



An Indigenous Approach to Business Communication and Economic Development

How the Government can support Indigenous communities and businesses to improve their economic growth and create jobs.

Submission by Walter Deagle, Founder and Executive Director  
Sweatlodge Technologies

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## **Note to the Standing Committee on Finance**

Dear honorable members of the Standing Committee on Finance,

In response to your call for submissions for the 2021 budget, Sweatlodge Technologies is pleased to present our vision for how the federal government can support Indigenous-owned businesses in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indigenous-owned businesses have jobs to offer and seek government procurement opportunities but have few cost-effective options for connecting with potential employees or get contracts. Sweatlodge Technologies aims to support these businesses with our new online inclusion platform, [www.itstimeforchange.ca](http://www.itstimeforchange.ca), (ITFC). ITFC is a communication platform with the capacity to put Indigenous job seekers and businesses in touch, to advertise new projects and initiatives undertaken by Indigenous communities, and aid governments and businesses with procuring contracts for tenders. An improved level of communication between Indigenous-owned businesses, government, and community members is an investment that aligns with government priorities and strategic outcomes across multiple departments

The Indigenous business community has a significant role to play in Canada's post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Assisting Indigenous-owned businesses to strategically position themselves within the supply chain will have a meaningful and sustainable impact for Canada, Indigenous peoples, Indigenous-owned businesses and their respective communities.

Stimulus spending and financial aid in a crisis such as we are experiencing will act as a bridge to what we really need, and that is long term economic inclusion and engagement that results in generational sustainability.

The Indigenous approach to holistic economic capacity building, a concept we have incorporated into our solution, is an approach we suggest the Government of Canada should consider in the pursuit of true economic reconciliation.

Sweatlodge Technologies is committed to realizing this goal and we hope the committee will consider our submission.

Sincerely

Walter Deagle, Founder and Executive Director  
Sweatlodge Technologies

### **Executive Summary**

As the Government of Canada works to support Canadians through the gradual reopening of the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, access to resources for business will be of paramount importance to helping everyday Canadians get back on their feet, move forward with their businesses, and provide essential services for our country. Indigenous-owned businesses were hit particularly hard during this pandemic and will have substantial difficulty recovering financially after the pandemic. Sweatlodge Technologies has created an inclusive business network, called [www.itstimeforchange.ca](http://www.itstimeforchange.ca), specifically to support Indigenous-owned businesses by strategically positioning them within Canada's supply chain. Our platform can connect job seekers and employers, ease communication of procurement opportunities, and help with publishing request tenders, expressions of interest, and community events and initiatives.

To optimize the value of this platform, it is important that Indigenous-owned businesses and community members join the network. To do this, Sweatlodge Technologies would like to offer free memberships to these businesses. An investment by the government of Canada in such an initiative would be a strong step to extending digital employment and procurement access to the Indigenous business community in a meaningful way

In addition to our business platform, Sweatlodge Technologies has created the Nahihtamowin initiative, a partnership with the newly amalgamated Children's Wish and Make a Wish Foundation to provide wishes to critically ill Indigenous children, who are often under-represented. We are also working to create local inclusion networks to help regional organizations respond collectively to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

To support our Indigenous communities in these social and economic goals, we suggest that:

**Budget 2021 can support Indigenous business development in a post COVID-19 Canada that is crucial to the well-being of our native communities through financial support for an Indigenous business communications and contract procurement platform.**

## **Background**

Sweatlodge Technologies is new to the Indigenous business landscape, but the minds behind the company have an intimate knowledge of the barriers and challenges experienced by Indigenous peoples, businesses, and communities as they strive for economic growth. There is however an unprecedented opportunity for economic growth, partnership and collaboration with Canada's Indigenous peoples. Our management team is bringing this opportunity to light.

Through our new and inclusive communications platform [www.itstimeforchange.ca](http://www.itstimeforchange.ca) (ITFC), Sweatlodge Technologies is taking bold steps to expand Canada's business networks to include Indigenous job seekers and employers in a way that provides the awareness, knowledge, and understanding to help business execute their strategies.

