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Releases

Conservative Senators’ Filibustering Threatens the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL AND THE BC FEDERATION OF LABOUR - JOINT NEWS RELEASE

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) are deeply frustrated by recent attempts to filibuster and delay Bill C-262, An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Conservative Senators are employing wholly undemocratic procedures in an unabashed effort to side-step the human rights of Indigenous peoples.

These actions, by an unelected body, are entirely outrageous, undemocratic and misaligned with Canada's commitment to Reconciliation, the Calls-to-Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the direction of the elected and accountable House of Commons, which overwhelmingly voted to pass the bill after being introduced over three years ago, and unanimously moved an April 10 motion, to pass Bill C-262 into law at the earliest opportunity, urging to the Senate to acquaint the house accordingly.

As last week's report from the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls made abundantly clear, Canada faces an urgent need to address its historic and current treatment of Indigenous peoples. Passing Bill C-262 and recognizing the inherent human rights of Indigenous Peoples is a solid first-step in the right direction.

Yet despite this urgent need, Conservative Senator Don Plett, party whip for the Conservative Senate Caucus, and Conservative Party Leader Andrew Scheer, appear dead set to maintain the status-quo by killing Bill C-262 and denying the application of Indigenous human rights through political filibustering and shortcuts to by-pass good-faith democratic processes.

"Canada's Conservatives have pledged to support the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and yet their actions at this time reveal their real intentions to continue to push back the relationship with First Nations. Canadians must demand better from political representatives and government systems that refuse to change. Our future generations are depending on all of us to deliver solutions that will begin bold actions, including the implementation of Bill C-262," stated BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

"The UN Declaration is a critical framework that affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples and establishes "minimum standards for our survival and well-being". We find it totally abhorrent that Conservative Senators are standing in the way and utilizing every effort to block the passage of legislation on this important human rights instrument", said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "The First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly last week passed a resolution calling on the House of Commons and every Senator to promptly adopt Bill C-262 before the House rises on June 21st. This legislation must not be allowed to die on the order paper".

“The UBCIC is calling on all Canadians to immediately contact Andrew Scheer, the elected leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, and demand that the Conservative Party Senators stop delaying a vote on Bill C-262. The actions of the Conservative Party Senators are an egregious denial of justice and a complete disregard for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Canada’s own democratic processes”, stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “The actions and attitudes of this Conservative Party belong in the past. There is no place in this country for political parties or representatives who rely on political games to maintain a status-quo founded on the ongoing suffering of Indigenous peoples and the continual denial of our basic, and internationally recognized, Indigenous and human rights.”

“Bill C-262 is about fundamental human rights. Conservative Senators politicking to kill Bill C-262 is undemocratic and nothing short of an attack on human rights. Reconciliation is a responsibility for all Canadians and should not be subject to partisan politics,” said BCFED President Laird Cronk. “Workers across B.C. want to see the United Nations Declaration implemented. The Senate of Canada must pass this Bill immediately.”

In a time when numerous reports, exposés and court decisions are calling on the Canadian Government to address their ongoing egregious treatment of Indigenous Peoples, why is the Conservative Party of Canada continuing to deny the recognition and application of the internationally recognized human rights of Indigenous Peoples? Political representatives must be held accountable for the circumvention of our democratically accountable processes and the continual denial of the human rights of Indigenous peoples.

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.

The BC Federation of Labour represents over 500,000 members from affiliated unions across the province, working in every aspect of the BC economy.

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