



MODERATOR OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Amanda Currie, B.A.Sc., M.Div.

Friday, November 13, 2020

The Honourable David Lametti,
Department of Justice Canada
284 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H8

Dear Minister Lametti,

As the moderator of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, I offer greetings from our denomination. I acknowledge that Presbyterian congregations are on the traditional territories of many different Indigenous nations, and both unceded and treaty lands across what is now called Canada.

In the September 24, 2020 Speech from the Throne, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette stated the government's commitment to introduce legislation to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the end of the year. I am writing to express our strongest support that this be done as a matter of critical urgency to the lives and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Please make every effort to bring legislation to Royal Assent as soon as possible.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, along with many other faith communities, has affirmed the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #48. Our 2019 General Assembly committed to implementing the principles of the Declaration in our own relationships with Indigenous peoples. Supporting legislation that creates a legislative framework for implementing the Declaration in Canada is one way we are living out that commitment as a church. Our support for such legislation is framed and shaped by the following considerations:

- Bill C-262 was passed by the House of Commons in the last Parliament. That bill had the wide support of Indigenous communities, was the subject of helpful debate in a Parliamentary committee (including testimony from 71 witnesses) and had the active support of many faith and civil society groups, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The principles articulated in Bill C-262 must be a baseline for legislation addressing implementation of the Declaration.
- We acknowledge the challenges that both COVID-19 and the minority Parliament pose to expeditious introduction and passage of the proposed legislation. Public spotlights on systemic racism further underline the urgency of measures to protect Indigenous rights in law.

- We urge that legislation be co-developed with Indigenous peoples and reflect clear and adequate commitments to community-based implementation.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission refers to the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation in both Call to Action 43 and 48. Legislative implementation of the Declaration will move Canada from mere words of apology and aspiration toward a just and substantive reconciliation that makes a difference to the safety, health, wellbeing and self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

We ask you to consider the above points carefully as you take steps to introduce the promised legislation. Furthermore, we commit to you our clear and vigorous public witness in favour of legislation that reflects the proposals that were at the heart of Bill C-262.

Please rest assured of our continued prayers for you and all members of Parliament as you seek to govern justly.

Sincerely,



Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator
The 2019 General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Cc Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Hon. Rob Moore, Justice critic, Conservative Party of Canada
M. Rhéal Éloi Fortin, Justice critic, Bloc Québécois
Mr. Randall Garrison, Justice critic, New Democratic Party

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall and The Rev. Donald Muir