



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
Special Chiefs Assembly

December 5-7, 2023

Shaw Centre – Ottawa, Ontario

Ottawa is located on the unceded unsundered Territory of the Algonquin People.

ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS
Assemblée extraordinaire des Chefs

Du 5 au 7 décembre 2023 - Centre Shaw - Ottawa (Ontario)

Ottawa est située sur le territoire non cédé et non abandonné du peuple algonquin.



Bill C-53, Recognition of Certain Métis Governments in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan and Métis Self-Government Act

History

On June 21, 2023, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-53, the *Recognition of Certain Métis Governments in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan and Métis Self-Government Act* (Bill C-53). Bill C-53 broadly recognizes the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN-S), and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) as representative Métis governments in these provinces, and provides them potential section 35 self-government rights.

At the 2023 AFN Annual General Assembly, First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 44/2023, *Protect First Nations Rights and Interests from Unfounded Métis Rights Assertions*, calling on the Government of Canada to immediately halt Bill C-53 until First Nations have been adequately consulted, and for the AFN to coordinate a national advocacy campaign with each interested region.

First Nations and the AFN continue to identify key issues in the legislation including Canada’s ongoing failure to protect First Nations rights from potential infringement, the lack of adequate consultation with First Nations, the failure to obtain First Nations’ free, prior, and informed consent, and the reality that First Nations are consistently forced to prove their Inherent and Treaty rights to their own lands and territories.

Bill C-53 passed first and second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) for further study and consideration.

AFN’s recent advocacy

The AFN is working hard to advance First Nations concerns with Bill C-53. In September the AFN worked closely with the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) to plan and attend a demonstration on September 20, 2023. The AFN continues to support First Nations through facilitating direct political engagement with Minister Anandasangaree.

In September, the AFN Interim National Chief sent a letter to the Prime Minister, calling on the Government of Canada to halt Bill C-53 until First Nations have been consulted and are able provide their free, prior, and informed consent. The AFN continues to raise Bill C-53 when meeting with the Government of Canada, as recently as October 25 when the AFN Executive Committee met with Minister Anandasangaree.

The AFN also continues to advocate directly in Parliamentary processes such as the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) Committee. The AFN provided information and support to regions as they planned their INAN Committee appearances and submissions, and submitted a written brief to the Committee capturing a national perspective on this issue.



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The AFN also made efforts to seek funding and resources to ensure all interested First Nations can undertake critical research and protect their section 35 protected Inherent and Treaty rights and continues to advocate for more effective processes for the recognition and implementation of First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights.

Next Steps

The AFN will continue to monitor and facilitate First Nations advocacy respecting Bill C-53, while calling for a national consultation process to be developed with First Nations regionally to ensure all potential impacts of this legislation are considered, and First Nations rights and interests are upheld in accordance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The AFN is anticipating further engagement on Bill C-53 if it moves to the Senate. The AFN will also take steps to engage directly with AFN regions to support the development of a national position and advance collective advocacy.