



THE ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS  
OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT  
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## Speaking Notes for

**Chief Candice Paul, APC Co-Chair (New Brunswick)**

**Launch of a National Engagement  
on *Indian Act* Election System Reform Initiative**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia  
October 1, 2010**

Thank you Chief Googoo.

Each of our First Nations communities throughout Atlantic Canada can take pride in the fact that we are leading the way – and that we will work together, with our brothers and sisters from across Canada, to discuss our recommendations for a new, sound, open, transparent and respected election process for First Nations in Canada.

Ultimately, today's announcement is about serving the people of our community. They deserve to be heard - and they must be part of the solution.

First Nations communities take their right to vote seriously, and we have a long history of exercising that right. I think most Canadians would be surprised to learn that participation in band elections is at 90%.

**90%!** That is well above the average Canadian turn-out for any level of government. It tells me that our people care. It is very much a choice – a choice which has direct impact on their lives. And that is why it is so important for us to find ways to make sure that their votes count.

As Chief Morley said, we've already begun the process of engaging our community members across the region.

From discussions in our region, we know that that many First Nations who currently hold elections under the *Indian Act* would support a new approach. An approach that would allow for four year terms, the importance of balancing on and off reserve Councillor positions, better nominations process, and of course a ballot system that ensure the integrity of the votes that are cast.

Another important element to these changes would be removing the role of the Minister in receiving, investigating and deciding on elections.

As in any democracy, a key value is that of accountability. As elected officials, we must strive to the highest standards, and we must be responsible directly to those who have placed their trust in us. That is why we are also proposing a recall mechanism that can be exercised at the two-year mark of a mandate that would allow for people to have their say.

Today's announcement is significant. It allows us to continue the work that we started over two years ago – but much remains to be done. We look forward to working with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and with communities all across Canada. It is a First Nations - driven initiative - and our commitment today is that it will continue to be led by those who have so much to gain – our people.