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### FIRST NATIONS FISCAL AND STATISTICAL MANAGEMENT ACT RESUMPTION OF HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE

OTTAWA , ONTARIO (April 28, 2004) - The proponents of the *First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act* (Bill C-23) were pleased that the House of Commons resumed debate on the Bill at Report Stage.

C.T. (Manny) Jules, spokesperson for the First Nations Fiscal Institutions Initiative, underscored the importance of swift passage of the legislation now that amendments have been proposed to reinforce its optional nature.

“We are delighted to see that the *First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act* is moving ahead through the parliamentary process. First Nations have waited a long time for this legislation and anticipate full party support,” Mr. Jules stated.

Led by First Nations, Bill C-23 will create a First Nations Tax Commission, First Nations Finance Authority, First Nations Financial Management Board and First Nations Statistical Institute. Collectively, these institutions are expected to provide the information, accountability, certainty, regulatory framework, confidence and infrastructure required to attract investment to First Nation lands.

Initially introduced on December 2, 2002, the Bill was being debated in the House of Commons at Report Stage when the 2nd Session of the 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament prorogued on November 12, 2003.

In January of 2004, Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), stated that the Bill “should be revised so that it specifically and explicitly only applies to those First Nations who want to sign-on to the legislation.” With those revisions, National Chief Fontaine stated that the AFN “will not stand in the way” of those First Nations who want to pursue the legislation.

In March 2004, the Federal Government reinstated the Bill and proposed amendments to reinforce the optional nature of the legislation.

Chief Strater Crowfoot of the Siksika First Nation and Chairman of the Indian Taxation Advisory Board commented on the optional nature of Bill C-23.

“As stated previously, Bill C-23 is clearly optional. First Nations may continue to use section 83 of the Indian Act, conclude a self-government agreement, or use the tools contained in this Bill,” said Chief Crowfoot. “The use of a schedule will address the concerns raised by some First Nations, including the views expressed by the Assembly of First Nations. Furthermore, the non-derogation provision concerning Aboriginal and Treaty rights, provides even greater certainty on the legislation’s optional nature.”

First Nations Fiscal Institutions Initiative  
Initiative sur les Institutions fiscales des Premières nations

The First Nation proponents of the legislation urge parliamentarians to avoid political partisanship, strive for all party support, and expeditiously pass an historic piece of legislation that is good for First Nations and good for Canada.

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**For more information on the institutions, please contact:**

First Nations Tax Commission - [www.fntc.ca](http://www.fntc.ca)

First Nations Finance Authority - [www.fnfa.ca](http://www.fnfa.ca)

First Nations Financial Management Board - [www.fnfmb.com](http://www.fnfmb.com)

First Nations Statistics - [www.firststats.ca](http://www.firststats.ca)