

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

312 – 345 Chief Alex
Thomas Way,
Kamloops, BC, V2H 1H1

Ph: 250-828-9757
Fx: 250-828-9893



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

For Immediate release:

December 14, 2015

An Open Letter from the First Nations Leadership Council to Premier Christy Clark regarding the release of the Plecas Report

Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver) — The First Nations Leadership Council today released the attached open letter to Premier Christy Clark commenting on the release of the report by Bob Plecas entitled Plecas Review, Part One: A review of policy, practice and legislation of child welfare in BC in relation to a judicial decision in the J.P. case.

-30-

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

For further comment please contact:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs: | 250-490-5314 |
| Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson, BC Assembly of First Nations: | 250-852-1143 |
| Colin Braker, Communications Director, First Nations Summit: | 604-328-4094 |

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

December 14, 2015

Premier Christy Clark
Premier of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

OPEN LETTER: FNLC Opposes Plecas Report Recommendations to Limit RCY

Dear Premier Clark,

Mr. Plecas has written a report called *Decision Time* as a special independent advisor to you and the Minister for Children and Families. Mr. Plecas was originally hired to review the J.P. case but his mandate was expanded to include an “interim report on the comparative analysis of applicable legislation, policy, standards and practice and recommendations for the improvement of Ministry, and other, systemic processes”.

Unfortunately, Mr. Plecas presents a wide-ranging, biased survey of child welfare and politics, including a unilateral public assessment of the value of independent oversight and the performance of the current Representative for Children and Youth. We find this attack on this valued oversight role to be deeply offensive and inappropriate. Let us be clear in stating that we fully support the important work of the Representative for Children and Youth.

The report references Grand Chief Edward John being brought on “to help find ways to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care”. We find this to be an attempt by Mr. Plecas to minimize a need to consult with First Nations’ on these important issues by offloading and mischaracterizing Grand Chief Edward John’s important role as Special Advisor.

We must point out that Grand Chief John has our support in his role as a Special Advisor to the Ministry of Children and Families and his mandate to specifically:

- *Provide a focused role on creating permanency for Aboriginal children in care, particularly those in care through continuing custody orders (in care until reaching the age of majority);*
- *After the release of the Council of the Federation report, assign follow-up for British Columbia (encourage national-level leadership and facilitate provincial level discussions) and;*
- *As necessary, assist the MCFD Minister in developing advice to cabinet members on these areas.*

We take great offense at Mr. Plecas’ cavalier observation that the deaths and serious injuries to children known to the MCFD “occur rarely.” From July 2007 to September 2015 there have been 2981 instances of critical injuries and deaths. To be clear, the MCFD is aware of 814 deaths and 2077 critical injuries in the last eight years. For the current fiscal year of 2015-2016, there are 380 critical injury reports and 90 deaths of children in care. We need to bring closure and honour the grieving families.



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

312 – 345 Chief Alex
Thomas Way,
Kamloops, BC, V2H 1H1

Ph: 250-828-9757
Fx: 250-828-9893



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

Mr. Plecas confirms what the Representative has already reported on extensively, that the MCFD budget has a shortfall of at least \$100 million over the past number of years. We urge you to make immediate financial investments. More importantly though, we urge you to work with us to ensure those investments actually help First Nations children and youth who are the mainstay of the children in need in BC.

We have asked the Representative to convene a meeting among herself, the First Nations Leadership Council, the First Nations Health Council and your Deputies to discuss the state of child welfare and how to move forward in the most appropriate manner.

We will also be writing to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to indicate that we hope the utterly unfair review of the performance of the Representative can be withdrawn fully and that should such a review be conducted, it should be done in the proper forum, before the Standing Committee on Children and Youth that the Representative has worked closely with for 9 years and has appeared before in excess of 30 times.

What is certain is that significant and real change is required, as well as direct investments to First Nations communities to support First Nations' children and families. Unfortunately, the Plecas Report falls significantly short and appears to be an attempt to discredit the important work of a respected First Nations individual and office holder. This report represents a wasted opportunity to effect the positive change so desperately needed in BC.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

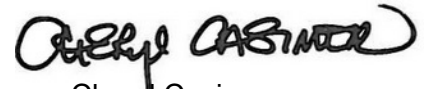
On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT:



Grand Chief Edward John



Robert Phillips



Cheryl Casimer

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS:



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Bob Chamberlin



Chief Judy Wilson

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson

CC: Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Representative for Children and Youth
Grand Chief Doug Kelly, First Nations Health Council
Hon. Stephanie Cadieux, Ministry of Children and Family Development