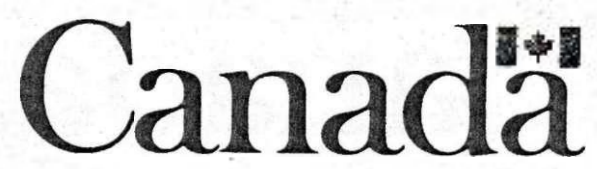


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**STATEMENT BY  
THE OBSERVER DELEGATION OF CANADA**

**DELIVERED BY  
MR. FRED CARON, ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER  
INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA**

**UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES  
EIGHTH SESSION ON  
AGENDA ITEM 3 (a): ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**NEW YORK, 18 MAY 2009**

**DÉCLARATION DE  
LA DÉLÉGATION D'OBSERVATEURS DU CANADA**

**PRONONCÉE PAR  
M. FRED CARON, SOUS-MINISTRE ADJOINT  
AFFAIRES INDIENNES ET DU NORD CANADA**

**À LA HUITIÈME SESSION DE L'INSTANCE PERMANENTE  
DES NATIONS UNIES SUR LES QUESTIONS AUTOCHTONES**

**CONCERNANT LE POINT 3 (a) À L'ORDRE DU JOUR:  
DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL**

**NEW YORK, LE 18 MAI 2009**

Madame Chairperson and members of the Permanent Forum, Canada welcomes the opportunity to address the agenda item "Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on economic and social development".

Canada wishes to commend the Permanent Forum for its decision to modify its working methods by focusing in alternate years on implementation of previous recommendations. It is hoped that this review and analysis of the status of the large body of existing recommendations will provide improved coherence and guidance for all affected parties and thereby contribute to the effectiveness of the Permanent Forum itself. Such stocktaking will be particularly useful if it is applied to inform the future work and decisions of the Forum.

Canada has, at previous sessions of the Permanent Forum and at inter-sessional expert working group meetings, provided extensive information on the Government of Canada's policies, programs and initiatives covering all of the Forum's six mandated areas.

While the information we convey may not specifically address individual recommendations, our approach and intention has been to respond constructively and in a thematic sense to issues identified by the Forum. We expect to continue this practice of information sharing and reporting.

Madame Chairperson and members of the Forum, it is acknowledged that persistent and unacceptable gaps continue to exist in Canada between the economic and social well-being of indigenous peoples and other Canadians. The Government of Canada is committed to an integrated, strategic and targeted approach to address and overcome such gaps, working in partnership with other levels of government; First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities; and other key sectors of Canadian society.

This approach is founded upon the protection and promotion of Aboriginal and treaty rights in an atmosphere of reconciliation and renewed relationship.

The Government has developed a five-pillar agenda to more adequately address the full range of challenges and opportunities facing Aboriginal people in Canada. The five pillars are: Economic Development; Education; Empowering First Nations Citizens and Protecting the Vulnerable; Resolution of Land Claims; and Reconciliation, Governance and Self-Government.

It is our sincere hope and expectation that this integrated and comprehensive approach will be an effective instrument in achieving our overarching goal of improving the quality of life for Aboriginal people.

Madame Chairperson, the Government of Canada wishes to share with the Forum a summary of key initiatives over the past year that respond to the short- and long-term challenges concerning the economic and social development status of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The current global economic recession affects all people in all countries. Disadvantaged and vulnerable populations – including indigenous people - can be affected particularly severely. It is important, in our view, that responses to the economic situation take this into account.

On January 27, 2009, the Government of Canada released its *Economic Action Plan* in response to the deteriorating global economic situation. The plan is designed to stimulate the Canadian economy; to protect Canadians during the global recession; and, to invest in long-term growth.

The Aboriginal-specific initiatives outlined in the *Economic Action Plan* share a common objective, ensuring Aboriginal people have the opportunity to participate fully in Canada's economy and society, with the Government's five previously identified priorities.



Active participation of Aboriginal people and provinces is critical to delivering on practical measures in each of these key areas to generate real improvements in the lives of Aboriginal people.

Leading up to the *Economic Action Plan*, the Prime Minister met with provincial and territorial government leaders on January 16, 2009 where they agreed to work together on a number of important actions to provide stimulus to the Canadian economy. The Prime Minister and provincial and territorial leaders also met with National Aboriginal Leaders on January 15, 2009. At this meeting, they agreed to:

- Take quick action to ensure the Aboriginal (First Nation, Inuit, and Métis) labour force is well prepared for the future with skills training and support; and
- Identify ways Aboriginal women and men can benefit from infrastructure projects, including in terms of employment, skills upgrading and business opportunities.

