



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Higgs Government Denies Implementing Change to Justice System**

FREDERICTON - The Chiefs of Mi'gmawel Tplu'taqnn Inc. (MTI), along with the Chiefs of the Wolastoqey Nation of New Brunswick and the Peskotomuhkati Nation, met today with the Premier and provincial cabinet ministers to advocate for immediate reforms to policing in New Brunswick and make the case for an independent inquiry into the province's justice system. The MTI Chiefs left the meeting feeling frustrated, angry and saddened that a provincial government would knowingly ignore the systemic discrimination happening to citizens within New Brunswick and, by doing so, condone these actions.

The MTI Chiefs proposed four specific and immediately actionable reforms to policing that are within provincial jurisdiction. These reforms are:

1. The need to change the approach to law enforcement in our communities – The Chiefs will develop a proposal that will be developed and submitted to the governments of New Brunswick and Canada to create community-based 'peacekeepers'. Peacekeepers are unarmed community safety officers from our communities, trained in de-escalation tactics and to address issues of mental health, addiction, poverty, trauma.
2. The need to change police training and standards – The Chiefs asked for an increased emphasis on training in cultural competence, de-escalation, and dealing with trauma, mental health, and addiction, to be approved and delivered by Indigenous Peoples.
3. The need for increased Indigenous involvement in police oversight – The Chiefs stated the Province needs to appoint Indigenous representatives to the Police Commission; put in effect cultural competence training for Commissioners and commission staff and investigators; and maintain statistics regarding complaints from Indigenous peoples.
4. The need for independent investigations into police shootings and other serious incidents - The Province of New Brunswick needs to establish its own independent investigative body, with full Indigenous participation, to ensure that police misconduct is investigated in an impartial way that is also sensitive to the realities of systemic racism, and to the realities of our Province.

“After the last meeting with the Premier, the Province asked us to prepare proposals and a plan going forward. We did that. We went into the meeting asking the Province for immediate action on policing. We asked the Province to consider proposals that are reasonable, realistic and attainable and within the Province’s jurisdiction. Premier Higgs and the relevant Ministers decided these weren’t worthwhile implementing at this point,” said Chief Bill Ward of Metepenagiag First Nation.

The MTI Chiefs joined with the other Nations in asking for an independent inquiry to address the inequalities and systemic discrimination throughout the justice system in New Brunswick. The Chiefs felt an inquiry was the best mechanism to understand the inequality that exists in the system. This request was also dismissed.

“Because of recent of events, a lot of attention has been paid to policing in this province. We know the issues extend to the court system and prison system. I know most New Brunswickers are not aware of the full extent of the discrimination. Currently, there is no equality before or under the law. The Premier and his ministers are refusing to act on this serious situation and continuing to use tactics to delay action. Justice delayed is justice denied,” said Chief George Ginnish of Natoaganeg.

The MTI Chiefs have talked about this at length and the case has been made to the provincial government. The Chiefs can no longer sit down at the same table with a party who appears to have no intention to act. The Higgs government will have to decide whether they want to be a part of a solution to addressing the systemic discrimination in New Brunswick’s justice system or be remembered as the problem.

The Chiefs would like to recognize the support they have received from their communities and the broader New Brunswick population in recent weeks and months. We will all need to continue to support and listen to one another in the days and weeks to come.

#### About MTI

Mi’gmawé’l Tplu’taqnn Incorporated (MTI) 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’gmag laws, rights, values, traditions, customs and practices.

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