



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Summit Comments on Release of Eyford Report

Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver, BC) – First Nations Summit leaders are encouraged by the recommendations contained in the report to the Prime Minister entitled *Forging Partnerships Building Relationships: Aboriginal Canadians and Energy Development* by Douglas Eyford, the Special Federal Representative on West Coast Energy Infrastructure.

"The recommendations in the report released by Mr. Eyford this morning contain critical recommendations that could open the door to a process of improved engagement between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. However, it is absolutely critical that the foundation of this engagement must be based on the recognition of First Nations Aboriginal Rights and Title within their respective territories", said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit.

"Mr. Eyford clearly recognized there are serious deficiencies in the way the federal government engages with First Nations which has resulted in a high level of mistrust. If the federal government takes these issues and this report seriously, it must work to immediately implement the recommendations, otherwise there will continue to be a high level of uncertainty in this province. The ball is now in the Prime Minister's court. He needs to meet directly with BC First Nations on an urgent basis to chart a way forward", added Chief John.

"It is critical to note that despite the findings in this report, the views of the general public and First Nations regarding the Enbridge Northern Gateway proposal will not change. We will continue to support and stand with the First Nations who are fighting to protect their traditional territories and cultures from the clear threats that projects such as this represent. Progress on further energy proposals in BC will not progress until a new process of Crown-First Nations engagement is implemented as per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", added Robert Phillips of the FNS political executive.

"Building trust with First Nations is critical. However the government must acknowledge this will be an incremental process that will not occur overnight. Trust must be developed incrementally by direct political engagement between federal and provincial Ministers and First Nations Chiefs. Relationship building must be the immediate priority of both government and industry", said Cheryl Casimer, also from the FNS political executive.

"Government and industry must abandon their normal strategy to water down and minimize their consultation and accommodation obligations with our communities. First Nations have a right to not only benefit in the resources that are being extracted from our territories, but we also have a right to ensure the highest level of environmental protection occurs within our territories. We agree, as Mr. Eyford states in his report *the duty to consult is grounded in the core precept of the honour of the Crown and the recognition of the unique relationship that exists between the Crown and Aboriginal Canadians. The Supreme Court of Canada has identified the duty as part of the reconciliation process mandated by section 35*", concluded Ms. Casimer.

The federal government announced in March 2013 that Mr. Eyford was appointed to engage with Aboriginal communities in British Columbia and Alberta, among others, that could benefit from future energy infrastructure development and to help identify opportunities to facilitate greater participation by Aboriginal peoples in resource development while at the same time identifying ways in which Aboriginal peoples can play a greater role in strengthening environmental protection.

-30-

The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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