

WORKING TO DEFEAT



ON-RESERVE POVERTY

Dale Swampy
President
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Hon. Marc Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
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March 30, 2020

Dear Minister Miller,

I am writing to share with you the urgent need for support of the First Nations communities, businesses and workers involved in Canada's oil and gas industry.

As you are no doubt aware, the combination of a flooding of the market of OPEC and Russian oil, alongside the fall in demand from the COVID-19 situation, has caused an unprecedented crisis in the Canadian oil and gas industry.

While, sadly, many Canadians will be dismissive of the needs of the industry and its hundreds of thousands of workers at this time, many First Nations are facing an economic disaster if the federal government is not able to support the industry in its recovery. There are 39 First Nations that produce oil and/or natural gas on reserve, and over a hundred that rely on economic benefits from pipelines passing through their territories. In addition there are over 12,000 self identified Indigenous employees in the industry, and hundreds of Indigenous owned businesses who

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provide goods and services worth billions of dollars to oil and gas companies every year.

All of this is now at risk. I know it is the Liberals' goal, and your mandate, to ensure more Indigenous people enter the middle class, and that more First Nations achieve self-determination, including by building revenue-generating capacity. It is the position, and the experience, of the National Coalition of Chiefs that this will not be possible without strong First Nations' participation in a strong oil and gas industry.

As such, I am writing to ask that you advocate forcefully for measures that will help the Canadian oil and gas industry recover as quickly as possible, to ensure that the many Indigenous communities, workers and businesses that rely on the industry can recover and thrive as well. I do not need to tell you that poverty, hopelessness, and dependence are a major source of the social ills and health gaps that plague our communities, and that the COVID-19 crisis will hit First Nations the hardest, if there is no strategic intervention.

Amongst other strategies, I believe protecting the North American market from the flooding of Saudi and other foreign oil is imperative. Reducing our dependence on foreign oil and mitigating the impacts of disruption and shocks to the global oil market by shifting to Canadian oil would result in higher incomes, higher tax revenues, stable employment and higher GDP for all of Canada, while ensuring our oil & gas needs are obtained from the most ethical of all oil sources – our own.

Various policies that have been proposed include putting quotas and limits on foreign oil imports, and improving pipeline transportation capacity from western Canadian to eastern Canadian refineries. These ideas have found support from political parties across the spectrum. There is no better time to shift our energy policies in favour of domestic production than right now.

I would be pleased to speak with you about the extensive Indigenous involvement in the oil and gas industry, particularly in Western Canada, and the implications a decline will have on our communities. This is an unnerving time for many; knowing

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the federal government supports Canada's oil and gas industry would provide much needed hope for many of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Swampy', written over a white rectangular background.

Dale Swampy
President
National Coalition of Chiefs

cc. Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

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