous neighbours and partners, as we seek to work constructively with you and other leaders on the journey of reconciliation. We know full well that the fulfilment of your mandate letter is a mountainous task for 4 years and well beyond. We are ready to climb that mountain with Indigenous leaders, other churches and with you and your government. We wish you God-the-Creator's blessings of wisdom, discernment and abundant energy for your important role.

Sincerely,

Rev. Darren Roorda
Canadian Ministries Director
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Rev. John Kapteyn
Executive Secretary
Regional Synod of Canada,
Reformed Church in America

Mike Hogeterp
Director,
Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

cc.: Yvonne Jones, M.P.
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