The Prime Minister's commitment to promote greater participation by Aboriginal people in the Canadian economy and to address the specific challenges and opportunities they face are well-reflected in the Government's *Economic Action Plan*.

More precisely, *Canada's Economic Action Plan* announced \$1.4 billion in investments over two years related to Aboriginal-specific programming in areas such as housing, educational facilities, skills and training, health, water and wastewater systems, and child and family services.

In *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, the Government of Canada invested: an additional \$100 million over three years in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership initiative which is expected to support the creation of 6,000 jobs for Aboriginal Canadians; \$75 million in a two-year Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund; and two-year targeted funding of \$200 million for the construction of 10 new schools on reserve and three major school renovation projects on reserve.

Northern Canada is home to many of Canada's indigenous population. The *Plan* also provides \$50 million over five years to support economic development in the North through the creation of a new regional economic development agency for the North and \$90 million over five years for a renewed Strategic Initiative for Northern Economic Development. The long-term economic outlook for the North remains positive. Canada will continue to ensure that Northerners, particularly Aboriginal Northerners, are full partners in and derive maximum benefit from development.

In addition to programs designed to specifically benefit Aboriginal people and communities, a number of other initiatives announced in the *Economic Action Plan* will also provide benefits to Aboriginal people and communities.

Aligned with its *Economic Action Plan*, the Government of Canada has made Aboriginal economic development a priority and committed to establish a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development. In partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis, the Government is currently developing a new economic development strategy that will be partnership-based and opportunity-driven and that will ensure that federal investments help Aboriginal Canadians benefit from viable economic opportunities.

The federal government has recently launched several practical measures that will expand Aboriginal participation in the Canadian economy by addressing long-standing barriers that have often impeded investment by the private sector in First Nations communities, and curtailed opportunities for growth of Aboriginal businesses.

In December 2009, the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, announced three new measures that will improve access to commercial financing for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities. Two pilot initiatives were launched: the first, to create new sources for business loans; the second, to support Aboriginal involvement in major resource and energy development projects. At the same time, Minister Strahl announced expanded eligibility criteria for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Aboriginal Business Canada program, allowing for larger contribution amounts and a projected increase of 200 projects each year.

Canada also has a role in helping to create the conditions for responsible and sustainable development affecting indigenous peoples in other countries. In March 2009, the Government of Canada announced its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy for the Canadian extractive sector operating abroad. The *Building the Canadian Advantage* Strategy includes four main pillars: 1) support for host country resource governance capacity-building initiatives; 2) endorsement and promotion of widely-recognized international CSR performance voluntary guidelines; 3) support for the development of a CSR Centre of Excellence; and, 4) the creation of the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor.

These new measures may not meet the expectations of all, but they will help Canadian mining, oil and gas companies meet and exceed their social and environmental responsibilities when operating abroad, including interaction with indigenous communities. Canada has recently supported several projects in Latin America aimed at meeting this goal and will continue such efforts in future.

The new strategy was informed by consultations undertaken with a number of stakeholders, including indigenous representatives from Canada and other countries.

Economic and social development also require that indigenous peoples have the land, resources and tools for effective governance and self-determination.

The first urban treaty in the history of British Columbia and the first modern treaty negotiated under the British Columbia Treaty Commission process – the Tsawwassen First Nation treaty – took effect on April 3, 2009.

The treaty and related agreements present Tsawwassen First Nation with modern governance tools, coupled with funds, to generate increased economic vitality.

The Tsawwassen treaty will operate within the framework of the Constitution of Canada. Within that framework, Tsawwassen First Nation has the constitutional authority to make laws in many areas of jurisdiction that are traditionally federal, provincial and municipal in nature.

On April 9, 2009 the signing of the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement was completed. This is the third Final Agreement in British Columbia to be signed by Canada, British Columbia and First Nations. In 2007, Maa-nulth community members ratified the Agreement, with 80 percent of voting members voting in favour. With this signing, the federal government can now formally proceed with introducing legislation to ratify the Agreement in Parliament.

