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Parliament next for Yale First Nation Treaty ratification

VANCOUVER – The Treaty Commission says quick passage of the Yale First Nation Final Agreement by Parliament would be an important signal that the Government of Canada remains committed to treaty making.

“We believe every effort should be made so that the Yale treaty makes its way through the House of Commons and the Senate at the earliest opportunity,” said Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre, following treaty ratification Wednesday by the BC legislature.

On Wednesday, May 18, 2011 Bill 11, Yale First Nation Final Agreement Act, was introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the Legislature.

Once the Yale First Nation Treaty Settlement Legislation has been passed by provincial legislators, it must also go before the House of Commons and then on to the Senate where it may be referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples before it is finally passed into law. The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement made its way through the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples and received royal assent by the Governor General in just four days in June 2009.

“The Government of Canada has shown that when all parties agree the process of ratifying a treaty can move very quickly,” said Pierre. “We have also seen where inaction by the government has led to questions about its commitment.”

Specifically, the Treaty Commission has repeatedly urged the federal government to initial the final agreement with Sliammon First Nation so members can vote. Sliammon and the BC government were prepared to initial the final agreement in June 2010, but after 11 months there is still no response from the federal government.

Yale First Nation members voted 68% in favour of the treaty earlier this year. The treaty will provide Yale with a capital transfer of \$10.7 million, economic development funding of \$2.2 million and 1,966 hectares of land owned in fee simple, made up of 217 hectares of former Yale Indian reserves and 1,749 hectares of Crown lands.

Treaties have been implemented for Tsawwassen First Nation and the five Maa-nulth First Nations; the Yale First Nation treaty has been introduced to the Legislature, and once passed still has to be ratified by Parliament; Sliammon First Nation is waiting for Canada to sign the Final Agreement so it can move to a ratification vote; Lheidli T'enneh First Nation is planning a second vote; In-SHUCK-ch Nation and Yekooche are both close to completing treaties; K'omoks First Nation has ratified an agreement in principle and six more tables are close; another 27 First Nations remain active in treaty negotiations, for a total of 42 of the 60 First Nations in the treaty process. The 60 First Nations represent 110 Indian Act bands and approximately 67% of the registered Indian population in the province.

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The Treaty Commission is the independent body responsible for overseeing treaty negotiations among the governments of Canada, BC and First Nations in BC. It has three roles: facilitation, funding, and public information and education. For more information please visit bctreaty.ca