

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## Press Release

March 6, 2023

### The FNLC Applauds BC's Initial \$100 Million Investment in a Watershed Security Fund

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) applauds BC's initial investment of \$100 million towards creating a Watershed Security Fund and its commitment to co-developing the Fund with First Nations through Budget 2023.

"First Nations and water advocates' calls for sustainable investments in our watersheds have finally been heard. This initial investment is critical to protect our most valuable resource. In the wake of the climate emergency and as poor industry standards, pollution, and overuse continue to negatively impact our watersheds, we must all work together to protect our lifeblood that is water", stated BC Assembly of First Nations Board of Director, Chief Jerry Jack.

Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive of the First Nations Summit, stated, "We celebrate BC's heed to our calls to invest in our watersheds and its commitment to co-developing the Watershed Security Fund with First Nations Rights and Titleholders. This is a critical step towards implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. First Nations have effectively and sustainably stewarded our lands and oceans since time immemorial. Now is the time to invest in our laws, knowledge, values, and capacity to co-lead this important work throughout our traditional territories."

Union of BC Indian Chiefs Vice President, Chief Don Tom stated, "This investment in our watersheds is a very positive first step, but we can't lose sight of the long-term financial commitments required to enable the Watershed Security Fund to thrive for our future generations." Tom concluded, "As so many First Nations face source water and drinking water insecurity and continue to be disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis in the wake of fires, floods, and drought in BC, significant long-term investments are needed from the Crown both provincially and federally. As this new Watershed Security Fund is co-created with Rights and Titleholders, it is imperative that the Federal Government works with First Nations and the Province of British Columbia by matching or exceeding this investment to ensure that our waters are protected now and into the future."

The creation of the Watershed Security Fund is a significant step towards resourcing Indigenous-led watershed management and restoration projects that uphold First Nations' rights to manage, conserve and protect the waters that run through our territories. The FNLC looks forward to continuing to engage with BC to ensure this is the start of a long-term and sustainable endowment for the benefit of future generations.

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).*

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