



COMMUNIQUÉ

TO: First Nations Leadership

FROM: Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day

DATE: February 28, 2017

RE: **Update on February 22-23 AFN Executive Meeting and Planned Quarterly Bilateral Meetings with Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Nation-to-Nation Process

The nation-to-nation work between the Assembly of First Nations and the federal government will soon be entering a critical phase; beginning with bilateral meetings to be scheduled every three months with the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The first such meeting will take place this April, at which time an Accord will be signed between Prime Minister Trudeau and National Chief Perry Bellegarde. The Accord will establish a new relationship that will hopefully result in positive change over the months and years to come.

This Accord will hopefully reconfirm previously made joint commitments, which includes the establishment of a Cabinet level working group between First Nation leadership and relevant Ministers that will focus on achieving transformative change across federal departments. Priorities include the implementation of the TRC 94 Calls to Action; co-drafting of the Indigenous Languages Act; co-drafting of a legislative framework and a national action plan to implement UNDRIP; continued work under the Canada—AFN MoU on fiscal relations; a joint federal law and policy review to map a path to decolonized federal law; and any other such jointly agreed priorities.

As Regional Chief, I am committed to providing as much information as possible during this very critical process. There is also an opportunity for any interested Chiefs to provide input and become directly involved. For example, the newly announced working group of six cabinet ministers to review laws and policies related to Indigenous peoples will be seeking input from our leaders. The Working Group will meet for the first time next week and will draft a work plan that will be made public.

AFN Executive Meeting

There are now 13 AFN Chiefs Committees, which include the newly formed Fiscal Relations; Nation to Nation; and Law and Policy. Chiefs are welcome to participate, present or observe. I will provide more detail on these committees in a much more comprehensive report on AFN activities.

At last week's AFN Executive meeting, a total of seven Cabinet Ministers provided updates on their work in relation to their Indigenous mandates. They were Finance Minister Bill Morneau; INAC Minister Carolyn Bennett; Health Minister Jane Philpott; Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould; Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr; Employment and Labour Minister Patty Hajdu; and Family, Children and Social Development Minister Jean-Yves Duclos.

As Chair of the AFN Chiefs Committee on Health, I presented Minister Philpott with the First Nations Health Transformation Agenda, which calls for an additional \$1.58 billion in the upcoming federal budget in order to immediately stabilize health programming that has been underfunded for the past decade. This agenda also includes immediate and long term investments in suicide prevention and life promotion. During our meetings with ministers, they all stressed the need to address the current suicide crisis.

Finance Minister Morneau stated that increased First Nation health funding will be a priority, while renewed efforts will be made to ensure that existing funding in all areas reaches communities, "We can do better in getting that money out. I really understand that this is a critical issue." *The 2017 federal budget will be released next month.*

AFN Expansion

After a decade of underfunding, the AFN budget has returned to funding levels that have not been seen for a decade. There are now 100 employees with plans to expand office space in April in order to accommodate new secretariats. This will enable the AFN to fully engage the federal government in the critical work ahead on a variety of files that impact our Peoples on a daily basis.

Next Steps

Next week, I will provide a much more fulsome report on the work being done at every AFN secretariat. In the meantime, I urge you to visit the www.afn.ca website for more information on the current activities, as well as upcoming forums.

Meegwetch!

Isadore Day, *Wiindawtegowinini*
Ontario Regional Chief