



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

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The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
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Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2  
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January 28, 2013

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We are writing to express solidarity with the Idle No More Movement. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (started in 1977) is a provincial coalition of first stage emergency shelters that promotes change that abused women and their children identify as important to their freedom from violence.

As advocates for social change, we are aligned with our Aboriginal sisters and brothers who are urging the government of Canada to repeal legislation that violates Treaties and Indigenous Sovereignty. The Indigenous Ways of Knowing is rooted in ways to protect water, air and land for future generations for all Canadians.

Bill C-45 is a large bill with many aspects to it that are unconscionable such as amendments to the Indian Act which gives the government authority to determine the surrender of First Nation territory. This clause contravenes the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in achieving their right of self-determination.

Additionally, Bill C-45 includes changes to the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which undermine Canada's ecology. These changes will impact all Canadians, but the traditional territories of the Aboriginal peoples will be in the most peril.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) called for profound transformation to the relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to change the appalling impact that Aboriginal people experienced during colonization, which resulted in the loss of far too many Indigenous people, their land, culture, language, and dignity. The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn A-In-Chut Atleo, also speaks of the deep change required in the relationships between our people.

The federal government has an opportunity to begin to repair and rebuild this relationship by listening and responding to First Nations, Inuit and Metis people with respect and dignity. Aboriginal Leaders should not need to resort to hunger strikes in order to draw attention to the urgent needs of First Nation communities. We urge the Canadian Government to respond to the goals and vision of Idle No More movement as it will not only benefit Aboriginal people of this country, but will benefit all Canadians. Please begin this renewal process by agreeing to meet as requested with First Nations leadership and chiefs from around the country as well as the Governor General.

Sincerely,

Lee-Anne Lee, Chair, Board of Directors