



THE ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS
OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT
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Speaking Notes for
Chief Morley Googoo, APC Co-Chair (Nova Scotia)

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

Halifax, Nova Scotia
October 1, 2010

Thank you Minister

On behalf of the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Atlantic Chiefs, I would like to welcome Ron Evans, the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Honourable John Duncan, the new Minister of Indian Affairs to our traditional territory for this historic announcement on reforming the *Indian Act* election system.

Over 2 years ago, the Atlantic Chiefs passed a resolution to strengthen our electoral system by extending the mandate of Chiefs from two years to four years. Staff at the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs began a process of reaching out to community members, and asking them what is important to them. As a result, a number of other issues have emerged. We discovered that we had an historic opportunity to reflect on the many challenges that the **current system** places on us. A system that we did not choose. For years, our communities have struggled with the consequences of a regime that is both out-of-date and

paternalistic. It has created instability and conflict – but most of all, it has deprived our people of the opportunity to develop long-term plans that would have a direct impact on the economic development of our communities.

Based on research and information obtained through the various forums, APC developed and documented a model for changing the *Indian Act* election system. A detailed communications strategy was also developed and implemented to ensure that all stakeholders were clearly informed of the project and its progress. After having held discussions and solicited the views of First Nation people in the Atlantic Region through meetings, focus groups, “Facebook,” online surveys, and newspaper articles, the APC Chiefs expressed their unanimous support for a proposed optional model for legislation for interested First Nations as an alternative to the *Indian Act* election system.

The time has come for First Nations People across the country to develop solutions that work for us. We have an opportunity to modernize our systems – believing that, ultimately, it will lead to more stable communities, and more **importantly** contribute to a greater sense of self determination.

I want to thank the Minister for listening to us, and providing us with an opportunity to share with others what we have learned and to lead a nation-wide effort to develop solutions.

And now I'd like to ask Chief Candice Paul, Chief of St. Mary's First Nation and Co-Chair of APC to say a few words....Chief Candice.