

FEDINTGOVB EDM

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November 25, 1981

c.c. - Honourable Peter Lougheed
Honourable N. S. Crawford
Honourable Dick Johnston
Honourable Dr. D. J. McCrimmon
R. W. Paisley
Dr. J. Peter Meekison

TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND ALL PROVINCIAL PREMIERS:

YESTERDAY THE HON. JOHN MUNRO INTRODUCED AN AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RECOGNITION AND AFFIRMATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION. IT WAS ALMOST IDENTICAL TO THE ORIGINAL WORDING APPROVED BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS EARLIER THIS YEAR, HOWEVER THE WORD :EXISTING: HAD BEEN ADDED.

WE ARE TOLD THAT ALL PREMIERS WHO SIGNED THE ACCORD HAVE AGREED TO THIS NEW WORDING. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT SOME PREMIERS FEEL THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO ADD THE WORD :EXISTING: WHEREAS OTHERS ARE AMBIVALENT.

WHILE WE SINCERELY APPRECIATE THAT ALL PREMIERS WHO SIGNED THE ACCORD NOW SUPPORT THE ENTRENCHMENT OF ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA, WE HAVE A MOUNTING CONCERN THAT BY ADDING THE WORD :EXISTING: THE INTENT AND MEANING OF THE ORIGINAL WORDING MAY BE DRASTICALLY ALTERED.

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE HAS STATED IN THE HOUSE THAT THE ADDITION OF THE WORD DOES NOT CHANGE ANYTHING. IF THIS IS SO, WE BELIEVE THE WORD SHOULD BE DELETED. YOU ARE NO DOUBT AWARE THAT A SUB-AMENDMENT HAS BEEN MOVED TO STRIKE THE WORD FROM THE CLAUSE. THE SUCCESS OF THE SUB-AMENDMENT, HOWEVER, APPEARS DEPENDENT UPON THE SUPPORT OF PREMIERS. WE CALL ON YOU TO SUPPORT THAT SUB-AMENDMENT AND ADVISE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACCORDINGLY.

WOULD YOU PLEASE GIVE THIS MATTER YOUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AS THERE IS PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME LEFT FOR DEBATE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR RESPONSE LATER TODAY. OUR TELEX NO. IS 053-3301.

ON BEHALF OF ONE MILLION INDIANS, INUIT AND METIS,

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS COALITION:

SMOKEY BRUYERE, NATIVE COUNCIL OF CANADA
CHARLIE WATT, INUIT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL ISSUES
GEORGES ERASMUS, DENE NATION
HARRY ALLEN, COUNCIL OF YUKON INDIANS
JANE GOTTFRIEDSON, NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
BILL LEE, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

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