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## SCO responds to 2019 Federal Speech from the Throne

*Build reconciliation through actions, not words, says Grand Chief Daniels*

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**ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** — Southern Chiefs' Organization expresses its response to a few key areas of the 2019 Speech from the Throne, which opened the first session of the 43rd Parliament of Canada by the Liberal Minority government yesterday on December 5, 2019.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels remarks on the speech, "The government speaks a good deal on Indigenous issues, but only time will tell if these words carry weight. It is my belief that the only way to truly build reconciliation is through our actions, not words."

The following promises were made by the Liberal government during the Throne Speech:

- *"Take action to co-develop and introduce legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the first year of the new mandate;*
- *Continue the work of eliminating all long-term drinking water advisories on reserve by 2021, and ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities;*
- *Co-develop new legislation to ensure that Indigenous people have access to high-quality, culturally relevant health care and mental health services;*
- *Continue work to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples;*
- *Work with Indigenous communities to close the infrastructure gap by 2030;*
- *Continue to move forward together to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are in control of their own destiny and making decisions about their communities;*
- *Take new steps to ensure the Government is living up to the spirit and intent of treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements made with Indigenous Peoples;*
- *Ensure that Indigenous people who were harmed under the discriminatory child welfare system are compensated in a way that is both fair and timely; and*
- *Continue to invest in Indigenous priorities, in collaboration with Indigenous partners."*

In regards to promises to co-develop and introduce UNDRIP legislation, Canada should not require pressure from external international organizations in order to enact humane and just legislation within our own nation,

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*"Representing Anishinaabe and Dakota First Nations in Southern Manitoba"*

but the gesture is welcome. *If* the government were to truly live up to treaty agreements as intended by our ancestors, First Nations would have been far beyond being self-sufficient, and would stand to be amongst the wealthiest peoples in the *world*. The Federal government hit the mark in this area, stating that, “when Indigenous people experience better outcomes, all Canadians benefit.”

However, First Nations continue to live in some of the most undesirable conditions, hence the decades of efforts brought forward through recommendations made by the United Nations.

Boil water advisories have been and continue to severely impact the lives and wellness of all affected communities. Water is *the most* basic human right, and is also held to be very sacred to our Indigenous ways of life. How long must we plunder and pollute the Earth that provides us all with the means for all life to sustain itself?

The government also promised to:

*“provide help for people displaced by climate disasters.”*

This is a welcome acknowledgement, as it was less than two months ago that Manitoba was hit by a severe winter storm, destroying power lines, trees, and displacing thousands of residents from their homes across the province. How many disasters must our communities face until we have a better grasp on how to face climate-related disasters that affect *all* Canadians?

It is only a week after the Federal government lost a court challenge against the ruling by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordering Canada to pay \$40,000 in compensation to First Nation children and family members impacted by the child “welfare” system. The Throne Speech ensures “that Indigenous people who were harmed under the discriminatory child welfare system are compensated in a way that is both fair and timely.” These seem to be two very conflicting stances on the same topic, similar to promises made to take action on climate change while moving forward on development of pipelines.

The actions of the Federal government need to remain in line with the promises contained in their Throne Speech. SCO will continue with its mandate to see that the needs and voices of our 34 First Nations are considered by all levels of government, and holding government accountable to their promises and fiduciary duties in honour of the treaties signed between Canada and our First Nations. We have made several efforts to collaborate with government in the past and will continue to do this important work for our communities.

The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First Nations of Manitoba in agreement to establish an independent political forum to protect, preserve, promote, and enhance First Nations peoples’ inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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