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CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

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First Nations in Ontario call on Canada and World Leaders to act on First Nations Rights

This week world leaders will be meeting in Muskoka and Toronto as part of the G8 and G20 Summits. The Government of Canada has spent over a billion dollars for security alone when First Nation people do not have access to basic human necessities such as clean water and safe housing. Instead they choose to waste money on constructing a fake lake and paving a road to nowhere.

The First Nations in Ontario remind Canada and the leaders of the world that contrary to the official position of the Government of Canada, Canada does not have a good record with respect to the Indigenous Peoples in this country. In 2005, the Government of Canada agreed to invest \$5 billion over five years in improving housing, education and health for First Nations people as part of the commitments made in the Kelowna Accord. The Conservative government of Canada has failed to honour this agreement and housing conditions remain deplorable in too many First Nation reserves in Canada. First Nations learners continue to lack the opportunities and supports that others in this country take for granted. First Nation people disproportionately suffer from many chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Yet the Canadian government said they had a better plan than the Kelowna Accord --- a plan that five years later we are yet to see.

Canada along with the United States are the lone holdouts in signing onto the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Canadian government announced in early 2010 that they would take steps to adopt the UN Declaration. Canada claims on the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website that "Canada's record on the rights of Indigenous people speaks for itself" --- we agree, but in our view the record establishes that Indigenous poverty, poor health, lack of infrastructure, housing, clean water, displacement from the wealth of the land and resources is the direct result of Canada's laws and policies in the past and today.

In October 2007 the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing released a report which stated "I was disturbed to see the devastating impact of the paternalism that marks federal and provincial government, legislations, policies and budgetary allocation for Aboriginal people on and off reserve." To Canada, and the leaders of the G20 nations, the Indigenous people of Canada are the original People's of this country called Canada. Our ancestors have lived on this land for thousands of years as have indigenous peoples in other countries. We expect better from the Canadian government and the international community--- we expect the Crown to honour the Treaties that we signed together on a Nation to Nation basis. As First Nations leaders in this province and this country, we will continue to strongly assert our rights and work on behalf our people to ensure they are provided with every opportunity to succeed and prosper in the future. We call on the international community to pressure Canada to uphold the obligations in international treaties and covenants that it signed onto, and to recognize the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.