



NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protocol for reforming child and family services for Indigenous communities: Another step towards First Nations self-determination

Wendake, July 7, 2020 – This morning, the Minister of Indigenous Services, Marc Miller, and Perry Bellegarde, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), announced the signing of a protocol agreement establishing a new structure to support the implementation of *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (Bill C-92). It is with optimism that the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) and the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) are welcoming this news.

Note that Bill C-92 confirms the inherent right of First Nations to self-govern while affirming their jurisdiction in matters of child and family services. It also recognizes, for the first time in Canadian history, the precedence of First Nations laws over federal and provincial legislation.

The protocol agreement that was signed today provides, among other things, for the establishment of a joint financial table. First Nations and Canada will therefore be able to discuss funding possibilities for First Nations governments wishing to take over their own services for their children and families. This is a significant step forward since Bill C-92, which came into force on January 1, 2020, made no mention of the associated funding.

The two organizations have also agreed to hold regular bilateral meetings and to establish a national policy based on distinctions through the creation of a Joint National Working Group. In addition, tools and mechanisms at the federal level will be developed to support the implementation of the Act.

“This agreement is a crucial step that should allow First Nations to develop effective long-term plans. This protocol ensures that Canada will work with our governments, but that the implementation of Bill C-92 will be led by First Nations. The wellness of our families and our children is at stake”, said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

“I would like to thank the AFN and the Government of Canada for establishing a Joint National Working Group. It is a commendable initiative as it will enable us to identify and acknowledge the characteristics of the various Nations throughout the country. As Committees of Experts facilitate the implementation of the Act at the provincial level,

we will be able to obtain an overall picture of the needs of our peoples,” added Derek Montour, President of the FNQLHSSC Board of Directors.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the political organization that brings together 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador.

About the FNQLHSSC

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is a non-profit organization that assists Quebec First Nations in achieving their health, wellness, culture and self-determination goals.

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