



**For immediate release
September 18, 2001**

**SAYS TREATY COMMISSION IN EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT
NEW THINKING, URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO SAVE TREATY MAKING**

VANCOUVER—Urgent action is necessary if treaty making in British Columbia is to survive growing public skepticism, First Nation disapproval and a province-wide referendum on the BC government's guiding principles, according to the Treaty Commission in its eighth annual report.

"Everyone is looking for answers that will bring certainty to land ownership and jurisdiction in this province," Chief Commissioner Miles Richardson said today. "Following a blunt assessment of what works and what doesn't work, the Treaty Commission has produced a prescriptive set of recommendations that, if followed, will restore faith in the treaty process, and bring a measure of certainty to land and resource use, and economic development to First Nations communities."

While comprehensive treaties remain the goal to end the uncertainty, the Treaty Commission says it is critical to establish building blocks and that is best accomplished through a series of incremental steps.

The report also says that many people have had unrealistic expectations for a process that seeks to reconcile the rights of all British Columbians. A theme throughout the report is that comprehensive treaties must be built over time. In his annual letter to British Columbians, the chief commissioner said, "The 'big bang' theory of treaty making must be laid to rest. That is one of the important lessons of the last eight years."

Treaty commissioners, releasing the report in five BC cities today - Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George, Prince Rupert and Kelowna - are calling on the governments of Canada, British Columbia and First Nations to intensify high level talks on major issues common to all tables such as taxation and compensation.

The report confirms there is a solid foundation for treaty making but spells out actions the parties must take to make progress in treaty negotiations:

- Protect through interim agreements First Nations' interests in lands and resources that are likely to form parts of treaties.
- Negotiate "slim" agreements in principle that allow First Nations to begin to benefit from treaty arrangements while high level talks on other treaty matters continue.
- Fund First Nations to develop their governance in preparation for treaties.

The Treaty Commission delayed for three months publication of its eighth annual report to complete an in-depth review of the treaty process. Traditionally, the Treaty Commission releases its annual report in June. It is required to report no later than six months after its fiscal year ends on March 31.

The report will be tabled in the Parliament of Canada and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, and to the First Nations Summit in Cranbrook on September 20.

The report is available at www.bctreaty.net or by contacting the Treaty Commission.

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