

**Speaking Notes**  
**for**  
**The Honourable Chuck Strahl, PC, MP**  
**Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor**  
**for Métis and Non-status Indians**

***A New Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development***

**Vancouver, British Columbia**  
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**Check against delivery**

Thank you and good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here ... MP Cadman, Chief Louie.

Today, I am pleased to announce that our Conservative Government is taking immediate and concrete action to support the participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian economy. We're doing this through the introduction of a new and vastly improved 'Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development.

This new framework represents a fundamental change in our government's approach to supporting Aboriginal economic development. It reflects the significant, real, and growing opportunities for Aboriginal people to take an unprecedented step toward becoming full participants in the economy – as entrepreneurs, employers and employees.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth comprise the fastest-growing segment of Canada's population. These young people are poised to enter the job market just as baby boomers approach retirement age. And graduation rates among Aboriginal students — at both the secondary and post-secondary levels — have never been higher.

An already sizeable Aboriginal land base is growing significantly with the settlement of land claims. And this land base, if used for economic purposes, can make an important contribution to Aboriginal communities, as well as to the national and regional economies.

The non-Aboriginal private sector is increasingly recognizing the economic potential of Aboriginal people. In fact, a recent report from the Toronto-Dominion Bank highlighted the growing and important trend of partnerships with Aboriginal businesses and communities.

And, finally, there is a growing entrepreneurial leadership emerging among the Aboriginal community that recognizes economic development as the means toward self-reliance and greater independence.

Under the old Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, our Aboriginal labour market programs were mostly supply-side driven. In other words, people were trained in the hope that they would find jobs. Under our new framework, funding will be tied to labour market requirements, real job prospects and real employers.

Under the old strategy, there were few long-lasting economic development benefits from our significant investments in First Nations infrastructure. Under our new framework, we will ensure that communities benefit more by using these investments to drive on-reserve business development and employment opportunities.

Under the old strategy, the federal government was often the only financial partner. Under our new framework, the private sector will drive investment, lending, joint ventures and major projects with Aboriginal Canadians. The recently established \$10 million loan loss reserve facility established by this Conservative government is expected to generate over \$50 million in new commercial capital for Aboriginal businesses.

Under the old strategy, Aboriginal communities did not always have the ability to assess the economic development potential of their lands and resources. Under our new framework, we will support their community and institutional capacity to assess and develop their economic potential and, where feasible, promote partnerships with the private sector. The recently established Major Resource and Energy Development initiative is expected to help push through over four times the federal investment from the private sector and other levels of government.

Overall, our new Framework will deliver more results through an up-to-date, “whole of government” approach. An approach that is responsive to economic conditions, targeted at emerging opportunities and one that leverages partnerships to achieve sustainable, long-term economic development.

This new approach will take into account the growing complexity of the globalized Canadian economy, the growing sophistication of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, and the tangible economic opportunities inherent in Aboriginal communities and businesses.

Since 2006, Advantage Canada, a strategic, long-term economic plan, has focused on creating the right conditions for Canadians — and Canadian businesses and organizations — to thrive. Advantage Canada also recognizes that to take advantage of existing opportunities, we need to modernize our approach to Aboriginal economic development.

This new framework builds on this idea while fulfilling our Budget 2008 commitment to launch a new approach for Aboriginal economic development. Our Conservative government is getting the job done.

Over the past year, we held a series of engagement sessions across the country. The sessions involved Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs, provinces and territories, labour groups and professional associations. In particular, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board was a key external advisor on the Framework. I salute Chief Clarence Louie, with us here today, for his strong and dedicated leadership as Chair of the Board.

These sessions confirmed the wide-spread consensus that it is time to take a new approach to Aboriginal economic development – one that is opportunity-driven, results-focused and partnerships-driven.

As Chief Louie has continued to remind me: “The single most important key to First Nation self-reliance is economic development.”

Aboriginal people want real change that will make a lasting positive difference in their lives. When our government came to office three short years ago, that was something we wanted too. By focusing on opportunities, leveraging partnerships and focusing on results, the Government of Canada, Aboriginal people and willing partners will work together to ensure that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people enjoy the same opportunities for employment, income and wealth creation as other Canadians.

A new Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development will help achieve several things:

One, it will strengthen Aboriginal entrepreneurship by improving access to financial capital and procurement opportunities.

Two, it will further develop Aboriginal human capital by focusing on skills and training that will create new opportunities and choices for Aboriginal peoples.

Three, the Framework will enhance the value of Aboriginal-owned resources by amending appropriate legislation and improving land-management regimes.

Four, it will foster new and effective partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups.

And five, it will focus the role of the federal government by improving coordination, collaboration and linkages among federal departments and agencies.

Our Conservative government has already begun to deliver on this new direction. Recent changes to the *Indian Oil and Gas Act*, for example, will modernize the regulatory regime for oil and gas development on First Nation lands.

Budget 2009 allocated an additional \$100 million over three years to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership, and \$75 million for a new two year Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund. This funding supports opportunity and demand-driven labour market programming.

Canada's Economic Action Plan also pledged \$90 million over five years in new monies to support the renewal of the Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development program. We are also working towards a Northern economic development agency.

We also recently introduced two new economic development pilot initiatives – a loan loss reserve to promote commercial lending to Aboriginal businesses and a new equity fund to support Aboriginal participation in resource and energy development projects.

Both of these new initiatives are based on identifying real economic opportunities, leveraging partnerships and demonstrating the potential for tangible economic development outcomes.

Today, I am also pleased to announce that the Government of Canada will invest \$200 million over four years in new measures to support economic development and the strategic priorities of the new Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development.

Specifically: we will help provide even greater access to commercial capital.

We will invest in efforts to promote Aboriginal procurement.

We will support Aboriginal participation in resource development opportunities.

We will accelerate the economic use of lands set aside through specific claims settlements.

And we will enhance the role of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board to provide advice to government on economic development matters.

Over the next few years, the new Framework will help guide federal efforts as we move to achieve better outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. Together, we will focus on opportunities, respond to new and changing conditions, leverage partnerships and focus on results.

This is an urgent task and I look forward to your support as we move forward.

Thank you.