

June 04, 2025

Sent by e-mail

Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty
Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
10 rue Wellington, Gatineau QC K1A 0H4
E-mail: ministresa-ministeris@sac-isc.gc.ca

Dear Minister Gull Masty:

RE: Long-term reform of First Nations Child & Family Services and Jordan's Principle

On behalf of the National Children's Chiefs Commission, I extend my sincere congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. Your leadership, experience, and dedication to the well-being of First Nations peoples are deeply respected—as is your commitment to upholding the traditional values of the Cree people. We look forward to your stewardship at this critical moment.

We also commend Prime Minister Mark Carney for his recent reaffirmation of Canada's commitment to long-term reform of First Nations child and family services. We share his resolve to “get back to the table with determination to achieve two fundamental objectives: long-term funding and the long-term reform of the system.”

These are words that promise change—and we sincerely hope they mark a renewed commitment to meaningful dialogue and action.

However, we must also express our deep disappointment that Canada's May 22 submission to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on the Caring Society's Consultation Motion did not reflect the Prime Minister's stated commitment to “get back to the table.” Rather than advancing dialogue, the submission indicated that Canada sees no value in continuing “unproductive consultations” and prefers to focus on Tribunal approval of the Ontario Final Agreement.

The National Children's Chiefs Commission was created by the First Nations-in-Assembly and is mandated to provide strategic direction and oversight of negotiations to reform First Nations Child & Family Services and Jordan's Principle. The Commission has been directed to work openly and transparently and to remain accountable to the First Nations-in-Assembly.

Canada's discrimination against First Nations children is national in scope. Accordingly, the Commission has a mandate to negotiate national long-term reform agreements. We strongly condemn Canada's attempts to negotiate reform with First Nations in only one region, while refusing to engage with First Nations in the rest of Canada. Similarly, we strongly object to Canada's efforts to settle, even partially, a national human rights complaint with a regional settlement agreement.

We are particularly concerned by Canada's submissions to the CHRT regarding the Ontario Final Agreement, noting that the OFA: "will provide the Tribunal with the opportunity to consider elements relevant to addressing how the discrimination referred to in the Merits Decision is remedied." The implication is that Canada intends to use the OFA as a template for a national agreement. The First Nations-in-Assembly have already rejected a draft agreement that closely mirrors the OFA and have called for renewed negotiations to fully remedy Canada's systemic discrimination in a manner that supports substantive equality for the wellbeing of First Nations children.

To be clear, the Commission fully respects the right of First Nations in Ontario to negotiate with Canada and to design remedies to Canada's discrimination in the best interests of their own children and families. The Commission urges Canada to immediately implement any such remedies. The Commission does not support Canada's efforts to supplant CHRT orders with a regional agreement—all First Nations voices must be included in any resolution of the human rights complaint.

As noted in our January 24 and February 21 correspondence to your predecessor, Minister Hajdu, the National Children's Chiefs Commission is ready, willing, and able to immediately proceed with completing negotiation of a national agreement to reform First Nations Child & Family Services. I invite you to meet with me at your earliest convenience to initiate that process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pauline Frost', with a stylized, cursive script.

Chief Pauline Frost

Chair, National Children's Chiefs Commission

cc. First Nations Child & Family Caring Society
AFN Regional Chiefs