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*Representing Northern Business Since 1973*

June 11, 2020

Hon Bill Morneau  
Minister of Finance  
430 Parliament Street  
Toronto ON M5A 3A2

Hon Marc Miller  
Minister of Indigenous Service  
3175 Saint-Jacques Street  
Montréal QC H4C 1G7

RE: Relief Funding for Indigenous Businesses

Dear Hon Bill Morneau and Hon Marc Miller

On April 18th, Prime Minister Trudeau recognized a support gap that many Indigenous businesses and the majority of Indigenous Development Corporations are falling into by announcing \$306.8m in much-needed support for the Indigenous business sector.

To date, six weeks after this announcement, no program has been implemented to assist this vital sector of the Canadian economy.

Indigenous businesses accounted for \$12B of Canada's GDP in 2016; they are one of Canada's largest employers. Seventy percent of Indigenous businesses reinvest their net profit back into their companies and communities. The health of this sector is vitally important as we look to recover from the impacts of COVID-19; it cannot be ignored any longer.

The NWT Chamber of Commerce represents over 100 members as well as over 3,500 businesses of every size and sector throughout the NWT, including Indigenous entrepreneurs and Indigenous Development Corporations.

Please accept this letter from the NWT Chamber of Commerce as a call to action regarding very much needed financial relief for Indigenous businesses.

High profile natural resource projects, which have been the driver of our Northern economy for years, are nearing end-of-life or have ceased operations entirely, making our Northern Economy pre-COVID particularly fragile.



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The erosion of the Northern Economy, high cost of living, limited physical infrastructure have created an environment where Indigenous businesses are forced to survive on razor-thin margins to ensure their survival and the livelihood of their employees.

Many Indigenous Development Corporations have several operating entities under their umbrellas, which include wholly-owned companies, joint ventures, partnerships, and subsidiaries. Much of their revenue comes in the form of management fees, dividends, and commissions that don't neatly fit into regular revenue streams. Demonstrating the effect of COVID-19 on a Development Corporation's financial statement for a particular month or even a specific quarter is near impossible. The true ramifications of COVID-19 will not manifest themselves on a Development Corporations financial statements until months from now.

The Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) changes announced on May 15th will assist some Indigenous businesses. Many others still will not be supported due to their inability to show losses in the designated fiscal period.

Indigenous businesses will likely be closed long before they can demonstrate a 30% reduction of revenue, meaning current thresholds for Federal support are not relevant in a Northern Indigenous context.

In survey results conducted jointly between Stats Canada and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 34.8% of surveyed Indigenous businesses can only last up to 4 months with fully/partial operational with social distancing rules in place. Social distancing measures have negatively impacted 74 %.

We recognize and appreciate that the Federal Government has made significant efforts to support the country's business community over the past few months and that it is nearly impossible to address every situation where a business may fall through the cracks.

The gap in program delivery for Indigenous business sector support is significant enough to warrant immediate attention and action. This oversight is troubling not only for Indigenous businesses but also for all the members we represent.

Indigenous businesses in the NWT are at a critical point; if action is not taken immediately, we will see a vital element of Canada's economy disappear.

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Yours truly,



Renée Comeau  
Executive Director  
NWT Chamber of Commerce



Jenni Bruce  
President  
NWT Chamber of Commerce

Signatures of Support



Darrell Beaulieu  
Spokesperson  
NWT Indigenous Leaders Economic Coalition Forum



Deneen Everett  
Executive Director  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce



Tim Syer  
President  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

*Cc'd: MP Michael McLeod; Hon Daniel Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs; Hon Yvonne Jones, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs; Hon. Melanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development & Minister Responsible for Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency; Hon. Larry Bagnell, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of CanNor; Hon Margret Dawn Anderson, Senator NWT; Hon Michelle Rempel Gardner, Shadow Minister of Industry and Economic Development; Hon Caroline Cochrane, Premier of the NWT; Hon Caroline Wawzonek, NWT Minister of Finance; Hon Katrina Nokleby, Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment*