



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Summit challenges Minister Plant on so-called increase to provincial treaty budget

Vancouver, BC – The leadership of the First Nations Summit is challenging Geoff Plant on his recent announcement to the Vancouver Board of Trade that BC is increasing the 2004 Treaty Negotiation Office budget by \$2.1 million. The Summit views this increase as nothing more than a ploy to gain political points with the business community.

“We are very disappointed that the provincial government is using the treaty budget for political gain”, said Chief Doug Kelly, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive. “What the Minister forgot to mention is that the Province has systematically reduced their treaty negotiations budget by nearly 46% over the past two years.”

“Even with a \$2.1 million “increase” to this year’s budget, there is still a shortfall of approximately \$23 million from the 2002/03 provincial treaty budget”, added Chief Kelly. “First Nations clearly see this as a lack of commitment on the part of BC to provide adequate financial resources to effectively negotiate at all treaty tables.”

“With the recently announced \$2.1 million surplus and Minister Plant’s restated commitment to achieve results in treaty negotiations – we would expect the Minister to begin seeking the support of his cabinet colleagues to restore the BC TNO budget to at least \$53 million as a show of true commitment to all treaty tables”, added Chief Kelly.

In June the First Nations Summit asked the BC Treaty Commission to review the readiness of the BC Government to conduct negotiations. Summit Chiefs are concerned that the BC Government gutted its capacity to conduct negotiations with the 44 negotiations tables with more than 50 First Nations. The BC government set its priorities with the five lead tables and do not have the capacity to negotiate with the other 40 negotiation tables.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia. www.fns.bc.ca

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