

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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First Nations Leadership Council shocked by BC's move to bypass environmental review requirements

Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver, BC) – The BC First Nations Leadership Council (BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs) is shocked by the announcement by the Provincial government that as of April 28, 2014 new natural gas processing plants will no longer be subject to the provincial environmental assessment reviews and that as of January 1, 2015, ski and all season resorts will also be exempt.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated "In a stunningly stupid move, the Province has effectively declared war on all BC First Nations and jeopardized all LNG discussions throughout the entire Province of BC."

BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould stated, "The Order in Council decision to omit sweet gas and ski resorts from provincial environmental assessment is very disappointing to many of the BC First Nations currently participating in dialogue with government and industry today at the Fort Nelson Shale Gas/LNG Summit. Decisions aimed only at 'cutting red tape' do nothing to ease intensifying concerns by First Nations and by the public about environmental protection. This growing unease does nothing to create a positive climate in BC; the province is running the risk of stalling economic progress by ignoring the need for appropriate environmental management. Opportunities for relationship building are lost when the BC Government on the one hand participates in open dialogue with First Nations on topics like LNG, but on the other makes no effort to consult with First Nations on major environmental deregulation in the same day."

"This is another unacceptable example of government once again attempting to water down and minimize their consultation and accommodation obligations with our communities. First Nations have a right to ensure the highest level of environmental protection occurs within our territories no matter what type of development is proposed. Our environmental standards are not for sale, whether it be a proposed LNG development or a proposed ski resort", stated Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit political executive. "Unfortunately, we have already seen this government ignore First Nations and environmental concerns with the approvals for the Jumbo Ski resort in the East Kootenays."

"This announcement shows the two faces of Government and their willful disrespect and disregard of First Nation's constitutionally-recognized and treaty protected rights," said Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice-President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "Cumulative infringements of Indigenous rights across Canada will lead to direct-action and road-blocks. What other choice of action is left?"

"Given the law as developed in a long line of cases from the Supreme Court of Canada, there is a legal requirement for governments to consult with First Nations regarding any and all land and resource development initiatives in their respective territories. As well, given the magnitude and potential environmental implications of any new LNG development or future ski or all-season resort developments, it is our view that the appropriate consultation standard is the "free, prior and informed consent" of the First Nations potentially affected. This standard has been adopted by the United Nations in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and is being implemented through the UN system", concluded Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit political executive.

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