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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 25, 2011

Responses From Liberal and NDP Leadership Candidates “What will you do?”

(Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver – February 25, 2011) The BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs is publicly releasing a joint letter to the leadership candidates of the BC Liberal Party and the BC New Democratic Party.

It is with much disappointment to report that only two leadership candidates of the BC Liberal Party and one leadership candidate of the BC New Democratic Party have responded. Their responses are attached.

A copy of the joint letter to leadership candidates is online at:
http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/News_Releases/UBCICNews02081101.html

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For more information and further comment:

Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould, BC Assembly of First Nations (778) 772-8681
Grand Chief Ed John, First Nations Summit (778) 772-8218
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of BC Indian Chiefs (250) 490-5314

Christy Clark, Candidate for the BC Liberal Party Leadership Response

February 22, 2011

First Nations Leadership Council

Dear Chiefs:

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to respond to your questions.

A primary focus of my government will be to create lasting relationships with Aboriginal people in the province. Enhancing these relationships means building on the key initiatives and successes of the past few years – successes such as the New Relationship and the Transformative Change Accord. My government is committed to building relationships and partnerships that reduce the socio-economic gap that still exists so that real concrete change can happen for our children, families and communities.

I will be focused on ensuring that Aboriginal people become meaningful partners in BC's economy in a way that will support and create opportunities to benefit Aboriginal people, their communities as well as industry and investors, and will build on the learnings of the past decade. To achieve this, it is my plan to want to support and create an Aboriginal advantage to investors by working with Aboriginal communities to identify and expand opportunities across the province in every sector.

Specific to your questions, I offer you the following:

- My government will establish a Premier's Aboriginal Business/Investment Council whose focus will be to set objectives, identify business opportunities, identify barriers, and provide recommendations to myself and government on potential solutions for attracting investment. This will provide direct access to the Premier's office and government for Aboriginal people, charged with ensuring that we are taking advantage of every opportunity and keeping Aboriginal issues at the forefront
- I will establish a Council that brings together both Federal and Provincial governments to work with Aboriginal Leaders to streamline initiatives, leverage resources and opportunities, and create a climate of cooperation. Making the systems we have work more effectively will immediately provide direct benefits to the people each of us represents at the community level.
- I will have regular meetings with the First Nations Leadership of BC so that they will have direct access to the Premier's Office and that I hear first-hand their issues and concerns.
- Further, I will make it a priority to develop initiatives that run parallel to the Treaty process, and provide better short term results as a way to incrementally support First Nation's community involvement in economic activities in their traditional territories.
- Finally, as part of supporting Aboriginal participation in the mainstream economy, I will be exploring public and private financial alternatives to assist Aboriginal groups to capitalize on their business and investment opportunities.

I have made it very clear that my first priority is putting families at the centre of all Government decision making. I am firmly convinced that the success of the Province of British Columbia and Aboriginal people is firmly inter-connected. We are in an interesting time - never in the history of the province have we had the range and scope of economic opportunities in front of us that we do today.

Collectively we have an opportunity that all of us must seize, that will result in real, concrete change for all of our children, families and communities across the Province.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond and I look forward to meeting with each of you again to continue this conversation as Premier.

Yours truly,
Christy Clark, Candidate for the BC Liberal Party leadership

Kevin Falcon, Candidate for the BC Liberal Party Leadership Response

Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, leadership campaigns are substantially different than full elections, and we do not have the resources to respond to questionnaires. However, we are looking at all correspondence submitted to us and will endeavour to answer as many as time permits during the campaign.

Best regards,

Team Kevin Falcon for Leadership

Listening-Learning-Leading

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Mike Farnworth, Candidate for the BC New Democratic Party Leadership Response

Dear Chiefs of the First Nation Leadership Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond as a leadership candidate for the BC NDP to the questions and concerns outlined in your Feb. 8 letter.

Key components of your questions deal with meaningful input into legislation and policy initiatives, maximizing economic involvement and governance capacity, assistance to engage industry, investors and 3rd party interests to help close the socioeconomic gap, and strengthening consultation policies to help resolve natural resource development disagreements. These are extremely important topics and progress must be made on all of them if First Nations, and non-First Nations alike, are to not only fully benefit from the rich resources we have in BC, but are also able to contribute in creating a better place for all to live.

