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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada  
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation  
First Nations Summit

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### **Treaty Principals take action to improve treaty negotiations**

VANCOUVER – The Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit have developed a path forward to improve and expedite treaty negotiations with First Nations in British Columbia.

As the Principals to the made-in-B.C. treaty negotiations process, we are committed to the negotiation of modern treaties between First Nations and the Crown and advancing long-term reconciliation of Aboriginal rights and title. However, we recognize that treaties are complex and have taken longer to negotiate than anticipated. The status quo is not acceptable — we need to find ways to negotiate treaties more effectively and efficiently and provide the benefits of treaty agreements to First Nations earlier.

To that end, we support a series of proposals and action items contained in the report on the "Multilateral Engagement Process to Improve and Expedite Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia" to work towards addressing some of the complex challenges that impede the conclusion of treaty agreements in a more timely and cost-effective manner.

It will take time to make progress, but we are focused on addressing longstanding issues and providing First Nations with flexibility and options for moving down the path of reconciliation. We are hopeful this work will provide for more completed treaties and encourage more First Nations in British Columbia to engage in treaty negotiations.

Implementation of this work will be undertaken in the context of advancing reconciliation as envisioned by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, and the Government of Canada's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Concluding treaty agreements with First Nations is a critical element of the process of reconciliation in British Columbia and sets a path to improve the economic and social well-being of First Nations. These commitments will benefit all British Columbians and Canadians.

## **Quotes:**

### **Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs —**

"The negotiations of modern treaties in British Columbia represent an ultimate expression of reconciliation with First Nations. The Government of Canada remains steadfast in its commitment to the British Columbia treaty negotiations process. This report is a first step and we will work in collaboration with our partners to advance these proposed new approaches and tools so we can create the momentum needed to expedite treaty negotiations both in British Columbia and across Canada."

### **John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation —**

"British Columbia initiated the process to find ways to expedite treaty negotiations, and we've developed proposals with our treaty partners that will allow us to make progress on issues that have challenged the treaty negotiations for decades. British Columbia continues to seek innovations and is working to accelerate negotiations with pilot tables. British Columbia is committed to improving the treaty process in our effort to bring the considerable benefits of treaty faster and to more First Nations."

### **Grand Chief Edward John, First Nations Summit —**

"This report comes at a very significant time given Canada's recent decision to become a full, unqualified supporter of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We concur with Minister Bennett's statement at the 15th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues that the Declaration reflects the spirit and intent of the Treaties. The implementation of the proposals in this report will help bring to life Canada's acknowledgement of the importance of concluding treaties with First Nations."

### **Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit —**

"The report provides an important contribution to our work to jointly improve the process of treaty negotiations in BC. Importantly, this work has also included a review of the effectiveness of the BC Treaty Commission and has resulted in an agreement by the Principals to immediately undertake the necessary steps to jointly appoint a new BCTC Chief Commissioner on a timely basis."

### **Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit —**

"We hold our hands up to the communities that have recognized the real opportunities the treaty negotiations process represents for their citizens. We also recognize their perseverance in moving forward, despite the unacceptably slow pace of negotiations. The implementation of the proposals in this report will provide more flexibility and create new opportunities to break down the barriers and overcome challenges currently facing First Nations, including those at advanced stages of negotiations, and should help First Nations conclude fair and just treaties in a more timely manner."

## **Learn More:**

For a copy of the Multilateral Engagement Process to Improve and Expedite Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia, and Frequently Asked Questions: [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca)

First Nations Summit: [fns.bc.ca](http://fns.bc.ca)

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation: [gov.bc.ca/arr](http://gov.bc.ca/arr)

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: [aadnc-aandc.gc.ca](http://aadnc-aandc.gc.ca)

B.C. Treaty Commission: [bctreaty.net](http://bctreaty.net)

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