

February 20, 2026

**By Email**

The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Indigenous Services Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

**Re: Collaboration toward long-term reform of First Nations Child & Family Services**

We acknowledge receipt of your December 21, 2025, letter and your public remarks of December 22, 2025, outlining Canada's proposed long-term reform plan for First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS).

In your letter and your public remarks, you affirmed that lasting reform must be First Nations-led, grounded in mandates determined by First Nations themselves, and advanced through collaboration, transparency, and respect for self-determination. You also confirmed, during our December 10, 2025 meeting, that you are the instructing client in *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society et al. v. Attorney General of Canada*. This clarification is significant as it confirms that Canada's litigation positions in this matter reflect ministerial direction and are not independent of the policy commitments you have articulated publicly and directly to First Nations Leadership.

In both your December 21 letter and your December 22 news conference, you stated that Canada remains open to working with the National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC), Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (Caring Society), noting that all parties share the same goal to ensure, on an urgent basis, that First Nations children and families receive quality services free of discrimination.

Prior to sending a formal reply to your letter, we considered it important to assess whether Canada's conduct before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) reflects the principles and commitments you articulated. Regrettably, Canada's recent litigation positions do not align with those commitments.

At the January 21, 2026, case management conference, Tribunal inquiries regarding potential engagement on a hybrid or collaborative approach were met with submissions from the Attorney General indicating that Canada had no mandate and no anticipated instructions to pursue such engagement. In parallel, Canada opposed the NCCC's application for interested party status, despite the NCCC's clear mandate from First Nations-in-Assembly to negotiate long-term reform of FNCFS and Jordan's Principle. These positions stand in direct tension with your public commitments.

As we outlined in our December 15, 2025 correspondence, the AFN, the NCCC, and the Caring Society remain ready to work with Canada to achieve lasting, systemic reform that permanently ends discrimination against First Nations children. For such discussions to proceed in good faith and with credibility, we reiterate our previous request for written confirmation that:

1. Canada has a mandate to work collaboratively with the NCCC, the AFN, and the Caring Society—consistent with First Nations Leadership direction—to permanently end discrimination in FNCFS and Jordan’s Principle;
2. The CHRT process will continue concurrently with any reform discussions to prevent further delay and to ensure compliance with existing Tribunal orders; and
3. Canada will immediately rescind and refrain from issuing unilaterally imposed operational bulletins under FNCFS and Jordan’s Principle, and commit to the co-development of all policies, directives, and operational changes affecting First Nations children and families.

We also seek clarification regarding Canada’s decision to file its reform plan “with prejudice” to the outcome of the judicial review of 2025 CHRT 80. Please confirm whether any aspect of Canada’s proposed plan—or its funding, implementation, or duration—is contingent upon the outcome of that judicial review.

Our shared objective must be durable, rights-based reform that ensures fewer children enter care, shorter stays when care is unavoidable, and meaningful accountability to First Nations children, families, and communities. Achieving these outcomes will require more than parallel processes or unilateral initiatives. It will require clear mandates, good-faith engagement, written commitments, and a demonstrable shift from control to true co-development.

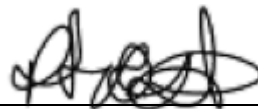
We remain prepared to work with Canada in a manner that reflects the spirit and substance of your public commitments and that adopts the First Nations-led Loving Justice Plan as the foundation for long-term reform. We propose an in-person meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss these matters and advance the work.

Sincerely,



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Regional Chief Francis Verreault-Paul,  
AFN Portfolio Holder, FNCFS & Jordan’s Principle,



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Chief Pauline Frost,  
Chair, National Children’s Chiefs  
Commission



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Cindy Blackstock, PhD  
First Nations Child and Family Caring Society

CC: National Chief and Executive, Assembly of First Nations  
National Children’s Chiefs Commission  
Julia Carbone, Indigenous Services Canada