



The Honourable Seamus O'Regan P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous Services
The House of Commons
Algonquin Territory
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

January 18, 2019

Re.: Reconciliation in Indigenous Education, fulfilling TRC 7-10

Minister O'Regan:

We write to extend our congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Indigenous Services. As believers in Christ-the-Redeemer-and-Reconciler we know that the journey of reconciliation with Indigenous neighbours is ours as a community of faith and ours as people living in this place called Canada. For that reason, Minister O'Regan, we offer our commitment to constructive dialogue in support of the fulfilment of your important mandate.

The Christian Reformed churches in Canada have affirmed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a *framework for reconciliation*, in fulfillment of TRC Call to Action #48. This commitment is also consistent with our ongoing efforts to support reconciliation in Indigenous Education. For much of the last decade we've listened carefully to Indigenous leaders and educators, and engaged in parliamentary dialogue in an effort to bear witness to reconciliation in education. In the course of that listening (and related research) we have learned that success in Indigenous education is built on equitable funding; Indigenous language, cultural and values content; and the full participation of Indigenous communities (especially Elders) in education. Along with Indigenous partners, we hold these principles of educational success high, as we encourage the fulfillment of TRC Calls to Action 7-10 (Reconciliation in k-12 education).

In September 2018 we were pleased to kick off our *Education Together* campaign with the release of a [report card](#) on the implementation of TRC Calls to Action 7-10. The campaign and report card are intended to bear witness to justice, equity, self-determination and reconciliation in Indigenous Education. We'll be encouraging members of our churches to learn about TRC 7-10 and to interact with Parliamentarians and 2019 candidates about it. In sum, we are encouraged by the ongoing development of agreements for First Nation self-determination in education, but greatly concerned with the ongoing discrepancies in graduation rates and funding inequities. As we mentioned to Minister Philpott in September 2018:

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue is a place of conversation, learning and action on God's call to justice, peace and reconciliation. We are a ministry of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, a denomination of 255 churches and ministries and across the country. We enjoy full partnership with the Regional Synod of Canada of the Reformed Church in America, and invest deeply in the major ecumenical organizations in Canada. **Seeking Justice, Speaking Hope**

“The history of discrimination in funding and services to Indigenous students has led to stunning injustices like a 24% graduation rate for on-reserve First Nations students (AG 2018), in contrast to a national graduation rate around 90%. The 2016 Budget made historic commitments that are a helpful start to addressing chronic inequities, and existing and developing self-determination agreements in education show great promise and results for equity and excellence in Indigenous education. These good steps on the journey of reconciliation can continue and must include careful attention to the voices and experience of Indigenous students, communities, Elders and educators and take into account the critical analysis of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General. With all of the above in mind we ask you to take vigorous steps to implement TRC Calls to Action 7-10.”

We respectfully echo this request to you Minister O’Regan. We shared the *Education Together* report with your colleague, Minister Philpott, and appreciated the opportunity to discuss our findings and to explore deeper questions with Ministerial staff member Ms. Ana Fujarczuk. We hope that such dialogue on TRC 7-10 will continue under your tenure as Minister.

Lastly Minister O’Regan, we know that reconciliation in education is a complex and long-term endeavour. We commit to consistent prayer for you in this sacred task of reconciliation. As we pray we also commit to listen carefully to Indigenous neighbours and partners, as we seek to work constructively with you and other leaders on the journey of reconciliation. We wish you God-the-Creator’s blessings of wisdom and abundant energy for your important role, and we look forward to the opportunity to discuss justice, equity and reconciliation in Indigenous education with you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Darren Roorda
Director of Canadian Ministries
Christian Reformed Church

Mike Hogeterp
Director,
Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

cc: The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, MP, PC
Cathy McLeod, MP
Romeo Saganash, MP
Ms. Ana Fujarczuk