



Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Demands Provincial Accountability for Deleted Emails regarding Highway of Tears

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, B.C.- October 27, 2015) A Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls is extremely upset that the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner has found that Ministry of Transportation staff willfully deleted emails related to the Highway of Tears, a remote stretch of Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, where many Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or disappeared.

The provincial government has failed to take meaningful action to provide adequate and safe transportation along the Highway despite numerous clear recommendations to do so from agencies including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry, and the Highway of Tears Symposium. BC's failure to act in response to these recommendations puts the safety of Indigenous women and girls at risk and is in neglect of its duty to take every reasonable effort to ensure the safety of all women and girls.

The Coalition is extremely troubled that, instead of working to improve safety for Indigenous women and girls along the Highway of Tears, Ministry of Transportation staff contravened their duties under the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act* by reading information requests narrowly and deleting emails related to the government's action on the issue in order to avoid disclosing them in response to an access to information request concerning the Ministry's meetings regarding the Highway of Tears.

The Coalition calls on the BC government to take immediate action to implement the recommendations for increased safety along the Highway of Tears and, as recommended by the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner, take steps to improve transparency and accountability in order to regain public confidence. Instead of working to avoid public scrutiny and accountability, we urge the government to focus on implementing effective solutions to the ongoing and systemic violence against Indigenous women and girls in BC. We also call on the BC government to formally apologize to the families of

women and girls who have gone missing from the Highway of Tears for the deletion of related emails and reports.

The Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls initially came together in response to the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry in British Columbia overseen by Commissioner Wally Oppal. Unfortunately the groups who formed the Coalition were shut out of the inquiry; however, the Coalition continues to meet regularly to pursue justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and has grown in number and strength.

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