



February 20, 2020

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Bennett,

We write to encourage the federal government to respond in a spirit of deep reconciliation as you take steps to peacefully resolve the on-going conflict on Wet'suwet'en territory. In this sense, we applaud the RCMP moving away from this territory today – giving space for necessary dialogue towards resolution.

We are aware that government authorities are under intense pressure to end the accompanying blockades and protests. These events, and the various responses of Canadians to them, are manifestations of how hard it is for Canadians to try to come to grips with centuries-old structural injustices in our treatment of Indigenous peoples. This is especially evident now with conflicting views being held not only within the wider Canadian community but also within indigenous communities. Disruptions in travel and economic activities highlight how difficult this transition has – and could – become in future. Fully aware of the Oblates' historical participation in the larger project of colonization, our stated commitment to truth and reconciliation oblige us today to move from words to action. The ways in which we act will transmit how profoundly we accept these challenges to change.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI Lacombe Canada Province) support Canada's adoption of the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and look forward to supporting legislation in Parliament to this effect. UNDRIP's Article 27 reads: *"States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process."*

How Canadians respond to the Wet'suwet'en concerns will illustrate our commitment to justice and peace in the creation of necessary new relationships of reconciliation.

Please be assured, Minister Bennett, of our prayerful and active support of your government's initiatives towards respectful, just and peaceful resolution of issues with Wet'suwet'en people.

Sincerely yours,

Fr. Ken Thorson, OMI
Provincial - OMI Lacombe Canada