

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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NDP Approval of Site-C Dam project a major step backwards in Provincial Government relations with BC First Nations

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – First Nations Summit leaders are denouncing today’s announcement by Premier John Horgan to approve continuation of BC Hydro’s Site-C Dam project on the Peace River, approximately seven kilometers west of Fort St. John in northeastern BC. The dam will result in the flooding and destruction of 5,550 hectares of land within the traditional territory of Treaty 8 First Nations. The continuation of the Site-C will have significant negative impacts on the ability of Treaty 8 First Nations to exercise their constitutionally-protected Treaty rights to harvest and to engage in various traditional activities on the land surrounding the reservoir.

“We are very disappointed that the NDP government has decided to proceed full steam ahead with the Site-C Dam project despite numerous studies that question the economic viability and need for the project and the great cost to those First Nations that will be directly impacted,” said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

“The previous provincial government chose to completely ignore their constitutional duty to consult and accommodate Treaty 8 First Nations prior to making the original decision to move forward with the Site-C project. We are bitterly disappointed that Premier Horgan and the NDP government has chosen to stay on that same destructive path. This approach is unacceptable and an affront to the cultivation of constructive government-to-government relationships between the provincial government and BC First Nations,” added Phillips.

“BC First Nations have been very encouraged by the NDP government commitments to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) and the TRC Calls to Action. We believe today’s decision to proceed with the Site-C project is in direct conflict with these commitments,” said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive.

“The First Nations Summit has consistently maintained the necessary consultation standard for any development project in BC, especially those with such a high potential for negative impacts, such as Site-C, must be to seek the free, prior and informed consent of each and every First Nation whose Aboriginal title and rights will be impacted. First Nations Summit leaders will be seeking an early meeting with Premier Horgan to discuss today’s decision and the impact it will have on relationships between the Government of BC and BC First Nations moving forward,” concluded Casimer.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For further information:

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Background

First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly have a unanimous standing resolution passed in October 2014 at a First Nations Summit Chiefs' Assembly in support of Treaty 8 Tribal Leadership's opposition to the Site C-Dam project. The resolution states;

- 1. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly unequivocally support Treaty 8 tribal leadership in their position on the proposed Site C Dam project proposal and their assessment that the proposed project is a threat to their ability to exercise their constitutionally-protected Treaty rights, the survival of their culture and people.*
- 2. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly urge the provincial and federal governments to immediately cease proceeding with the proposed Site C Dam project, notwithstanding having issued environmental approvals.*