



**Qalipu**  
FIRST NATION

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The Honourable Marc Miller  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Miller:

**Re: Letter Dated March 29, 2021 from the Director General, Individual Affairs Branch**

I write following receipt of the attached letter from the Director General, Individual Affairs Branch, dated March 29, 2021 notifying the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) and the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation of Canada's unilateral decision to pause exploratory discussions with respect to those members of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and other Mi'kmaq organizations on the island of Newfoundland who did not obtain Founding Membership in Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation. Given the positions taken in discussions within the Implementation Committee, with Department and Ministerial office staff, and with various Ministers of the Department, you must have anticipated the profound frustration and dissatisfaction of both the Qalipu First Nation and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians with Canada's decision.

When approached in November 2018 to join Gudie Hutchings, the Member of Parliament for Long Range Mountains, to announce the commencement of exploratory discussions, we were hopeful that Canada, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, and Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation would find a way, in the true spirit of Reconciliation, to bring longstanding issues surrounding the enrolment process to an end. While pleased that we were able to identify a solution for members of the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP, and Veterans, we had been clear, since the commencement of our discussions, that we also had to identify a resolution to concerns surrounding the fact that members of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and other Mi'kmaq organizations on the island of Newfoundland named in the 2008 Agreement, did not obtain Founding Membership.

During exploratory discussions with Canada's representatives which began in earnest in December 2018, the FNI developed options to address concerns related to FNI members and members of other Mi'kmaq organizations. The lack of any meaningful response from Canada on the proposed options was frustrating, which resulted in seeking a reassurance from your predecessor, Minister Seamus O'Regan, in 2019 that Canada remained committed to addressing issues resulting in these applicants not obtaining Founding Membership. Minister O'Regan responded on September 10, 2019,

confirming that Canada remained committed to continuing exploratory discussions with respect to these applicants. A copy of this response letter is attached.

The litigation referred to in the attached letter dated March 29 was active in November 2018 when exploratory discussions were initiated by Minister Carolyn Bennett and in September 2019 when we received Minister O'Regan's letter. In this context, the explanation provided by the Director General to pause discussions does not make sense. The unilateral decision by Canada to pause the discussion is also contrary to the concept of our nation-to-nation relationship, that is based on cooperation and partnership which has been asserted by Canada since the outset of this process in November 2018.

I therefore strongly urge a reconsideration of this decision in view of its inconsistency with past commitments Canada has given to continue discussions.

Your immediate attention must be given to this unexpected and discouraging development.

Sincerely,



Brendan Mitchell,  
Chief, Qalipu First Nation  
President, Federation of Newfoundland Indians

cc. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
Hon. Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Natural Resources  
Gudie Hutchings MP, Long Range Mountains  
Yvonne Jones MP, Labrador  
Scott Simms MP, Coast of Bays-Central-Notre Dame  
Churence Rogers MP, Bonavista-Trinity-Burin  
Ken McDonald MP, Avalon  
Hon. Andrew Furey, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Hon. Lisa Dempster, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation  
Lori Doran, Director General, Individual Affairs Branch