

Statement from the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, and Member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville

I have received many questions and inquiries about the Cabinet shuffle announced today and why I am no longer the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Thank you for all the kind words. While I can understand the interest of Canadians in this matter, I will not be commenting. In our system, decisions regarding the appointment of Cabinet Ministers are the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

Moving forward, I am very proud to be the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence. Any opportunity to serve and support Canada's Veterans is a great honour, and I look forward to meeting with Veterans across the country, engaging with the crucial matters that must be addressed, and continuing our Government's progress to support and honour Canada's Veterans.

I do, however, on leaving the office of Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (MOJAG) wish to share with Canadians some reflections about my time in that office.

Serving Canadians as MOJAG for the past three plus years has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. I was directed in my mandate letter to pursue and achieve a broad, progressive, and ambitious agenda and I am tremendously proud of our accomplishments. There is very little, if anything, in my mandate letter we have not done or is not well under way to completing, and we have also achieved much beyond it. I have attached an overview of these accomplishments to this statement. I thank my amazing Minister's office staff and the hardworking and dedicated public servants within the Department of Justice for their tireless work and for so ably supporting the advancement of our agenda. I also thank the residents of Vancouver Granville, and all Canadians who have been overwhelmingly kind, generous, and supportive as we worked together to help build an ever stronger and more just Canada. This work goes on, and I remain dedicated to it, whatever public or private roles I may play.

I firmly believe that as a result of our achievements, the state of the justice system in Canada is stronger and better positioned today than when our Government took office. Most importantly, the ongoing work of protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians has advanced. As I have said before, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is in many ways an ambassador for the *Charter*.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is somewhat distinct from other Cabinet Ministers because the role is a dual one. The Minister of Justice is the legal advisor to Cabinet. In this capacity, the Minister is concerned with the administration of justice, including policy in the areas of criminal law, family law, human rights law, and Indigenous justice. The role of the Attorney General of Canada carries with it unique responsibilities to uphold the rule of law and the administration of justice, and as such demands a measure of principled independence. It is a pillar of our democracy that our system of justice be free from even the perception of political interference and uphold the highest levels of public confidence. As such, it has always been my view that the Attorney General of Canada must be non-partisan, more transparent in the principles that are the basis of decisions, and, in this respect, always willing to speak truth to power. This is how I served throughout my tenure in that role.

At a time when the functioning of democracies around the globe is increasingly under strain, and democratic norms are in peril, the unique and independent aspects of the dual role of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada are even more important. I know Canadians across the country expect such high standards to continue to be met – especially in the uncertain times in which we now live – and I expect this to continue.

With respect to Indigenous issues, as MOJAG, I have publicly expressed my opinions in various venues about the ongoing challenges in transforming what the Prime Minister has stated is the “most important” relationship, that between Canada and Indigenous peoples. One of my main motivations for seeking public office was to see the work of reconciliation accelerate and advance in real and tangible ways.

The work that must be done is well known. We have the solutions. Indigenous peoples have advocated and brought forward what must be done for decades. Countless Commissions, studies, reports, and analyses have reiterated the work we must do together to reconcile.

The foundation for moving forward is understanding that the dire social and economic realities that Indigenous peoples continue to face – including lack of clean drinking water, over representation in the criminal justice system, inadequate housing, high rates of poverty, and violence against Indigenous women and girls – are directly linked to legislative and policy regimes that have disempowered and divided Indigenous peoples, eroded their systems of governance, laws, and responsibilities, harmed their economies, and denied their basic rights and systems. Long overdue legislative and policy changes based on the recognition of title and rights, including historic treaties, are urgently needed, so that Indigenous peoples can accelerate and lead the work of re-building their Nations and governments, and a new climate of co-operative relations can emerge.

While our government has taken some very important steps, and hard work is being done, the necessary shifts have not yet been fully achieved. Rather, a number of the proposals that our government has been pursuing so far require substantial work in co-operation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples to reset the new foundations for this most important relationship.

As a Member of Cabinet, I will continue to be directly engaged in advocating for and advancing the fundamental shifts in relations with Indigenous peoples that are required and will continue to work with my colleagues and to ensure my voice is heard.

Again, I express my deepest gratitude to the residents of Vancouver Granville, and all Canadians, who have shown me such kindness, patience, and support over the past three plus years, and I am excited to continue to build a better Canada alongside you in the days and months ahead as the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

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Jody Wilson-Raybould, P.C., Q.C., M.P.
Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence
Member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville

ANNEX:

LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS:

As Minister of Justice, introduced 13 pieces of legislation:

Bill C-14 – In conjunction with the Minister of Health, passed legislation that responded to the Supreme Court of Canada's *Carter* decision that gives Canadian adults with a grievous and irremediable medical condition the choice of a medically-assisted death.