I will address the key components you have outlined in a holistic approach. If you have additional questions or want to discuss aspects in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

There are a number of existing avenues in government structures that can provide opportunities for meaningful First Nations input that begins to reconcile their respective aboriginal title and rights with government legislation and policy development. But these avenues need to be reinvigorated, and we need to build trust in government, which is one of the focal points of my campaign. Specifically in connection to meaningful First Nations input, we need to reestablish the Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs which has not met under the BC Liberals for eight years. This is a bipartisan legislative committee which is ideally suited for the type of meaningful input you describe if the right terms of reference are implemented. I also believe integrity needs to be restored in the process of passing Bills into law. This legislative process is set up to provide checks and balances so that a thorough discussion of the planned legislation can occur through first and second readings, the committee stage and the third reading. Unfortunately, the practice of the BC Liberals includes sometimes allotting only two days for this entire process or jamming 10 or more Bills into the last two weeks of a legislative sitting and then using their majority to vote in favour of all them on the last day, no matter how little debate has occurred. This is not a productive, sound or honorable way to make the law of the province. My plan is to restore the integrity of this process and provide meaningful input to legislation, especially during the committee stage where MLAs could take the contents of a Bill to First Nations in their constituencies to improve the final outcome in the legislation. I also want to ensure each MLA plays a more prominent role in the legislative process which will entail productive dialogue with First Nations to receive meaningful input while a Bill is still in the drafting stage. Of course in legislation and policies that involve an overall provincial approach to all First Nations, organizations such as the First Nations Leadership Council will be critical to providing input and analysis in the drafting and committee stages of legislative endeavors.

The socio-economic gap you describe that exists between First Nations and non-First Nation populations in this province is a direct result of Crown policies since contact and is a disgrace for a country and province that prides itself on the principles of justice and fairness. There are many initiatives on the social and economic side that can make a difference in closing this gap. My education platform calls for a provincial commission on education to ensure BC has the best possible education system for the 21st Century. That commission will address topics like how best to prepare students for the realities of modern life and careers. It would be able to make recommendations, for instance, to correct the fact that a 49% school completion rate for First Nation students, 30 percentage points lower than the remainder of the population in BC, is unacceptable and needs action quickly. My poverty reduction platform includes appointing a Cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to set and achieve legislated poverty reduction targets. One element of this multi-faceted platform is protecting children-at-risk through immediate investments in child protection services and enhancing support for the transition to First Nations' aboriginal child welfare. This will go a long way to address the fact that 15 of 21 children under

the age of two who died in BC between 2007-2009 while in care were aboriginal as detailed in a report last month by BC Representative for Child and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. And properly resourcing organizations like the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres will provide much needed, target support for the rapidly growing urban First Nation demographic.

Education and training are at the basis of increased First Nations participation in the economy yet current provincial government approaches to economic development on traditional territories has reduced opportunities especially in natural resource-related initiatives. We have witnessed a lack of investment due to uncertainty regarding title and conflicts that have arisen due to inadequate consultative processes. A part of this is the failure of the BC Liberals to ensure companies have the 'social license' to develop and operate a project. Currently the government absolves itself of responsibility in this area and advises companies to undertake social license related negotiations with the impacted First Nation. This is a total abdication of what is a legitimate role of a responsible government – something the *Haida* case properly pointed out. A provincial government under my leadership would provide the support and resources to the relevant Ministries to ensure the framework for the social license discussion is well constructed so that the province, First Nations and companies enter into this area of negotiation with a clear understanding of the rules and final objectives. My platform also calls for a revamped environmental assessment process that is independent, fully-funded and utilizes a triple bottom line to assess the full spectrum of economic, social and environmental considerations and the cumulative impacts of project proposals. As such the environmental assessment would fulfill its role as a technical process which could usefully serve as the first stage in consultation with First Nations by collecting and evaluating relevant information so that an accurate picture of a project's impact and potential mitigation measures can be developed. But consultation with a view to reaching an accommodation is very much a political, not a technical, process which must be attempted through a formally established, and mutually agreed upon, government-to-government process. One reason we have seen failures of the EA process recently is due to the fact that the provincial government's approach is leaving a technical process to also primarily deal with consultation and accommodation as well and the results have been poor in all topic areas.

There are bilateral and treaty table mechanisms that can assist in defining successful accommodation and consultation as well as addressing the certainty issue around aboriginal title. These mechanisms need more attention and support from the provincial government. At the basis of my approach is respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights in developing government agreements and treaties, ending court actions by government that have sought to deny such title and rights and broadening the range of tools available to include legislation and resources. *As Premier I would immediately strike a reconciliation committee in caucus to review recognition legislation with the goal of introducing recommendations into the legislature within one year of forming government.*

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. I look forward to more detailed discussions in the future.

Yours truly,
Mike Farnworth