

May 6, 2015

(Ottawa, ON) – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde says that today’s vote in the House of Commons to defeat Private Member’s Bill C-641, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, undermines Canada’s claims to be a country that respects and acts on the human rights of Indigenous peoples.

“The same government that endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has now actively defeated a bill that would compel Canada to act on its endorsement,” said National Chief Bellegarde. “This is a betrayal of Canada’s commitments to First Nations and all its citizens. Canada consistently pretends to be a defender of human rights on the international stage while working to undermine those same rights here at home.”

Private Member’s Bill C-641 was introduced on December 4, 2014 by New Democratic Party MP Romeo Saganash. The bill would have required the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure that all Canadian laws are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs would have to prepare an annual report to Parliament reviewing progress in implementing the law. National Chief Bellegarde recently delivered a statement on behalf of a wide range of groups calling on all countries to ensure their laws are consistent with the UN Declaration. Yesterday, the National Chief sent a message to all Members of Parliament calling on them to support Bill C-641.

“Claims that the Declaration is incompatible with Canadian law are untrue and undermine Canada’s reputation in the international community,” said National Chief Bellegarde. “Giving life to the principles in the UN Declaration will help close the gap in the quality of life between First Nations and other Canadians. The Declaration sets out a respectful approach based on reconciliation, healing, justice and peace. We will work with all levels of government and the public, private and legal sectors to ensure they do.”

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the UN in

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2007 and officially endorsed by Canada in 2010. The Declaration sets out minimal global standards for the protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nation citizens in Canada.

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