Bill C-16 – Groundbreaking human rights legislation that added gender identity and expression as a prohibited ground for discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act, and to the list of distinguishing characteristics of “identifiable group” protected by the hate speech provisions of the Criminal Code.

Bill C-45 – In conjunction with the Ministers of Health and Public Safety, passed legislation to legalize, strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis for adults.

Bill C-46 – In conjunction with the Minister of Public Safety, passed the companion legislation to the *Cannabis Act*, which toughens laws on drug and alcohol impaired driving. Also authorized the use of the *Dräger*, the first roadside oral screening device regarding drug use.

Bill C-51 – Legislated the first major update to sexual assault laws in over 25 years. It also legislated the requirement of Charter Statements to accompany each piece of government legislation, and repealed a number of redundant provisions of the Criminal Code.

Bill C-60 – Passed the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act* (the 12th of its kind), an Act to correct certain anomalies, inconsistencies and errors and to deal with other matters of a non-controversial and uncomplicated nature in the Statutes of Canada and to repeal certain Acts and provisions that have expired, lapsed or otherwise ceased to have effect.

Bill C-75 (currently before the Senate) – Our government's legislative response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Jordan*. It contains a comprehensive package of criminal justice system reforms and is the outcome of a review of the changes in our criminal justice system and sentencing reforms over the past decade. It also implements our platform commitments to toughen criminal laws and bail conditions in cases of domestic assault, in consultation with stakeholders and with the goal of keeping survivors and children safe.

As well, Bill C-75 reintroduces legislative amendments from the following four bills:

Bill C-28: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (victim surcharge);

Bill C-38: An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons); and

Bill C-39: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (unconstitutional provisions) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (this bill also included **Bill C-32**, An Act related to the repeal of section 159 (anal intercourse) of the Criminal Code).

Bill C-78 (currently before the Senate) – The first substantial update of Canada's federal family laws in

over 20 years, which will put the best interests of children first, address family violence, reduce child poverty, and make Canada's family justice system more accessible and efficient.

Bill C-84 (currently in the House of Commons) – Strengthens the law on bestiality and animal cruelty, and responds to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R v. D.L.W.*

For each piece of Justice legislation, as well as some other Government bills, introduced in the House of Commons an accompanying Charter Statement outlining how the bill potentially engages Canadians' *Charter* rights.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS:

Overhauled the federal judicial appointments process, including the process of appointing Supreme Court Justices, to ensure that it is transparent, inclusive and accountable to Canadians.

As a result of that process, appointed 250 judges across Canada including a record number of 104 appointments in 2018. Of those, more than 56% are women, eight are Indigenous, twenty-two are members of visible minority communities, twelve identify as LGBTQ2S, and three identify as persons with disabilities. Created 75 new judicial positions across Canada responding to the needs of Canadians and the courts.

Expanded Unified Family Courts in Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Conducted a Criminal Justice System Review that included diverse consultations and round-tables across Canada.

Invested in victim's services and access to justice for victims and families through the Victim's Fund.

Reviewed our government's litigation strategy, ending appeals, changing positions or settling cases where it was appropriate to do so.

Issued a prosecutorial directive on HIV non-disclosure cases to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, to make our justice system fairer and to reduce the stigmatization of Canadians living with HIV.

Issued *Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples*.

For the first time, published an annual *Litigation Year in Review* document in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Issued a *Directive on Civil Litigation Involving Indigenous Peoples*, which will guide Canada's legal approaches, positions and decisions taken in civil litigation involving Aboriginal and treaty rights and the Crown's obligation towards Indigenous peoples.

Supported the Minister of Canadian Heritage in the restoration of a modern Court Challenges Program.

Led delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council's third Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, a review of Canada's human rights record by United Nations member states. Was the first time Canada sent a cabinet-level head-of-delegation.

Initiated the first meetings of federal-provincial-territorial Ministers responsible for human rights in nearly 30 years.

Spoke to the UK House of Lords, with an introduction by the Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell.

Delivered the Annual Reconciliation Lecture at the Australian National University in 2016, the first non-Australian to do so.

Opened the 15th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2016, with a speech on Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the need for free, prior and informed consent.

Delivered the annual Campagnolo Lecture on Restorative Justice, 2018.

Note: All speeches, legislation and other documents referenced here can be found on the Department of Justice's website at: www.justice.gc.ca