

**Submission to the Standing House of Commons Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs by  
Democracy Probe, Hamilton**

**RE: Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous  
Peoples**

April 7, 2021

We are pleased to respond to the request for comments on Bill C-15: An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We write to urge you to make it a top priority to pass Bill C-15 into law during the current session of Parliament.

We believe that if Bill C-15 is passed into law it would be of use to both Canada and Indigenous Peoples by providing a foundational basis for them to jointly develop processes that facilitate mutuality in exercising their respective decisions about lands and resources.

Changes over the last decades have created increasing uncertainty about whether and how resource developments in Canada can proceed. These uncertainties follow in part from successive governments not addressing the obligations arising from Canadian court decisions made in response to Indigenous Peoples' pursuit of recognition of their inherent rights by Canadian law. The uncertainties are also due to successive governments not taking initiatives to develop joint Canadian - Indigenous governing processes to facilitate negotiations of their differences over the development of lands and resources. There is thus a pressing need to develop new paths toward exercising multi-party rights and governance. Bill C-15 can help to meet that need.

We also view C-15 as following on decades of persistent work and negotiations by dozens of Indigenous Peoples and organizations at the United Nations and around the world, including Canada. It was right to listen to and respect these Indigenous initiatives by bringing this Bill to Parliament. Now this promise needs to be fulfilled by completing the passage of the Bill.

This is an exceptionally important moment and C-15 is an urgent Bill. It should not be allowed to fail to become law because members of Parliament emphasize partisanship to the point of ignoring common needs, nor for lack of will. We urge that members of the Committee, despite the especially diverse responsibilities we all face at this moment, make it a high priority to pass Bill C-15 into law in this session of Parliament.

Democracy Probe is an advocacy group whose members are mainly retired McMaster University faculty. Several of us have decades of experience working with and alongside Indigenous Peoples in Canada and abroad. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our submission.

Harvey Feit  
for  
Paul Dekar  
Atif Kubursi  
Graeme MacQueen  
Don McLean  
Jane Mulkewich  
Gary Purdy  
Rama Singh  
Donald Wells