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## CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT AND ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS STRIKE SPECIFIC CLAIMS TASK FORCE

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**OTTAWA, ONTARIO (JULY 25, 2007)** - The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) have struck a Task Force to assist in the development of specific claims legislation.

On [June 12, 2007](#), the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada announced major reforms to the way Canada handles specific claims, with the goal of bringing forward legislation to implement the plan in the fall.

The work of the Canada-AFN Task Force will shape the development of legislation centred on the creation of an independent tribunal on specific claims. The Task Force will be supported by experienced technical staff from both the Government of Canada and First Nations.

"The work of this Task Force is integral to both the success and spirit of our plan to bring greater fairness, transparency and speed to Canada's specific claims process," said Minister Prentice. "Canada's New Government is proud to be part of an historic move that will fundamentally change the way specific claims are handled in Canada."

"The AFN welcomes engagement in a process of joint legislative drafting and non-legislative discussions that will revolutionize Canada's specific claims resolution system," said National Chief Phil Fontaine. "We know from previous experience that using a collaborative approach to improving the specific claims process will effectively address concerns of both First Nations and Canada. Earlier this month, Chiefs from across Canada approved the Task Force's mandate at our Annual General Assembly in Halifax," added National Chief Fontaine. "This cooperative work is long overdue, and we commend Canada for wisely choosing negotiation with First Nations, rather than engaging in confrontation."

Over the course of the summer, the task force will meet bi-weekly with the first meeting taking place later this week. Membership comprises eight highly-qualified individuals – four representing First Nations and four representing the Government of Canada.

The Task Force's Co-Chairs will be Bruce Carson, Office of the Prime Minister, and Shawn Atleo, AFN Regional Chief, BC. Other members include:

- Roger Augustine, Chief of Staff, AFN
- Sylvia Duquette, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- Lawrence Joseph, AFN Regional Chief and Chief, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations
- Willie Littlechild, AFN Regional Chief, Alberta
- Jean-Sébastien Rioux, Chief of Staff to Minister Jim Prentice
- Robert Winogron, Justice Canada.

[More information on Canada's Specific Claims Action Plan](#) is available

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