



NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
MAY 4, 2012**

First Nations Summit welcomes federal report on treaty negotiations in BC, encourages Canada to take urgent action to implement recommendations

Coast Salish Territory/ Vancouver, BC – The First Nations Summit welcomes the long-awaited public release of the report on treaty negotiations in BC by James Lornie, Special Representative to the Hon. John Duncan, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The First Nations Summit is calling on the federal government to take immediate action to implement Mr. Lornie's nine core recommendations which outline how the federal government can accelerate treaty negotiations in BC.

The nine recommendations are:

- 1. Consider re-evaluating the approach to key substantive mandates under discussion at the Common Table, to look for opportunities to address the concerns of First Nations.*
- 2. Review and re-evaluate the concerns raised by First Nations regarding the application of the existing Own Source Revenue (OSR) policy, to look for opportunities for flexibility in its application.*
- 3. Review aspects of fisheries negotiations that are not implicated by the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon on the Fraser River, for opportunities to recommence negotiations (in the context of both comprehensive and incremental treaty agreements).*
- 4. Reconfigure the current federal treaty-related decision-making and mandate development process to introduce greater flexibility, efficiency, authority and capability.*
- 5. Re-evaluate the negotiations loan funding policy with a view to introducing amendments to the policy, subject to a cost-benefit analysis.*
- 6. Engage in tripartite incremental treaty agreements to secure land and resources for First Nations at any stage of the BC treaty process.*
- 7. Engage in discussions between the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the BC Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to review existing cost-sharing arrangements and commitments.*
- 8. Provide resources to support effective dispute avoidance and resolution options for all First Nations affected by potential conflict relating to shared territory and overlap issues arising out of treaties, whether or not those First Nations are participating in the BC treaty process.*

9. Develop and implement options for engagement in reconciliation measures outside the treaty process with all First Nations.

"It's time for the federal government to take responsibility for the slow pace of treaty negotiations. The federal government must shift its focus from their unilateral take-it-or-leave-it negotiation mandates, to recognizing that Canada needs to change its approach to treaty negotiations in key areas to respond to First Nations' legitimate concerns such as those identified in Mr. Lornie's report", said Chief Doug White of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

"The federal government has become overly concerned in recent years with how it can shut down negotiation tables which it has labeled as 'unproductive', while at the same time taking key issues, such as fisheries, right off the table. As Mr. Lornie stated, the most important response the federal government can make is to recommit to treaty-making as a federal priority at every level of the federal system", added Dan Smith, also of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

"First Nations engaged in negotiations want nothing more than to reach timely, just and equitable agreements with Canada and BC to better allow us to have healthy, sustainable and prosperous communities", added Mr. Smith.

In January of this year at the Crown-First Nations Gathering held in Ottawa, Prime Minister Stephen Harper committed to ensure that "federal negotiation policies reflect the principles of recognition and affirmation ... and advance certainty expeditious resolution and self-sufficiency." The First Nations Summit believes that the only way the Prime Minister can live up to this commitment is to fully embrace and immediately take steps to implement Mr. Lornie's recommendations. As Mr. Lornie has noted, "the time for action is now."

The First Nations Summit executive will be examining Mr. Lornie's report in detail with Chiefs and leaders from First Nations engaged in treaty negotiations at the upcoming First Nations Summit Chiefs' Assembly taking place in North Vancouver from June 6-8, 2012.

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Note: A copy of the full report by Jim Lornie can be downloaded at www.fns.bc.ca

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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