

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

STATEMENT

April 25, 2018

First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) statement on *BILL 26 (2018) – Child, Family and Community Service Amendment Act*



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Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver: Yesterday the Government of BC introduced amendments to the CFCSA in Bill C-26. These amendments have some promising components.

We welcome amendments to the Child, Family and Community Service Amendment Act (CFCSA) in that they provide communities the opportunities for direct involvement with the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) when dealing with their children and families; however, we have a number of serious concerns.

We are aware that the amendments were prepared unilaterally and without consultation by BC. Further, we are concerned that the amendments are technical and operational and do not go far enough in addressing the principles of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and our inherent right to self-determination and self-government.

The amendments do not lay the foundation for the more significant shift required to change the child welfare conditions where the overrepresentation of First Nations children in care remains the most serious issue.

First Nations of British Columbia and others, including Grand Chief Ed John in his special report for Government, and the former Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, have called on Government to lay the foundation for change by recognizing and committing to the TRC Calls to Action—especially the first five Calls to Action on the legacy of child welfare systems following the residential school experience.

Leadership on child welfare reform is needed at all levels of Government in Canada. We can only hope that during the debate of the Bill after second reading, that the Opposition and Government will realize that more profound improvements are needed and address some of the concerns we have voiced, and which went unheeded.

These amendments will permit MCFD to enter agreements with communities they designate. However, any amendments must recognize the inherent rights we have as Nations to make decisions for our children, and the need for this to become integral to child welfare so we can end the mess that the policies of control and colonialism have left for this and potentially future generations.

We will hold BC, and Canada, to their commitments to work with BC First Nations and the FNLC in ensuring substantive changes required for full reform of the system be conducted in full partnership and be co-developed. Working together in partnership is the only way to achieve the necessary reforms that will lead to lowering the number of Indigenous children in care by ensuring all opportunities are available to keep them safe in their home communities and connected to their cultures.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

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