



**National Aboriginal
Economic Development Board**
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**Conseil national de
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des Autochtones**

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November 24, 2015

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, M.D., P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
10 Wellington Street, 23rd Floor
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H4

Dear Minister Bennett:

On behalf of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Your Government's commitment to renew the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples gives us great hope that together we can overcome the many challenges facing Indigenous Peoples and build upon the many opportunities that will help lead to better socio-economic outcomes.

Established in 1990, our Board, comprised of First Nations, Inuit and Métis members, is a national, non-partisan body with a mandate to advise the Government of Canada on Indigenous economic development issues.

As the Prime Minister has stated, your overarching goal will be to renew the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples, built upon a nation-to-nation relationship based on recognition, rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. It is the strong and unanimous position of our Board that a nation-to-nation relationship will only be possible where Indigenous governments are able to assert jurisdiction over matters that affect our lands, resources and other levers of economic development. Without a strong economy, Indigenous Peoples will be unable to escape the paternalism of anachronistic laws and policies and achieve greater self-sufficiency and independence.

The Board has developed a Strategic Plan that identifies a number of key issues that we believe align well with your own priorities and will help contribute to increased economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples.

First, it is our stated objective that federal investments in Indigenous economic development should represent no less than 10% of overall federal funding for Indigenous Peoples. The right investments in the right places will lead to more Indigenous businesses and more jobs for Indigenous People, and will help create the right conditions for investment and development in our communities. As you are aware, a recent TD Bank report found that closing the socio-economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians would boost Canada's GDP by \$401 billion and reduce social costs by \$115 billion by 2026.

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Second, we have begun an ambitious program of analysis and study that will focus on: increasing Indigenous community readiness for economic opportunities; building stable revenues through improved access to capital; enabling a new and equitable fiscal relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples; building the economic potential of Indigenous lands while minimizing environmental impacts; supporting Indigenous business and Indigenous women entrepreneurs; and promoting the importance of Indigenous economic development.

We urge you to draw on the recommendations that we have made in previous reports as you advance your work. In particular, our report on *Improving the Economic Success of Urban Additions to Reserve*, which demonstrates the economic benefits of additions to reserve to all Canadians, has already been well-received by many stakeholders, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Our *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report (2012)* and *Aboriginal Economic Progress Report (2015)* demonstrate the importance of tracking how Indigenous Peoples are doing across a wide range of socio-economic indicators. These reports show that while some progress has been made Canada is not on track to reach a point where there is parity in terms of economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Real change is necessary.

We invite you and your colleagues in Cabinet to make regular use of the Board as a source of expert advice as you develop proposals and initiatives. We would welcome your attendance and participation at our Board meetings, and encourage you to consider formally joining the Board as a co-chair so that we can engage with you in discussions about Indigenous economic development on an on-going basis.

In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to invite you to our next Board meeting, which we would be pleased to arrange to suit your schedule, so that we can begin to discuss how we can work together to strengthen Indigenous economies and support our communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clarence Louie', written in a cursive style.

Chief Clarence Louie
Chairperson
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board