

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2021

New minority government must result in concrete actions and measurable outcomes on critical Indigenous issues

(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) - First Nations Summit (FNS) leaders congratulate Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Liberals following yesterday's federal election which saw the Liberal party win the highest number of seats in Parliament, likely resulting in yet another minority government.

"In the event of a new minority government, we encourage Prime Minister Trudeau and his caucus to take the necessary steps to ensure a stable government for Canada over the next four years, with Indigenous issues being at the centre," said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "We were disappointed to see such a costly and ill-timed election called in the middle of a pandemic. We can't afford to see another election in the next couple of years, as there is a plethora of critical Indigenous related issues, including justice and policing reform, systemic racism, implementation of Indigenous child welfare legislation and the ongoing discovery of unmarked burials at former residential school sites, that all require the immediate attention of a stable and committed federal government".

"A new minority government must work with First Nations to take concrete actions with measurable outcomes in an effort to close the disparate socio-economic gaps faced by our communities. This starts with the fulsome implementation of the recently passed *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP Act). It is critical that this implementation be in full partnership with Indigenous peoples," added Casimer.

"The Canadian electorate has once again indicated they are not confident enough to give any one party a majority. Instead, the election result represents status quo and a challenge for the minority government to work with other parties to gain confidence and to effect real tangible change that benefits Canadians, especially Indigenous peoples. Now is the time to get past the political rhetoric of the election and get back to work," said Robert Phillips, also of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

"Unfortunately, the election of a minority government was likely the best outcome that Indigenous communities could hope for. We look forward to working with Mr. Singh and the NDP party to holding the Liberal minority government accountable and ensuring they work with Indigenous communities towards real substantive change that will result in safer, healthier, more prosperous Indigenous communities. In particular, we must see substantive reforms to Canada's justice and policing systems. Continuing to see Indigenous women go missing or murdered, or seeing our citizens die at the hands of police, is unacceptable and must stop," said Lydia Hwitsum of the FNS Political Executive.

Key Liberal commitments that FNS leaders expect the new minority government to act on as soon as possible include:

- a. *Commitment to fully implement the UNDRIP Act, including the co-development of an Action Plan with Indigenous partners, to implement and achieve the objectives of the Declaration through a whole of government approach.*
- b. *Commitment to continue to support Indigenous-led processes for rebuilding and reconstituting nations, advancing self-determination and work in partnership on implementation of treaties, land claims and self-government agreements with appropriate oversight mechanisms to hold the federal government accountable.*
- c. *Commitment to support and provide funding to Indigenous communities: in their work to uncover burial grounds; for commemoration ceremonies, honouring memorials, and re-burial in their home communities; and to manage the buildings of former residential schools, such as demolition, rehabilitation, or construction of new facilities.*
- d. *Commitment to work with Indigenous partners to appoint a Special Interlocutor who will work with Indigenous communities, provincial and territorial governments, to develop the necessary legal and regulatory framework to advance justice regarding unmarked graves and make recommendations relating to federal laws, regulations, policies, and practices surrounding unmarked and undocumented graves and burial sites at residential schools.*
- e. *Commitment to engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations on the development of legislation and initiatives that address systemic barriers in the criminal justice system, including collaboration on an Indigenous justice strategy.*

First Nations Summit leadership will also be requesting the new minority government to immediately implement past Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders that compel Canada to cease systemic discrimination against First Nations children and to compensate First Nations victims for their suffering willful and reckless discrimination as a result of an underfunded and poorly coordinated child welfare system. It is time for the federal government to once and for all cease fighting Indigenous children in court.

The FNS looks forward to Prime Minister Trudeau naming his new Cabinet in the coming weeks and will be requesting early meetings with key Ministers to discuss the federal Indigenous agenda.

The FNS also holds our hands up to, and commends, all of the Indigenous people across the country who put their name forward as candidates for election during the 2021 campaign, especially those who ran in BC ridings.

-30-

The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For Further Information contact:

Cheryl Casimer, FNS Political Executive: 778-875-2157
Lydia Hwitsum, FNS Political Executive: 778-875-4463
Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive: 604-868-0032