



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
October 24, 2019

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
First Nations Leadership Council

Reconciliation legislation fosters greater economic certainty

VICTORIA - Legislation introduced today by the provincial government will move the province forward with a clear action plan for reconciliation, supporting predictability and economic opportunities, while respecting Indigenous human rights.

The new legislation aims to create further certainty for investment and re-affirms B.C. as a world-class destination providing opportunities for business while creating a strong inclusive economy. It provides an additional tool for establishing rules, transparency and accountability when the Province works with Indigenous governing bodies, business and local government on decisions affecting Indigenous rights.

Over time as provincial laws are modified or built, they will be aligned with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration). Existing B.C. laws will not change immediately – bringing provincial laws into alignment with the UN Declaration will take time, and will require consultation with Indigenous peoples and stakeholders including business, industry and local government.

The legislation enables the Province to enter into decision-making agreements with Indigenous governments, when the other relevant statute allows for it. The legislation sets out a transparent process that must be followed when making decision-making agreements, including ongoing consultation with stakeholders and local government.

An added element of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is recognition for additional forms of Indigenous governments when making agreements. This will help provide more clarity for businesses about who to engage when working with Indigenous partners.

The legislation was developed in collaboration with the First Nations Leadership Council, which is comprised of leadership from the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Quotes:

John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia -

“This new law is an important step toward true and lasting reconciliation, where we build a robust and sustainable economy by working together, and create economic and social opportunities for Indigenous peoples, communities across B.C., business and industry.”



Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation -

“Many companies investing in B.C have figured out that collaborative relationships with Indigenous governments are creating improved investment certainty. This legislation supports further collaborative opportunities and successful partnerships with Indigenous governments.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations -

Economic prosperity one of the key goals of all British Columbians and First Nations. As a former professional forester, I have worked with industry; when industry and First Nations are aligned, we all prosper. This legislation provides the tools to create certainty, to make decisions better, and to ensure that our people can get out of poverty. Business leaders and investors here and around the world must understand that we can do business better when First Nations rights are included and respected.

Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive -

No one benefits from failed approaches and policies that all too often lead to the courts. First Nations want a prosperous economy just like our neighbours. Today is a momentous day that will set the stage for an improved business environment in this province where our rights are recognized and respected. We must recognize the long-term benefits of this legislation. It will undoubtedly lead to greater business opportunities and an improved economy for all British Columbians.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of Union of BC Indian Chiefs -

Without recognizing Indigenous rights in BC, there has been constant economic uncertainty. Where proponents have taken this responsibility on, such as with the development of Apex Ski Resort in my territory, business and Indigenous relationships have flourished, and the project has proceeded successfully. We are confident that this legislation is going to result in more opportunities for better outcomes.”

Greg D’Avignon, BC Business Council -

“The Business Council of British Columbia membership is optimistic for the long-term potential of B.C.’s UNDRIP legislation to advance meaningful reconciliation. In the spirit of collaboration, the implementation of the legislation must include engagement with business and their Indigenous partners and communities. Together we can collectively inform the work ahead building on the experience and success of the nearly 500 agreements formed over the last two decades between business and Indigenous peoples, many of which incorporate UNDRIP principles. Successful implementation will also require government support for nation building and capacity building to enable Indigenous peoples' full participation in shared decision-making processes, while creating the needed clarity and greater certainty for businesses, investors and the people of B.C. as we pursue opportunity and prosperity together.”

Kendra Johnson, Association of Mineral Exploration of British Columbia –

"Mineral explorers in BC are leaders in reconciliation, with many companies already employing practices that are aligned with the principles of UNDRIP. As one of the largest private sector employers of Indigenous peoples in Canada, we are supportive of our First Nation partners and



encourage fostering respectful relationships through early engagement. We look forward to working with government and Indigenous leaders on the implementation of UNDRIP principles to ensure clarity and certainty for all British Columbians."

Quick Facts:

- When passed, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* will make British Columbia the first Canadian province to bring the internationally recognized standards of the UN Declaration into provincial law.
- There will be no immediate changes to rules regulating resource development projects when the legislation comes into effect. Any amendments to other provincial legislation would take time, and be subject to a process under the new legislation, including public notification and stakeholder consultation.
- The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* does not change the rules for consultation with Indigenous people, as established by the courts, nor will it result in the re-opening of existing permits or certificates or affect current regulatory timelines.

Learn More:

About the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*: www.declaration.gov.bc.ca

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

Media contacts:

Jen Holmwood
Office of the Premier
250 818-4881

Sarah Plank
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
250 208-9621

Jaime Sanchez
BC Assembly of First Nations
250 713-1129

Colin Braker
First Nations Summit
604 328-4094

Ellena Neel
Union of BC Indian Chiefs
778 866-0548