

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Mandate Letter

Office of the
Prime Minister



Cabinet du
Premier ministre

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A2

Dear Dr. Bennett:

I am honoured that you have agreed to serve Canadians as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

We promised Canadians real change – in both what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in the last election, and our platform offered a new, ambitious plan for a strong and growing middle class. Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.

We made a commitment to grow our economy, strengthen the middle class, and help those working hard to join it. We committed to provide more direct help to those who need it by giving less to those who do not. We committed to public investment to spur economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. We committed to a responsible, transparent fiscal plan for challenging economic times.

I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do their part – individually and collectively – to improve economic opportunity and security for Canadians.

It is my expectation that we will deliver real results and professional government to Canadians. To ensure that we have a strong focus on results, I will expect Cabinet committees and individual ministers to: track and report on the progress of our commitments; assess the effectiveness of our work; and align our resources with priorities, in order to get the results we want and Canadians deserve.

If we are to tackle the real challenges we face as a country – from a struggling middle class to the threat of climate change – Canadians need to have faith in their government’s honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians. We will direct resources to initiatives that have the greatest, positive impact on the lives of Canadians, and that allow us to meet our commitments to them. I expect you to report regularly on your progress toward fulfilling our commitments and to help develop effective measures that assess the impact of the organizations for which you are answerable.

I made a personal commitment to bring new leadership and a new tone to Ottawa. We made a commitment to Canadians to pursue our goals with a renewed sense of collaboration. Improved partnerships with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are essential to deliver the real, positive change that we promised Canadians. No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more

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light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Our platform guides our government. Over the course of our four-year mandate, I expect us to deliver on our commitments. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we fulfill our promises, while living within our fiscal plan. Other issues will arise or will be brought to our attention by Canadians, stakeholders, and the public service. It is my expectation that you will engage constructively and thoughtfully and add priorities to your agenda when appropriate.

As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and the public service; constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including business, organized labour, the broader public sector, and the not-for-profit and charitable sectors; and identifying ways to find solutions and avoid escalating conflicts unnecessarily. As well, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them is essential.

Canadians expect us, in our work, to reflect the values we all embrace: inclusion, honesty, hard work, fiscal prudence, and generosity of spirit. We will be a government that governs for all Canadians, and I expect you, in your work, to bring Canadians together.

You are expected to do your part to fulfill our government's commitment to transparent, merit-based appointments, to help ensure gender parity and that Indigenous Peoples and minority groups are better reflected in positions of leadership.

As you are aware, I recently announced our government's intention to dissolve the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and to replace it with two distinct, though complementary, departments, each with its own minister. I expect that you and your colleague, the Minister of Indigenous Services, will collaborate closely to advance the Government's ambitious agenda.

As Canada's first Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, you will accelerate the work you have already begun to renew the nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, and government-to-government relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. You will also modernize our institutional structure and governance so that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples can build capacity that supports implementation of their vision of self-determination.

This new relationship must be based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. I expect you to build on the progress that has been made already, including the establishment of 50 rights and recognition tables across the country, the creation of bilateral mechanisms with National Indigenous Organizations to make progress on shared priorities, and the progress made across government on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*.

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In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities:

- Develop and lead consultations as we adopt machinery of government changes to renew the relationship with Indigenous Peoples. This will include the dissolution of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and the creation of two new departments. This work should increase our capacity to function on a distinctions basis, ensure we implement the spirit and intent of existing and future agreements with Indigenous Peoples, and identify those services across the Government of Canada that are best delivered by a Department of Indigenous Services. Please provide recommendations to me, under my prerogative for the machinery of government, on the division of responsibilities between you and the Minister of Indigenous Services and your respective departments.
 - Please prioritize consultations relating to the anticipated transfer of responsibility for the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch from the Minister of Health to the Minister of Indigenous Services. Special attention should be paid to engaging with Indigenous Peoples, public service leadership, public sector unions, and external experts on this specific change.
- Lead a whole-of-government approach to the renewal of a nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, and government-to-government relationship with Indigenous Peoples including implementation of the permanent bilateral processes, advancing distinctions-based policy, and improving our capacity as a government to consider and respond to the unique realities of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- Continue to develop and lead a whole-of-government strategy to include Indigenous representatives in meaningful ways in Canada's federal-provincial-territorial dialogues.
- Lead our government's work in the North. You will advance work on a shared Arctic Leadership model and a new Arctic Policy for Canada, and support northern programming, governing institutions, and scientific initiatives.
- Continue work to update and expand the Nutrition North program, in consultation with northern communities.
- Work with the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. to advance devolution in Nunavut.
- Work with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on the implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in the North and support northern communities confronting immediate climate adaptation challenges.
- Increase the number of comprehensive modern treaties and new self-government agreements in a manner that reflects a recognition of rights approach and reconciliation. Accelerate progress on existing rights and recognition tables to identify priorities for individual Indigenous communities.
- Deepen work with the Minister of Finance to establish a new fiscal relationship with Indigenous Peoples that moves towards sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding for communities, a renewed economic and fiscal relationship that ensures nations have the revenue generation and fiscal capacity to govern effectively, and to provide programs and services to those for whom they are responsible.
- Continue to be a member of the Working Group of Ministers on the Review of Laws and Policies Related to Indigenous Peoples, chaired by the Minister of Justice. Drawing on the *Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples*, and in full partnership and consultation with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, the Working Group is developing a recognition of rights framework and ensuring the Crown is fully executing its legal, constitutional, and international human rights obligations and commitments, including constitutionally protected treaty rights.