A uniquely Canadian economic inclusion network, the ITFC platform is a central repository of information as well as employment and connection opportunities that drive the economic growth of both Canada's business and Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous economy is expected to grow from 32 billion to \$100 billion in a relatively short period of time. This explosive growth represents an unprecedented opportunity for Canada's private sector, including our country's 50 000+ Indigenous-owned businesses. Our network will provide an opportunity for our members to connect, share, promote, advocate, and benefit from an economy based on shared values and vision.

Indigenous communities are invited to participate in our platform free of charge. Through a user-friendly interface, Indigenous communities can access and manage digital job placements and procurement opportunities, solicit partnerships based on economic priorities, and publish requests for tenders, expressions of interest and more. The procurement section of the ITFC platform is essential due to the federal investment of nearly \$4.7 billion announced spending within Canada's Indigenous communities. This investment is then directed to specific projects in Canada's Indigenous community resulting in multiple new procurement opportunities that Canada's private sector is often unaware of.

Sweatlodge Technologies believes wholeheartedly in the importance of corporate social responsibility. We have developed a strategy that provides for regional organizations to participate in a local inclusion network enabling them to respond collectively to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We have also recently completed our incorporation of the Nahihtamowin initiative and have partnered with the newly amalgamated Children's Wish and Make a Wish Foundation. The initiative allocates a percentage of revenue from membership to fund wishes for critically ill Indigenous children, currently an under-represented demographic.

### **Financial Support for Improved Business Communications and Contract Procurement**

Sweatlodge Technologies proposes that the Government of Canada provide financial assistance that would pay for a portion of the membership costs for Individual businesses. This will enable our team to profile and equip 50,000+ Indigenous-owned businesses in Canada with the tools they need in an environment that facilitates success. We recognize that Indigenous-owned businesses are typically more vulnerable than non-Indigenous business due to their remoteness, singular focus, dependency on band office initiatives, and a lack

of marketing awareness and capacity to compete. Understanding this, we are offering to contribute the remaining 80% of the annual membership fee in the form of a discount if the Government of Canada would provide the remaining 20%, which would come to \$99.80 per business.

This inclusion initiative is supported by the Indigenous Economic Institute's logic that a 2-3% increase in the engagement of Indigenous-owned businesses with the rest of Canada's private sector would generate an additional \$12 billion in the Indigenous economy. As capacity within the Indigenous business community grows through opportunity and collaboration, the federal government will be better positioned to reach their stated 5% goal for Indigenous participation in Government of Canada procurement. Our inclusion platform advocates that income is one of the most important social determinants of health, and so we aspire to create one additional job for each of the 50,000+ Indigenous-owned businesses. This would contribute an additional \$2 billion of income, and improve the individual and overall health of Indigenous communities all across Canada.

Finally, we acknowledge that Indigenous-owned businesses have traditionally relied heavily on their attendance at events and conferences to identify new work opportunities. The travel restrictions currently imposed are redirecting those Indigenous-owned businesses toward online alternatives to identify opportunities. Unfortunately, navigating the internet can be complicated, which, when combined with the cost of membership and subscription rates, can prevent Indigenous-owned businesses from maximizing online resources. Our proposal eliminates this issue.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Government of Canada extend their Go Digital strategy and adopt the proposal, "Using Tech to Connect" as a platform to strategically position every Indigenous-owned business within Canada's national supply chain in an effort to advocate, engage, and promote the inclusion of Indigenous businesses in the new post Covid economy.

That the Government of Canada provide \$99.80 per Indigenous-owned business that registers with the ITFC platform to ensure Indigenous communities and

businesses have the same high-quality access to jobs and procurement opportunities as the rest of Canada's private sector.

## **Conclusion**

Given the hardships faced by Indigenous communities across Canada in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the time is now to support economic recovery and job creation in Indigenous communities. Due to the predicted \$12 Billion in economic activity that can be generated by a 2-3% increase in the engagement of Indigenous-owned business and the \$2 billion in income generation from Indigenous job growth, we believe that economic growth can best be achieved by increasing the number of Indigenous-owned businesses enrolled on a free, user friendly, well connected communications platform, like ITFC.

By supporting the ITFC platform, the Government of Canada will also be empowering our local inclusion network and regional organizations to respond collectively to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Government support will also go to the Nahihtamowin initiatives to create wishes for Indigenous children with critical illnesses.

In a time of economic rebuilding, the Government of Canada has a unique opportunity to support a creative way to help Indigenous-owned businesses thrive and contribute to Canada's economy.