



**For immediate release
May 20, 1998**

TREATY COMMISSION ACTS TO PROTECT TREATY PROCESS

VANCOUVER -- The BC Treaty Commission, hopeful the Province will act quickly to appoint a Chief Commissioner, today appointed Commissioner Wilf Adam as Acting Chief Commissioner for a period of one week.

The decision to appoint an Acting Chief Commissioner was made necessary when Chief Commissioner Alec Robertson's term expired on Thursday, May 14. The Treaty Commission anticipated that Robertson would be appointed to a two-year term given that an agreement on the reappointment was reached at a Principal's meeting May 7 between federal Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart, provincial Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Dale Lovick and the First Nations Summit.

However, the day following the expiry of Robertson's term, the Province proposed an extension only to June 30, 1998, to coincide with the deadline for concluding discussions on accelerating the treaty process.

"The Treaty Commission has an important role to play in the review of the treaty process and must remain independent to be effective," said Acting Chief Commissioner Adam. "This short-term appointment proposed by the Province is inconsistent with that independence."

The Principals agreed that treaty negotiations should continue while the review of the treaty process is underway. The temporary appointment of Commissioner Adam will give the Province time to make the necessary decisions and allow the Treaty Commission to address pressing treaty process business.

The Acting Chief Commissioner will have the authority to fund those First Nations that are continuing with treaty negotiations. There are 36 First Nations that have made arrangements to receive loan funding, with as many as 10 expecting to receive funds within the next two weeks. First Nations fund treaty offices and staff primarily with the loans from Canada distributed through the Treaty Commission.

Federal and provincial legislation and the Consent Resolution of the First Nations Summit allow Commissioners to unanimously appoint a sitting Commissioner to act as Chief Commissioner in the event of a vacancy or absence. Commissioner Adam is the longest serving Commissioner, first appointed in April, 1995.

The Treaty Commission, with Robertson at its head, was instrumental in initiating the current treaty process review. The Treaty Commission advised the Principals of problems with the treaty process two years ago and a year ago provided

recommendations to deal with the problems. Following the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Delgamuukw*, the Treaty Commission urged the Principals to work together to reinvigorate the treaty process, suggested an approach, and arranged meetings to begin the treaty review process.

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