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Federal Throne Speech says First Nations crucial to economy

VANCOUVER – The British Columbia Treaty Commission is encouraged that the federal Throne Speech recognizes that First Nations had an essential role in building the economic backbone of the country. Treaties will reinvigorate this economic contribution.

“The completion of treaties will unite First Nations as economic partners and strengthen the role that First Nations in BC play in the economic health of our province and the nation,” said Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre. “Treaties will tap into the industry and ingenuity that the Throne Speech refers to as the hallmarks of Canada’s economy.”

“We also note that the BC government’s financial commitment to the treaty process and First Nation issues remains strong,” said Pierre. “The momentum we have gained in treaty negotiations over the past two years, and the good prospects for agreements, are reflected in the provincial budget. There will be no change to the Treaty Commission budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1.

“The benefits that can be achieved through treaties are essential to our overall economic recovery and to the future well being of our province,” said Pierre. “The whole province will benefit from completed treaties.”

The Treaty Commission expects both the provincial and the federal governments to give priority to First Nation issues and treaty negotiations in the coming year. “We had that assurance in our meeting with Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister George Abbott in Victoria Tuesday.”

Yale First Nation has initialed a final agreement with the governments of Canada and BC, and In-SHUCK-ch Nation, Sliammon First Nation and Yekooche Nation are close to concluding final agreements.

Nine First Nations are moving to conclude agreements in principle including K’omoks First Nation, Namgis Nation, Nazko First Nation, Northern Shuswap Treaty Society, Oweekeno Nation, Te’Mexw First Nation, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, and two of the Tsimshian First Nations – Kitselas and Kitsumkalum.

Other First Nations are taking a close look at the two completed treaties – Tsawwassen First Nation and Maa-nulth First Nations – with a view to moving ahead.

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About the BC Treaty Commission

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; and employs 12 staff.

Established in 1992, the Treaty Commission and six-stage treaty process are designed to advance treaty negotiations. The Treaty Commission comprises a provincial appointee, a federal appointee, two First Nations Summit appointees and a chief commissioner chosen by agreement of all three parties. For more information about the BC Treaty Commission, see www.bctreaty.net.