Located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, the five Maa-nulth First Nations belong to the Nuu-chah-nulth linguistic group. The Maa-nulth communities are comprised of approximately 2,000 people. The Final Agreement defines the Maa-nulth First Nations' rights regarding self-government and the ownership and management of lands and resources, including rights with respect to the harvest of fish and wildlife.



On June 18, 2008 the *Specific Claims Tribunal Act* received Royal Assent and came into effect. The *Act* creates an independent tribunal with binding powers to resolve specific land claims. The tribunal, which will be made up of sitting superior court judges, can award compensation on claims worth up to \$150 million.

This historic legislation, developed jointly by the federal government and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), will ensure specific claims are solved more quickly and fairly. The *Act* delivers on a commitment made in an action plan launched by the Prime Minister in 2007. This very necessary and overdue action will improve and accelerate the resolution of specific claims in order to provide justice to First Nation claimants and certainty for all Canadians.

The Office of the Federal interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (OFI) of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is working in the area of economic development to develop key areas of governance, strategy and capacity and partnership within Métis and Non-Status Indian (MNSI) organizations.

OFI and MNSI organizations are collaboratively examining resources, gaps and sectors that the provincial and federal governments should focus on in order to promote self-sufficiency, wealth creation and increased participation in the Canadian economy. OFI is working in an inclusive nature while being focused on demonstrable results and tangible outcomes.

In 2007, the Government of Canada made a long-term commitment on urban Aboriginal issues by investing \$68.5 million over five years to help respond effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people living in key urban centres. Through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), the Government of Canada partners with Aboriginal and community organizations, municipal and provincial governments and with the private sector. These partnerships support projects that respond to local priorities and advance the UAS national priority areas of: improving life skills; promoting job training, skills and entrepreneurship; and, supporting Aboriginal women, children and families.

Canada notes with appreciation the acknowledgment in the Permanent Forum Secretariat's analysis report on economic and social development that, internationally, "The Government of Canada has been the main supporter for keeping urban indigenous issues at the forefront." Canada has appreciated the opportunity to work with the Permanent Forum, UN-HABITAT and other UN agencies, as well as member states and indigenous peoples' representatives to further cooperation in advancing this important dialogue at the international level. There remains much to be done, and we will continue to support and seek out partnerships and opportunities for future collaboration.

Health Canada has taken a leadership role in international discussions on inequities affecting indigenous populations through the work of the Canadian Reference Group (CRG) to the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health. This work has contributed to the recognition of the unique status of indigenous peoples in the Commission's final report.

As a result of the collaboration initiated at the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the UNPFII between the Health portfolio of the Forum, the Assembly of First Nations and the World Health Organization, a Global Indigenous STOP TB Expert Meeting took place in Toronto from November 12-14, 2008. This event, co-hosted by the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and supported by Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency, brought together TB and indigenous experts to develop an action plan to reduce the burden of tuberculosis within indigenous populations globally. This successful Expert Meeting was attended by approximately 130 participants from 60 countries.

Past recommendations from the UNPFII urged member states to establish culturally appropriate HIV/AIDS programmes, provide educational material in indigenous languages and use specially

trained indigenous HIV/AIDS health workers. In 2008, Health Canada funded, in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN), the Second Indigenous/Afro-Descendant Peoples' Pre-Conference on HIV/AIDS, Sexuality and Human Rights prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> International HIV/AIDS conference in Mexico.

Health Canada supports awareness campaigns and symposia through its national partner organizations: Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network and Pauktuutit - Inuit Women of Canada. In addition, Health Canada supports the Assembly of First Nations with community development work around HIV/AIDS.

Health Canada's HIV/AIDS funding has enabled communities to develop culturally specific outreach programs, prevention strategies and training opportunities, to strengthen the response to HIV/AIDS in First Nations and Inuit communities.

Canada's federal government is also working with interested provinces and First Nations to achieve tripartite agreements on First Nations Health. The object of such agreements is to improve the health status of First Nations people in Canada by integrating federally funded First Nations health services with provincial health systems, and by enhancing the role of First Nations in all health systems decisions that affect them. The first major tripartite agreement was signed in British Columbia in June 2007 (B.C. Tripartite First Nations Health Plan). In August 2008, the Government of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on First Nations Health and Well-Being in Saskatchewan.

The Government of Canada has made significant progress in helping First Nations in the provision of drinking water on reserve since 2006, when the Government launched the *Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nation Communities*. Since then, the number of First Nation communities with high risk water systems has been reduced by two-thirds. Out of the 21 priority communities identified in 2006 as having high-risk systems and as drinking water advisories, only four remain today and action plans are in place for each of these.

