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### **CHIEFS CALL FOR MINISTER DUNN'S RESIGNATION**

The Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik Chiefs are calling for the resignation of Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Arlene Dunn, in response to her opposition to holding a public inquiry into systemic racism in the justice system in New Brunswick.

Yesterday, the Legislative Assembly debated a motion that endorsed the Chiefs long-standing call for an inquiry into systemic racism in the justice system in New Brunswick. The Higgs Government, led by Minister Dunn, gutted the motion by removing any reference to an inquiry.

"We are outraged by the actions of the Progressive Conservatives yesterday. They gutted a motion calling for an inquiry, completely removing its purpose. Removing the reference to the inquiry but then trying to pretend they want to address systemic racism is disgraceful," said Chief Ross Perley of Neqotkuk.

The Chiefs met with Minister Dunn earlier this week, and once again laid out the need for an inquiry to address long-standing institutional racism in the justice system. They made clear, as they have from the beginning, that previous reports do not specifically address racism in New Brunswick, and not racism in the justice system, and that the need for an Inquiry is separate and apart from the need for action on past commissions and inquiries that addressed other issues.

"Without an inquiry, the government cannot be forced to cooperate and share all necessary information, and this government will continue to deny the level of systemic racism that exists and as a result the measures that need to be implemented to combat systemic racism will never be undertaken," said Chief Tim Paul of Wotstak.

"Unfortunately, our request fell on deaf ears. Given her lack of willingness to listen to or work with First Nations, we have lost confidence in the Minister. As far as we are concerned, Dunn is done. We will not be meeting with her again. She should do the right thing and tender her resignation." Said Chief Bill Ward, of Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation.

The Chiefs had hoped the Minister would work with them to address issues their communities face such as systemic racism in justice, child poverty, and how we can improve the Treaty relationship.

“The reality is that this government is not listening and what happened yesterday only provided us further evidence that we should not trust this government,” said Chief Allan Polchies Jr. of Sitansisk.

“As the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Minister Dunn is supposed to be an advocate for the Indigenous peoples in this province. It was a slap in the face to see Minister Dunn was the Member who actually moved the amendment to the motion that removed all references to an inquiry. We have lost our trust in her.” said Chief George Ginnish of Natoaganeg.

The Higgs government has never provided a valid reason for their opposition to holding an inquiry. The government has simply pointed to their own failure to act on the findings of other commissions and inquiries affecting Indigenous Peoples, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Minister Dunn’s amendments reference the work of the All Nations/All Parties Working Group on Truth and Reconciliation, a long overdue working group intended to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That working group is not tasked with looking into systemic racism in New Brunswick, nor is it equipped to do so.

“The government continues to refer to a working group, a term which it uses interchangeably with a Task Force. We have been clear and firm in our position—we need an inquiry. A task force, or working group, is not enough,” said Chief Shelley Sabattis of Welamoktok.

“The Higgs government is trying to get around having an inquiry and it’s clear they’re using the All Nations Working Group as a screen to hide behind. If that’s the case, we will have to reconsider our participation in that process, said Chief Rebecca Knockwood of Fort Folly.

“Once again, this government is taking a paternalistic approach, and assumes they know better than we do what our communities need. We are partners in this process. Start treating us with the fairness and respect we deserve. We’re not going anywhere,” said Chief Sacha LaBillois.

Minister Dunn and Minister Cardy both stated that they “support action” instead of an Inquiry. Their inaction, however, speaks louder than their words. The Chiefs have now repeatedly provided the Higgs government with a list of immediately actionable reforms in the justice system, and in other areas. The Higgs government has failed to action a single reform.

The Chiefs also thanked the opposition parties, Jake Stewart and particularly MLA Lisa Harris, who brought forward the motion, for their support.

#### Media Inquiries

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#### About MTI

Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated is a not for profit organization created by the Mi'gmag First Nations in New Brunswick. Its objectives include promoting and supporting: the recognition, affirmation, exercise, and implementation of the Aboriginal and Treaty rights; the right of self-determination; political, cultural, economic, educational and social development; justice and equity; wider respect and understanding; and general awareness of its member communities and their Mi'gmaq laws, rights, values, traditions, customs and practices.

#### About WNNB

The Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick provides technical advice and support to the 6 Wolastoqey Communities in New Brunswick to ensure that the constitutional duty to consult owed to the Wolastoqey is being met and Wolastoqey Aboriginal and Treaty rights are being recognized and implemented.