



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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September 3, 2020

The Honourable David Lametti
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
David.Lametti@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Lametti:

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I write to express support for the Government of Canada's commitment to pass legislation that creates a framework to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration). The ELCIC, along with many other faith communities, has affirmed the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action #48. Parliamentary action for legislative implementation is a critical element of our collective responsibility for reconciliation.

In 1987, the ELCIC joined with other church leaders in making a pastoral statement calling for a *New Covenant* between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The 2011 ELCIC National Convention endorsed the Declaration and the 2015 ELCIC National Convention repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. Therefore, we support the legislative implementation of the Declaration.

ELCIC support for such legislation is shaped by the following considerations:

- As you are aware, 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. I am pleased to hear that your government considers Bill C-262 to be the floor for implementation legislation in this Parliament and support this principle.
- I note that both COVID-19 and the minority Parliament pose challenges 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. I urge you to honour your government's commitment to the legislation as a high priority. Please make every effort to bring this legislation to Royal Assent in advance of the next election.
- As discussed in a meeting with faith group representatives in May 2020 with your staff members Jesse McCormick, Olivier Jarda and Marc Tremblay, I encourage your careful

attention to the pitfalls of rights recognition language. Please work to ensure adequate and clear commitments to community-based implementation, both during the legislation creation process and once legislation is in place, in any co-development efforts focused on Indigenous support for the legislation.

- The TRC 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 noble words of apology and aspiration to the active use of Indigenous rights for the healing of relationships. This is critical for the integrity of reconciliation in this place today called Canada.

I ask you to consider the above points carefully as you take steps to introduce the promised legislation. Furthermore, I commit to you the ELCIC's clear and vigorous public witness in favour of legislation that clearly commits to implementing Indigenous rights. Please let me know how the ELCIC can effectively support the expeditious passage of the legislation.

Yours in Christ,

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The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Cc. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Candice Bergen, Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Randall Garrison, NDP Justice Critic
Rhéal Fortin, Bloc Québécois Justice Critic
Paul Manly, Green Party MP
ELCIC National Church Council