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The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister Indigenous & Northern Affairs
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May 3rd 2016

RE: IRSSA Settlement Agreement And the Breach of Reconciliation

Minister Bennett,

I am writing you regarding the disturbing revelation that a deal has been negotiated to absolve the Catholic Church from paying indemnities owed under the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. I agree with you that there is a moral obligation to put this right. However, considering that it was the government of Canada which negotiated this deal with the Catholic Church behind closed doors, it is not solely the Catholic Church's responsibility to make this right. If the Catholic Church is not willing to live up to its moral and financial responsibilities to the survivors then it falls to the Canadian Government to make up the shortfall.

It simply isn't credible to explain this agreement away as merely a case of "miscommunication." This was a carefully constructed legal agreement put together by two of the key defendants in the Residential School Settlement Agreement. The decision by your government to keep the final text of this legal deal confidential gives the impression that the interests of the defendants are still being put ahead of the interests of the survivors. Given what we have learned from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, such subterfuge is simply not acceptable.

When Canada's Parliament issued the historic apology for the abuse of the residential school system it was rightly seen as a watershed moment in Canadian history. The people of our nation took the government and the defendant Churches at their word that Canadian society would undertake a heartfelt journey towards indemnification and reconciliation.

Since then there has been a disturbing pattern of undermining these legal obligations through the suppression of police evidence in the case of St. Anne's Residential School or the use of questionable legal tactics to deny compensation through the so-called administrative split. Such actions have had a corrosive effect on the credibility of the defendants regarding their willingness to atone for the harm inflicted on innocent children

We now learn that as a result of the secret deal between the Catholic Church and the Government of Canada, similar side deals have been arranged with the Anglican and United Churches. And so it seems that the only group that is losing out are the survivors.

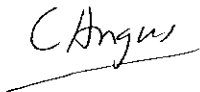
I recognize and respect your desire to bring about true reconciliation but several questions remain about what went down in the backrooms of these private negotiations between defendants. Therefore I am asking you to help clarify some major unanswered questions:

1. How much of the 29 million dollars in cash donations was given to the Survivors?
2. How much of the 25 million dollars that was supposed to come from fundraising, was actually raised and of that money, how much was donated to the Survivors?
3. Will you provide a line by line accounting for what was described as 25 million dollars of in kind donations?
4. How much of the compensation owed was not given as it was written off as an expense, legal cost, or administrative fee of the church?
5. At what point did government lawyers begin to negotiate with other churches to absolve them of their legal obligations?

The issue of reconciliation between Canada and the First Peoples of this land has become the defining moral issue of our time. I find it unfathomable that the government of Canada and the Catholic Church would make this tawdry side deal that is offside with this movement towards reconciliation, truth and justice

I look forward to hearing your response to this letter and these issues that need to be clarified.

With greatest respect,



Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay

cc. Gerry Pettipas Archbishop and Chair of the Board of Directors, Catholic Bishops
Douglas Crosby President of the Catholic bishops
General Secretary Frank Leo
National Chief Perry Bellegarde AFN
Justice Sinclair