



FAFIA-AFAI

Feminist Alliance for
International Action

L'Alliance Féministe pour
l'Action Internationale

Support for Equal Status for Women in the Indian Act 'Overwhelming'

(Ottawa, November 7) Today the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action released a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with signatures of hundreds of organizations and individuals. The letter calls on the Prime Minister to eliminate discrimination against women from the *Indian Act* immediately, and to support the Senate's '6(1)(a) all the way' amendment to Bill S-3, which was passed by the full Senate on June 1.

Just a week ago, Senator Lillian Dyck and Senator Sandra Lovelace-Nicholas joined with Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, Sharon McIvor and Dr. Lynn Gehl, to ask for public support from non-Indigenous friends and allies to end discrimination against women in the *Indian Act*. The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) supports their request and is gathering responses. (http://fafia-afai.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Letter-to-Prime-Minister_Signatures-1.pdf).

The urgent call was sent out because the Government of Canada is poised to pass Bill S-3. Bill S-3 is another minor change to the *Indian Act*, which will remove a sliver of the sex discrimination, but leave the core of it in place. Although the Senate unanimously passed an amendment to Bill S-3 that would have ensured equal status for Indian women and their descendants for the first time, the Government of Canada removed this amendment in the House of Commons on June 21. Now Bill S-3, without the Senate's amendment, is expected to be returned to the Senate for passage before December 22, 2017.

Shelagh Day, Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, said "the response to the request for support has been overwhelming. Organizations large and small, women's organizations, human rights organizations, church and trade union organizations, as well as hundreds of individuals, have thrown their support behind these courageous Senators and Indigenous women leaders. The message from these communities is clear: we do not support discrimination against women in the *Indian Act*. It's time to end it."

The letter to the Prime Minister that groups and individuals have signed says:

"Prime Minister, you recently visited Mexico and urged Mexican Senators to renew their efforts to advance women's rights. But at home you will not support the efforts of Canadian Senators to ensure that the *Indian Act* provides equality for Indian women and their descendants."

"Canada's integrity, at home and abroad, depends on your commitments being trustworthy. We want to believe that your commitments to women are real, and that a new Nation-to-Nation relationship will include Indigenous women as full and equal participants. We need to see your espoused commitments turned into concrete reality."

"We ask you to eliminate all sex discrimination from the *Indian Act* now...We ask you to accept the Senate's '6(1)(a) all the way' amendment to Bill S-3, and grant full status to Indian women and their descendants on the same footing as their male counterparts."

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For background information and to find out how to support the campaign to eliminate sex discrimination from the *Indian Act*, go here: <http://fafia-afai.org/en/solidarity-campaign/-tab-3>

For comment and further information, contact:

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