



September 1, 2020

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

Dear Minister Lametti,

We write to you to express our support for your government's stated commitment to pass legislation to create a framework to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) in Canadian law.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI Lacombe Canada Province) previously wrote to your colleague, the Hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, in February, urging Canada's adoption of the Declaration, and looking forward to supporting legislation in Parliament to this effect.

OMI Lacombe 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 (TRC) Call to Action #48. Parliamentary action for legislative implementation is a critical element of the collective responsibility of citizens, civil society, faith communities, business and government for reconciliation. That is why we stand ready to support the legislative implementation of the Declaration.

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. We are pleased to hear that your government considers Bill C-262 to be the floor for implementation of legislation in this Parliament and will support that principle vigorously.
- We 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. Therefore, we urge you to honour your government's commitment to the legislation as a high priority. Please bring this legislation to Royal Assent in advance of the next election.

- The TRC refers to the Declaration as a *framework for reconciliation* in both Calls to Action 43 and 48. Legislative implementation of the Declaration will move Canada from noble words of apology and aspiration, to active and justiciable Indigenous rights. This is critical for the integrity of reconciliation in Canada today.

Minister Lametti, we ask you to consider the above points carefully as you take steps to introduce the promised legislation. We commit to you our clear and vigorous public witness in favour of legislation that indeed is built on the floor that Bill C-262 represented.

Please do let me know how we can effectively support the expeditious passage of the legislation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Thorson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Fr. Ken Thorson, OMI
Provincial
OMI Lacombe Canada

Cc. Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister