

Ministre des Services
aux Autochtones



Minister of
Indigenous Services

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H4

15 June 2021

Dale Swampy
President
National Coalition of Chiefs
111 Everstone Rise SW
CALGARY AB T2Y 4J7

daleswampy@coalitionofchiefs.ca

Dear Dale Swampy:

I acknowledge the concerns that you expressed in your correspondence received May 3, 2021, addressed to the Prime Minister in response to the announcement of Budget 2021.

Thank you for sharing concerns with respect to investments needed to support the natural resources industry as a means of both aiding in the economic prosperity of First Nation communities and in supporting Canada's transition to a lower-carbon future. Along with overall health, safety, and well-being, the Government of Canada has prioritized the economic relief and recovery of Indigenous communities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Budget 2021 both builds on existing programs, and also creates several new initiatives to assist with immediate and continuing needs in the context of COVID-19. In addition to these short-term emergency measures, Budget 2021 includes long-term investments to work toward closing long-standing socio-economic gaps while also prioritizing initiatives aimed at addressing climate change.

While our colleagues in the Department of Finance and Natural Resources Canada will be able to speak more directly to initiatives involving energy and natural resources, we would like to highlight some of the measures within Budget 2021 that support Indigenous businesses, including those in the natural resource industry.

- An additional \$42 million over three years, starting in 2021-2022, to expand the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program through the network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions and Métis Capital Corporations to support Indigenous-led businesses and help Indigenous communities generate wealth by improving access to capital and business opportunities.

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- \$22 million over three years, starting in 2021-2022, to support the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association's Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship Initiative by providing tools, services, and resources to increase the number of Indigenous women entrepreneurs who access financing through Aboriginal Financial Institutions by 50 percent.
- An extension of the COVID-19 Indigenous Business Initiative to June 30, 2021, to support Indigenous businesses during the pandemic by providing interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation businesses.
- \$36 million over three years, through the Strategic Partnerships Initiative, to build capacity for local, economically-sustainable clean energy projects in First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities and support economic development opportunities.
- Budget 2021 also announced the launch of the Indigenous Growth Fund, first envisioned in Budget 2019 as a source of affordable loan capital to support Indigenous businesses. It is expected to play an important role in the economic recovery post pandemic and it will be the base for the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association to attract private sector capital to grow the fund. The Fund is currently valued at \$150 million, with financing from the federal government (Social Financing Fund - \$50 million), the Business Development Bank of Canada (\$50 million), Export Development Canada (\$35 million), and Farm Credit Canada (\$15 million).

Thank you for sharing your concerns over the investments in Budget 2021 and measures needed to support poverty reduction in First Nation communities and natural resource development. No relationship is more important to the federal government than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples, and we look forward to engaging with First Nation organizations and leadership in the implementation of these new investments as we continue to walk the shared path of reconciliation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

The Honourable Marc Miller, PC, MP

c.c.: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP
The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, PC, MP