



**National Aboriginal
Economic Development Board**

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**Conseil national de
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October 28, 2015

**Mr. Justin Trudeau, MP
Leader
Liberal Party of Canada
House of Commons
111 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A0A6**

Dear Prime Minister Designate,

As the Chair of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, and on behalf of the Board members, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to you as you take on the responsibilities of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Established in 1990, the Board is a national, non-partisan body with a mandate to advise the federal government on Aboriginal economic development. Board members are appointed by the Governor in Council and are First Nations, Inuit and Métis community and business leaders from across Canada.

Like you, we believe that real change is necessary. Aboriginal people cannot afford to wait any longer to be full participants in one of the world's most prosperous economies. The social issues are too pressing; the potential for Aboriginal people to contribute is too great.

I am pleased to note that an unprecedented ten Aboriginal Members of Parliament were elected, including eight from your party. These Members of Parliament will play an important role as your government pursues an ambitious agenda with respect to Aboriginal issues. The increased number of Aboriginal candidates who ran in the election, a total of 54, and the increased turnout of Aboriginal voters in many ridings highlights both a pressing need to deal with Aboriginal issues and optimism that progress can be made.

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It is the opinion of our Board that the federal government has consistently underinvested in Aboriginal economic development. As shown in our *Aboriginal Economic Development Progress Report*, which was released in June 2015, a lack of focus and attention to Aboriginal economic development is holding Aboriginal people back from achieving parity with other Canadians in terms of community and individual well-being. It has long been the position of our Board that spending on Aboriginal economic development should not be less than 10% of total federal spending on Aboriginal programs.

It is my opinion that the best social program is a job. It is imperative that the proportion of federal spending on Aboriginal economic development be increased so that Aboriginal communities can develop thriving economies in which community members can find fulfilling employment.

Our previous reports include recommendations that I believe will be useful to your government. In addition to reporting on Aboriginal economic development progress in a systematic way, on topics including: the benefits to all Canadians of Additions to Reserve, and the tools that Aboriginal people need to benefit from resource development in their traditional lands. Going forward, we will continue to focus on critical issues that will unlock the potential that exists for the Aboriginal economy to grow including the need to increase infrastructure investment in and around Aboriginal communities. We plan to release a recommendations report on Infrastructure in Canada's North in the coming months and look forward to working with your incoming Minister on this topic.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite you to meet with the Executive members of the Board. We would welcome the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with you about the role Aboriginal economic development can play in strengthening Aboriginal communities and Canadian society.

Having Aboriginal people as full and equal participants in the Canadian economy benefits all Canadians – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike – and is a priority for our country. On behalf of the Board, we look forward to working with you and your Ministers to make real change for the better.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Clarence Louie
Chairperson
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board