



The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau

Prime Minister

justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

August 26, 2024

Re: Letter of Support for the Survivor's Secretariat

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Your recent decision to implement a nationwide decrease in funding for the critical work required to bring our lost children home is appalling. Further, your decision is contrary to and in direct conflict with your very own mandate letter to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations as posted on your website (pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters). In your mandate letter you state “Your immediate priority is to provide the necessary supports for communities as they undertake searches of unmarked graves and burial sites at residential schools and ensure supports for healing and commemoration to preserve and protect the rights and dignity of children who never made it home.” Your mandate letter further states “Work with the Minister of Indigenous Services to address the history and legacy of residential schools, including by continuing to provide the necessary supports to communities who wish to continue to undertake the work of burial searches at the sites of former residential schools and other federally-run institutions, such as day schools and Indian hospitals.”

As you know, the painful legacy of the Indian Residential School system has had, and continues to have, devastating impacts on generations of First Nations peoples. On behalf of the 59th Elected Council, I encourage you to honour your words, to honour Canada's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and to honour the nation-to-nation work that is necessary to move Canada forward in a good way. I encourage you to continue to prioritize truth, justice, and reconciliation by ensuring that every child who never returned home is acknowledged and properly laid to rest with dignity in a matter determined by their families and communities.

I am aware that the recently announced funding cap is lifted however the outcome and reality is that some First Nations will be denied financial support to do the critical work to bring their children home and further, First Nations will continue to compete for funding.

Specifically, I respectfully request that funding be restored to \$3 million (and continue annually) to the Survivor's Secretariat, located here at Six Nations. Further, the accumulated changes to the funding of the work of unmarked burials and missing children will cause division amongst First Nations as the total funding available is simply not large enough for all communities and will result in some communities receiving little to no funding. Under the new program, First Nations that were once eligible for funding may no longer be eligible and as such, cannot complete the work they commenced or that is needed.

As you may know, the Survivor's Secretariat supports survivors from sixty (60) First Nations who attended 'The Mush Hole' (Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario). Precluding the work that is underway (comprehensive investigations, community support and healing, education and awareness, collaboration with First Nations leadership and commemorations) will bring more harm and devastation to the survivors, to their families and by extension to First Nation communities broadly. I trust this is not your intent.

Given the urgency of this request to restore funding, and to establish national funding at appropriate levels, all federal Ministers will receive a copy of this letter in the coming days.

Nia:wen (thank you) for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

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

Chief Sherri-Lyn Hill
Six Nations of the Grand River

cc: All federal Ministers