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For Immediate Release

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

First Nations Call For Direct Relationships with the Crown

Today before the Standing Committee on Finance, (a House of Commons Committee) Chief Rose Laboucan spoke regarding the current arrangements between First Nations and the Crown of Canada. The Brief from Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta includes the recommendation to transition First Nation's government towards so-called "Treaty-based Funding Agreements".

The 142 year old *Indian Act* is derogatory to First Nations' people in its title alone. The content, suggests Chief Laboucan, is no better. "The Act was created unilaterally without consulting First Nations. The Treaties, by contrast, were enacted through a more consultative and good faith negotiation. Most First Nations continue to hold the Treaties as a sacred trust between their First Nation and the Crown; therefore, the Treaties are a more legitimate basis for good faith negotiation than the *Indian Act*."

The Chief calls upon the Standing Committee on Finance to begin a consultative process that will create a new deal with First Nations. "Canadian First Nations people are the only indigenous people in the world that remain colonized," stated the Chief in today's public hearing. "The current administrative and financial arrangements have left massive gaps in the education and well being of our communities, and massive gaps in appropriate accountability."

When asked what she meant by accountability, she referred to the more than 1,000 pages of largely meaningless reporting that each First Nation is required to submit on an annual basis. Chief Laboucan noted: "First Nations' governments are administratively and financially accountable to the Department, but we are politically accountable to our electorate, and it doesn't work."

The complete brief submitted by Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta is available at the website of the Chiefs' Fiscal Table (Alberta): www.abcft.com.