



Via Email

April 7, 2022

Mr. Jagmeet Singh, M.P., Burnaby South
Leader, New Democratic Party of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca

RE: The Need For Systemic Changes To Accompany New Investments In First Nations

Dear Mr. Singh:

Last month we wrote to the Prime Minister about the need to establish the First Nations Infrastructure Institute. The central point in our letter was that “The systems that First Nations are required to operate under to build and maintain their infrastructure are fundamentally flawed, and until they are fixed the outcomes will also be flawed.” This point is particularly important in the context of the Supply and Confidence Agreement announced between the Liberal and New Democratic parties.

While we are pleased that Canada is prepared to increase its investments in Indigenous housing, it is vital that the systems are in place to make these investments work. As Indigenous Institutions, both the First Nations Financial Management Board and the First Nations Tax Commission have worked since their start to change the operating systems that support First Nations. We are working to decolonize these systems and recognize First Nations jurisdiction and the need for First Nations control. Only with these changes to the systems that First Nations are forced to operate under will meaningful progress be made.

Currently infrastructure on reserves takes too long to develop, costs too much to build, and does not last long enough. This contributes to a series of poor health, social and economic outcomes. This is just one of many examples of how colonial systems of control and lack of recognition of First Nations jurisdiction are stifling development and progress. We would like to meet with you to discuss the changes needed to enable First Nations to make much more meaningful progress on their own terms.

Since the last federal election, we have met with MP Charlie Angus, had discussions with Lori Idlout at committee, and met with the office of MP Niki Ashton. Now with the new supply and confidence agreement, we believe the time is right for us to have a more fulsome discussion with you and your team on how New Democrats can use the next three years to help advance the systemic changes that First Nations need to succeed.

The First Nations Fiscal Management Act (FMA) is a good example of how systemic change can be brought about. It is a piece of legislation that was championed by First Nations, continues to enjoy all-party support, created Indigenous Institutions, and its optionality respects the jurisdiction of First Nations.



First Nations
FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT
BOARD

CONSEIL
DE GESTION
FINANCIÈRE des
Premières Nations



First Nations Tax Commission
Commission de la fiscalité des premières nations

To date, 321 First Nations have chosen to be scheduled to the Act, demonstrating its broad and deep support across the country. And this is why we are proposing the First Nations Infrastructure Institute be created as the fourth institution within the FMA.

The NDP has long recognized the need for meaningful change that respects the rights and jurisdiction of First Nations. The NDP was the party that first championed the passage of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Since this legislation passed last year, First Nations expectations for meaningful change have only increased.

In response to these increased expectations, the FMA institutions have developed the RoadMap Project. It is a practical and optional framework that advances Indigenous economic reconciliation, consistent with UNDRIP. The RoadMap offers realistic and implementable options to empower First Nations governments to move past the failed one-size-fits-all approach and will support the implementation of UNDRIP through Indigenous-led initiatives. We would like this project to be the focus of our discussion with you and your team.

We will contact your office to see when a meeting can be arranged with you. We appreciate the NDP's commitment to improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples, and we look forward to working with you to create the systemic change that will make this a reality.

Sincerely,

Harold Calla, Executive Chair
First Nations Financial Management Board

C.T. (Manny) Jules, Chief Commissioner
First Nations Tax Commission

CC: Lori Idlout, M.P., Nunavut, Critic - Indigenous Services; Northern Affairs; Crown-Indigenous Relations; lori.idlout@parl.gc.ca
Charlie Angus, M.P., Timmins-James Bay; Deputy Critic-Ethics, Deputy Critic - Crown-Indigenous Relations (Child Welfare); charlie.angus@ndp.ca
Nikki Ashton, M.P., Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Critic - National Revenue (Tax Fairness and Inequality); Official Languages; Deputy Critic - Indigenous Services; Deputy Critic - Northern Affairs; niki.ashton@parl.gc.ca