



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

First Nations Summit Unveils 29,000 Protest Ballots; Further Proof of a “Failed, Divisive” Referendum on Treaties

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NORTH VANCOUVER – Twenty-nine thousand protest referendum ballots were set out at a meeting held here today by the First Nations Summit, proving that the BC Liberal vote on treaties was “a flawed failure that in no way represents the voice of the people.”

The ballots – some spoiled, many unopened – were collected from aboriginal and non-aboriginal people from across the province.

“In itself, this is an astonishing result,” Kathryn Teneese, an outgoing member of the Summit’s political executive said. “But consider, as well, that these 29,000 protest ballots represent just a small percentage of the 1.4 million British Columbians who refused to participate in an ill-advised referendum exercise, designed to pit aboriginal people against their non-aboriginal neighbours.”

“We want to thank all those British Columbians who stood behind us,” Teneese said. “In our newspaper campaign, we asked people NOT to vote in the referendum. And, in huge numbers, they did just that – refusing to vote. Thanks also to all those people who helped to organize our protest.”

“Now, let’s put the referendum where it belongs – on the bookshelf, never to be forgotten as a blight on our history. A year has been wasted. Together, we have got to move in a bold, new direction and get back to effective good faith treaty negotiations immediately.”

In another development, Edward John (Tl’azt’en Nation), Satsan (Herb George, Wet’suwet’en Nation) and Lydia Hwitsum (Cowichan Nation) were elected to two-year terms on the First Nations Summit political executive replacing outgoing executives Kathryn Teneese, Bill Wilson and Gerald Wesley. The elections were tightly contested and required four ballots. The new executives will assume their duties immediately.

A number of visiting dignitaries were on hand to witness the unveiling of the protest ballots and to voice support for the Summit’s anti-referendum initiative. These included: Alfred Scow, Anglican Church Committee and former provincial court judge; representatives from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs; Joy MacPhail, Leader of the Opposition, Jenny Kwan, NDP MLA; Adriane Carr, Green Party; George Heyman, BCGEU President; Jim Sinclair, BC Federation of Labour President.

The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia. Background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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