

27 November, 2015

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
North Tower, 10 Wellington Street  
Gatineau, Québec, Ontario K1A 0H4

Dear Minister Bennett,

I am writing on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada to congratulate you on your party's victory in the federal election as well as on your recent cabinet appointment. I want to assure you of our prayers and extend our best wishes as you begin your new responsibilities as Canada's Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, sharing God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC Canada currently supports programs in 60 countries through the efforts of over 1,000 workers, 14,000 volunteers, and 122,000 members of supporting churches.

Given our more than four decades of experience building relationships with, supporting, and working for justice in partnership with diverse Indigenous communities across the country, MCC is greatly encouraged by your mandate to foster healing with Indigenous Peoples by forging a nation-to-nation relationship based on "rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership." As you work towards this renewed relationship, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—which affirms the right to self-determination and empowers communities to flourish according to their own practices—should fully undergird the government's response both to daily concerns for First Nations as well as long-term issues such as upholding Canada's treaty obligations.

In addition to enacting the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, MCC welcomes your party's promises on a number of key issues. A national public inquiry into the continuing reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is a crucial step towards healing the wounds of systemic violence and addressing its root causes. We look forward to your leadership in facilitating a robust process that will provide the space for understanding the scope, scale, and impacts of these tragedies while also moving towards concrete recommendations for resolving past—and preventing future—violence.

MCC also affirms your party's commitment to address issues impacting local Indigenous communities by establishing a new (and predictable) fiscal relationship, closing funding gaps for education, dealing with outstanding land claims, and investing in physical infrastructure. Indeed, as MCC has long worked with First Nations communities struggling without access to any clean drinking water, the need for

financing and sustainable infrastructure to deliver safe sources of potable water on reserves across Canada is a priority of utmost importance.

As we have with all Canadian governments over the past five decades, MCC will continue to offer our perspective and expertise—guided by the voices of our partners and the people we serve in Canada and abroad—in order to contribute to policies and programs that are better able to address the profound challenges of our world.

Once again, I assure you of our prayers as you work towards building just and equitable relationships with Indigenous Peoples across Canada. We look forward to engaging with you in constructive discussions on important public policy issues in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,



Donald G. Peters  
Executive Director  
MCC Canada

CC: Cathy McLeod, Official Opposition Critic for Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Conservative Party of Canada  
Charlie Angus, Opposition Critic for Indigenous and Northern Affairs, New Democratic Party of Canada