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- Lead work required to ensure the achievement of the Working Group's objectives as follows:
 - work with Indigenous Peoples to support them in their work to rebuild and reconstitute their nations, advancing self-determination, and, for First Nations, facilitating the transition away from the *Indian Act* and toward self-government;
 - work with the Minister of Justice to ensure that both in our dispute resolution mechanisms and litigation we advance positions that are consistent with the resolution of past wrongs towards Indigenous Peoples, promote co-operation over adversarial processes, and move towards a recognition of rights approach; and
 - consider means to clarify obligations and ensure the implementation of pre-Confederation, historic, and modern treaties and agreements, including updating elements of the treaty relationship to ensure consistency with a recognition of rights approach.
- Work with the Minister of Justice to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples.
- Support the work of reconciliation, and continue the necessary process of truth-telling and healing, work with provinces and territories, and with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation, to drive progress on implementation of recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and establish a National Council for Reconciliation. I expect the full support of your ministerial colleagues in this endeavour.
- Lead further work to address the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada, and be the lead Minister, in collaboration with the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Status of Women, and the Privy Council Office, supporting the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Support the work of the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Health in making systemic change to reduce the health inequities between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians and to make reforms to child and family services. Specifically, I expect you to support these Ministers to develop governance models that bring control and jurisdiction back to communities.
- Work with residential school survivors, First Nations, Inuit, the Métis Nation, provinces, territories, and educators to incorporate Aboriginal and treaty rights, residential schools, and Indigenous contributions into school curricula.
- Collaborate with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Transport, and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to ensure that environmental assessment legislation is amended to enhance the consultation, engagement, and participatory capacity of Indigenous groups in reviewing and monitoring major resource development projects.
- Working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation leadership and local stakeholders and with the support of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, lead the government's efforts to develop the vision for a national space for Indigenous Peoples at 100 Wellington. This space, on the ancestral land of the Algonquin people, is to be used by and for Indigenous Peoples – their voices must be heard through comprehensive consultation, and they must be involved in leading the project.

These priorities draw heavily from our election platform commitments.

I expect you to work closely with your Deputy Minister and his or her senior officials to ensure that the ongoing work of your department is undertaken in a professional manner and that decisions are made in the public interest. Your Deputy Minister will brief you on issues your department may be facing that may require decisions to be made

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quickly. It is my expectation that you will apply our values and principles to these decisions, so that issues facing your department are dealt with in a timely and responsible manner, and in a way that is consistent with the overall direction of our government.

Our ability, as a government, to successfully implement our platform depends on our ability to thoughtfully consider the professional, non-partisan advice of public servants. Each and every time a government employee comes to work, they do so in service to Canada, with a goal of improving our country and the lives of all Canadians. I expect you to establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister, whose role, and the role of public servants under his or her direction, is to support you in the performance of your responsibilities.

We have committed to an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards, and applies the utmost care and prudence in the handling of public funds. I expect you to embody these values in your work and observe the highest ethical standards in everything you do. When dealing with our Cabinet colleagues, Parliament, stakeholders, or the public, it is important that your behaviour and decisions meet Canadians' well-founded expectations of our government. I want Canadians to look on their own government with pride and trust.

As Minister, you must ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the *Conflict of Interest Act* and Treasury Board policies and guidelines. *Open and Accountable Government* has been developed to assist you as you undertake your responsibilities. I ask that you carefully read it and ensure that your staff does so as well. I draw your attention in particular to the Ethical Guidelines set out in Annex A of that document, which apply to you and your staff. As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. Please also review the areas of *Open and Accountable Government* that we have expanded or strengthened, including the guidance on non-partisan use of departmental communications resources and the new code of conduct for exempt staff.

I know I can count on you to fulfill the important responsibilities entrusted in you. In turn, please know that you can count on me to support you every day in your role as Minister.

I am deeply grateful to have this opportunity to serve with you as we build an even greater country. Together, we will work tirelessly to honour the trust Canadians have given us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Justin Trudeau', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada