



## Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec–Labrador

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### PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

#### **Indigenous Policing Services: an essential service and not a program**

*Wendake, March 26, 2018* – The Assembly of first Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) welcomes the third call for action issued on March 23<sup>rd</sup> by Commissioner Viens in the context of the *Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec* (Viens Commission). This call for action echoes the hearings held on March 21-22, 2018 in Montreal and attests that changes need to be made in light of the public safety state of emergency in First Nations communities.

Based on the troubling testimonies shared on March 22<sup>nd</sup> by the AFNQL representatives, including the need for Canada and Quebec to put in place a concrete and urgent action plan, significant changes are required. If indigenous policing is an essential service, just as it is for any other police force, fair and equitable treatment can only be provided through legislation and non-administrative means.

"I am grateful to Commissioner Viens for listening and for his willingness to ensure fair and equitable treatment for our police services by both levels of government," said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL. Chief Picard recommends, among other things, that First Nations wishing to extend their tripartite agreement ending March 31<sup>st</sup> for one more year have this opportunity, particularly to ensure that a true tripartite negotiation process be deployed, without the threat of having to sign, within a few days, a non-compliant long-term agreement or without being forced to dissolve their police force or to maintain it for a maximum of one year without any external financial assistance.

"Given the proposed provincial budget to be tabled tomorrow, it will be interesting to see whether the Quebec Government has heard the call for action from the Viens Commission so that a new era towards real reconciliation can begin, of course assuming the end of all forms of discrimination against our citizens," said Chief Picard.

Nevertheless, the AFNQL will continue to urge Canada and Quebec to ensure that concrete action is taken in response to the Commission's recommendations and that a tripartite working table be set up quickly to take the needs of First Nations communities into account. The fundamental right to individual and collective security must be guaranteed to all First Nations people, as it is for any other citizen in Quebec.

**About the AFNQL**

The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador is the political organization regrouping 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. Follow us on Twitter @APNQL

Source:

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