

# Nault, Coon Come agree to 30- day "cooling off" period on FNG consultations

*CP files and staff*

HULL, Que. (CP) — Federal consultations on a new Indian Act will be put on hold for 30 days while government and native leaders discuss how to proceed, Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault said Tuesday.

The development came after strong protests from some native leaders who threatened to blockade roads and mount other disruptive protests if there was no change in the process they say steamrolls over their concerns.

"We'll get right at it — the sooner, the better," Nault said after an hour-long meeting with Matthew Coon Come, grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

"The consultation process will continue but we have agreed, for the sake of our relationship and to give time for the work plan to be put together, that we'll have a 30-day cooling off period."

Nault said the two sides will talk about changes to the act, their overall relationship and concerns expressed by the assembly at its annual meeting in Halifax in July.

The minister said he expects to have a better idea where they're headed within 10 days to two weeks.

Coon Come came to the meeting ostensibly to deliver a 30-day ultimatum from the 700,000-member assembly he heads for Nault to abandon consultations on how to revamp the 125-year-old act.

More than 200 such meetings have been held since May. The latest, Monday at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, attracted only about a dozen people, some of whom were suspicious of federal aims.

"Let us talk among ourselves and then we can come to the federal government and talk," said Lewis Cardinal, a First Nations member who directs the office of native student services at the university.

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# Nault, Coon agree to 30-day "cooling off"

By CP News

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The 633 chiefs have boycotted the process, saying it's too rushed and narrowly focused to allow real input on legislation, expected later this fall.

The chiefs threatened an 'aggressive strategic plan of action' across Canada should Nault refuse to include them in a broader, longer term consultation.

Coon Come wouldn't comment Tuesday on the status of those threats, which include the prospect of highway blockades.

"Well we had a very good meeting with Mr. Nault. We've agreed to present that work plan. We will direct our people to meet with his people and figure out where we go from there," said Coon Come. "And we will work very fast

and see where we go from there."

He said part of the work plan will address issues such as health, housing and economic development — all of primary concern to the chiefs.

Those issues were also mentioned in the Liberal throne speech that opened Parliament in January, Coon Come pointed out. "We'll find a solution; we'll find a way."

Said Nault: "I think as leaders — no matter whether we're on the federal government side or in First Nations communities — we all want our citizens to tell us what they think about how we can move together down the road."