

THE CANADIAN RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE SUPPORTS BILL C-15

Montreal, April 21, 2021 — The Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) supports federal Bill C-15, “An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. The CRC also invites religious congregations and institutes of consecrated life in Canada to express their support for this bill, as other Christian Churches and organizations have done by signing [Faith in the Declaration](#).

Bill C-15, tabled on December 3rd, 2020 by the Honorable David Lametti, Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, aims to ensure that the laws of Canada become consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)). This is the second attempt to do so, following Bill C-262, which had been introduced by NDP MP Romeo Saganash in 2016, passed Commons but was ultimately blocked by Conservative Senators in 2019 without becoming law.

The CRC and its network of Catholic religious communities sincerely desire to journey in reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, keenly aware of the deep suffering caused by colonization, residential schools and the abuse generations of Indigenous youth endured, as well as the responsibility Churches and a number of religious congregations carry in that history. Several congregations took part in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, asked for forgiveness and offered financial compensation. The CRC and its network continue to commit to the necessary education in order to build new relationships between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. It is by recognizing the complexity of our history and the diversity that characterizes Canada that we can work together against discrimination and racism, towards eliminating poverty, for climate justice and care for our common home.

In March 2016, [the CRC signed a joint response](#) together with other Canadian Catholic organizations, answering Call to Action (CTA) 48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. CTA 48 called on all faith groups in Canada to *formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a framework for reconciliation*. The UNDRIP was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, and the Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN has explicitly endorsed this Declaration a number of times.

It is in keeping with its 2016 response to CTA 48 that the CRC wishes to see Bill C-15 passed. The CRC is aware that in its current state, the bill does not rally unanimous support from Indigenous Peoples, federal and provincial political parties, and religious organizations. However, following the failure of Bill C-262, and a parliamentary schedule that may be disrupted by the pandemic or possible fall elections, the CRC is concerned that Bill C-15's goals may once again languish. In this context, the CRC strongly encourages proceedings to advance Bill C-15 to Royal Assent this spring. The CRC believes that consultations with Indigenous Peoples in the development of an action plan, following the passing of the legislation, must allow for the necessary revisions and amendments to the legislative framework to ensure its compatibility with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Bill C-15 is instrumental for renewing the spirit of reconciliation in Canada and encouraging the work of decolonization, in order to establish right relationships and a common vision for the future of our country.

In light of this, the Canadian Religious Conference expresses its support for Bill C-15 and encourages its members to add their voices to the [Faith in the Declaration](#) coalition of Churches and Christian organizations.

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