



Ref. 40247

October 12, 2016

Pat Pimm, MLA
Peace River North
10104, 100th Street
Fort St. John BC V1J 3Y7

Dear MLA Pat Pimm:

Thank you for your time this morning to discuss the various negotiations we have underway with Treaty 8 First Nations. You have made your point clearly, and I completely agree with the need for transparency with stakeholders, members of the public and local governments.

Our practice in the past has been to treat negotiations with First Nations as confidential and, therefore, have not fully engaged stakeholders, the public and local governments. This practice is changing. We are implementing new engagement principles that serve as clear instructions to our negotiators. The core of these principles is that we are transparent and seek input at the earliest stages and throughout negotiations from stakeholders, local governments and members of the public, including those who do not have tenures but use or access Crown land. Our engagement must be meaningful, and any input that we receive must be fully considered as we develop our mandates and negotiating positions. To be even more specific, no lands will be transferred to a First Nation unless and until there has been appropriate engagement with stakeholders, local governments and members of the public.

Also note that we have implemented land selection criteria for our negotiators. Our negotiators are to avoid or mitigate any third party impacts and ensure any existing public access is maintained across a transferred land parcel.

Doug Caul, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR), has ensured that all MARR negotiators, and all negotiators across other resource ministries, are abiding by the newly implemented engagement principles and land selection criteria.

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As I offered in our call, I am prepared to meet with your Advisory Committee in the near future to discuss this matter further. In the meantime, I trust that this letter provides you with absolute clarity that we entirely agree with the importance of transparency with stakeholders, members of the public and local governments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Rustad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Rustad
Minister