*Canada's Economic Action Plan* accelerates infrastructure projects in First Nation communities, including for 18 water and wastewater initiatives across the country.

Furthermore, in 2008-09, the Government invested approximately \$368 million to address water issues in First Nation communities, including upgrading water and wastewater facilities on reserve, maintenance and operation of the facilities, training, and moving forward with other initiatives under the *First Nation Water and Wastewater Action Plan* (FNWWAP).

Real progress is being made but more remains to be done. Future success in addressing water needs on-reserve will depend on continued collaboration between Government, First Nations and other partners. (Source: INAC News release April 2009)

Education is an essential foundation stone for social and economic development. Improving education outcomes for Aboriginal learners is a shared responsibility for which governments, communities, families and students all play a critical role.

Real partnerships are required to meet the challenges in Aboriginal education. In December 2008, the Government of Canada announced \$268 million over five years and ongoing funding of \$75 million in each subsequent year for two new programs that set the foundation for long-term improvement in First Nations education.



Through the *First Nation Student Success Program*, on-reserve schools will develop success plans, conduct student assessments, and put in place performance measurement systems to assess and report on school and student progress.

*Through the Education Partnerships Program*, the Government of Canada is working with interested First Nations and provinces to develop and enhance tripartite partnerships to support better collaboration between First Nation schools and provincial education systems. The Government of Canada has already signed tripartite agreements to improve education outcomes for First Nations students in band-operated and provincial schools, in British Columbia and New Brunswick.

In February 2009 the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) brought together key stakeholders to address challenges in Aboriginal education in Canada at a Summit entitled: *Strengthening Aboriginal Success: Moving Toward Learn Canada 2020*. The Government of Canada is committed to working with the provinces and First Nations communities to address the gap in academic achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students outlined in CMEC's Learn Canada 2020 declaration

The quality of education for off-reserve Aboriginal students is of critical interest for the Office of the Federal Interlocutor at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This office works closely with provinces, national and provincial Aboriginal organizations, federal departments and organizations towards achieving overall coherence in the services available to off-reserve Aboriginal Canadians.

The end goals of these efforts are strong and accountable partnerships that lead to demonstrable improvements for Aboriginal students.

First Nations children are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. The goal of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) program of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is to support First Nations communities in providing culturally appropriate child welfare services comparable to those available to other provincial residents in similar circumstances. As of 2007 there are 108 First Nations CFS agencies across Canada. The Government continues to move forward in implementing concrete changes in child and family services on reserves, together with willing provinces and First Nations partners.

Under an Enhanced Prevention-Focused Approach, the Government of Canada in 2008 developed tripartite accountability frameworks with the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia to help ensure families receive appropriate child and family services in a timely manner. Canada's Economic Action Plan (2009) provides \$20 million over the next two years to ensure further progress on this strategy with other provinces, and in the process ensures more effective information gathering and enhanced accountability and reporting.

Canada believes that appropriate and effective policy, program and legislative processes for the economic and social development of indigenous peoples require a solid foundation of evidence-based research. As such, the Government of Canada supported the third Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, held in Ottawa on March 8 – 12, 2009, and organized by the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), the University of Western Ontario (Western) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

The Conference brought together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and policy makers from Canada and abroad, showcasing the wide range of high-quality research that has recently been conducted on Aboriginal issues in order to inform evidence-based policy making that improves the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples. The conference included over 130 workshops, covering a wide range of themes, such as:

- Building a First Nations Economy: Land into Trust Mechanisms
- Approaches to Aboriginal Economic Development: An International Comparison
- Issues in Corrections and Justice
- Indian Residential School Settlement and Healing
- Improving Education Outcomes: Culturally Aware Curriculum
- Urban Aboriginal Relations and Program Development Issues

We were particularly gratified to once again welcome to the Conference representatives of the Permanent Forum. We thank member Señora Elisa Canqui Mollo from Bolivia and Ms. Sonia Smallacombe from the Secretariat for their participation.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update of some of the Government of Canada's recent key initiatives to support the social and economic development of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples in Canada.

*For additional information on these and other Aboriginal issues in Canada, please visit the following websites:*

<http://www.gc.ca/home.html>      <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/index-eng.asp>

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>      <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml>

<http://www.international.gc.ca/international/index.aspx>      <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/>

<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-327123948-NQF>