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ABPA Statement on the US-CAN Trade War and the Impacts on Indigenous Businesses and Peoples

February 3, 2025 - Robinson-Superior Treaty, Fort William First Nation Territory, Thunder Bay, Ontario: The Anishnawbe Business Professional Association (ABPA) expresses deep concern over the recent imposition of U.S. tariffs on Canadian exports and their detrimental impact on Indigenous businesses and communities in Ontario and across Canada.

Impact on Key Sectors:

- **Oil and Gas:** Indigenous communities with equity and participation agreements in the oil and gas sector face significant revenue losses due to reduced exports and increased costs.
- **Forestry:** Tariffs on lumber have strained the forestry sector, leading to job losses and reduced income for First Nations communities that have forest licences and are reliant on forestry agreements.
- **Mining:** The competitiveness of Canadian mining exports is threatened by tariffs on minerals, affecting Indigenous communities with stakes in mining operations.
- **Electricity Exports:** Tariffs on electricity exports to the U.S. could lead to higher costs and reduced demand, impacting Indigenous communities involved in electricity generation and export.

Opportunities within Canada:

Closing the Infrastructure Gap: The significant infrastructure gap in First Nations communities, estimated at \$350 billion, presents a massive opportunity for investment and development within Canada. This includes projects related to housing, water and sanitation, energy, transportation, and digital connectivity.

UNDRIP and FPIC: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) provide a framework for ensuring Indigenous participation and benefit-sharing in development projects as well as Treaty implementation.

Equity Participation: Promoting equity participation models allows Indigenous communities to become partners in development projects, sharing in the ownership and benefits. This can foster economic reconciliation and self-determination.

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Recommendations to the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments:

- **Diversify Export Markets:** Expand trade agreements with other countries to reduce dependency on the U.S. market.
- **Support Indigenous Entrepreneurship:** Increase funding and support for Indigenous entrepreneurs through grants, loans, and business development programs.
- **Enhance Infrastructure:** Invest in infrastructure projects in Indigenous communities to lower operational costs and increase competitiveness.
- **Promote Value-Added Production:** Encourage Indigenous businesses to produce finished goods rather than raw materials.
- **Strengthen First Nations' Rights and Land Claims:** Expedite the resolution of land claims and support First Nations' self-governance.
- **Local Sourcing Initiatives:** Promote local sourcing of goods and services within the province to reduce reliance on imports.
- **Economic Diversification:** Encourage economic diversification in Indigenous communities by supporting various sectors such as tourism, technology, and agriculture.
- **Partnerships with Indigenous Organizations:** Collaborate with Indigenous organizations to develop and implement economic development strategies.

Quote from ABPA President: "The imposition of U.S. tariffs poses a significant threat to the economic stability and growth of Indigenous businesses in key sectors such as oil and gas, forestry, mining, and electricity exports," says ABPA President Jason Rasevych, a member of Ginoogaming First Nation. "We urge the Federal and Provincial Governments to work with Treaty Partners to ensure that Indigenous leaders are a part of the discussion to mitigate these impacts and support the resilience and prosperity of all Canadians. Canada needs more than reactive tariffs or bailouts. We need a bold, forward-thinking strategy that makes us the obvious choice for global business. That means reducing internal trade barriers and championing the strengths that set us apart— Free Prior Informed Consent, our skilled workforce, market access, and reputation for stability. As leaders, it's our responsibility to act decisively and inspire confidence—We saw during the pandemic that Indigenous businesses were a low priority for relief programming. We need to ensure that this doesn't happen again and that these businesses are supported to deal with tariff impacts."

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About the ABPA:

The Anishnawbe Business Professional Association (www.anishnawbebusiness.com) is a non-profit, member-based organization based in Thunder Bay, Ontario. ABPA serves the First Nation business community within Treaty #3, Treaty #5, Treaty #9, and Robinson Huron and Superior Treaty Areas. The ABPA develops and expresses positions on business issues and other public issues relevant to First Nation business, on behalf of its members.

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