
News Release Communiqué

2-3220

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, MAA-NULTH FIRST NATIONS AND BRITISH COLUMBIA TREATY COMMISSION APPLAUD THE HOUSE OF COMMONS' PASSAGE OF MAA-NULTH FIRST NATIONS FINAL AGREEMENT BILL

Ottawa, ON (June 16, 2009) – The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, along with the five Maa-nulth First Nations and the British Columbia Treaty Commission are pleased to announce that Bill C-41, legislation to give effect to the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement, was passed by the House of Commons and has moved on to the Senate.

"I am very pleased that Bill C-41 received third reading and passage by the House of Commons today and I am confident that Senators will give this historic bill the priority it deserves", stated Minister Strahl. "Reaching this milestone is but one of many along the road to finalizing the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement. The hard work and dedication of all those involved is a fabulous example of partnership and the renewal of the relationship with Aboriginal people in Canada."

Introduced on Monday, June 15, 2009, the timely passage of this bill by the House of Commons demonstrates Canada's commitment to the British Columbia treaty process. The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Act is the third Final Agreement in British Columbia to be signed by Canada, British Columbia and First Nations. It will be the second final agreement to be ratified under the British Columbia Treaty Process and the first agreement to be reached with multiple First Nations.

"We are proud of what we have accomplished together," Chief Councillor Robert Dennis, Huu-ay-aht First Nations stated. "The biggest challenge now lies ahead. Our five First Nations, Canada and BC need to work together to foster relationships and partnerships to develop strategies that will ensure that the objectives of the treaty are met."

"Today, we can begin to accept each other in a manner unprecedented in our history. We can begin to share in a realistic way the resources in the *ha-holthe* of our Ha'wiih (traditional territories of our Hereditary Chiefs), "stated Chief Councillor Therese Smith, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7e'th' First Nations.

“We must thank our leaders of the present generation who carried the wishes of their ancestral leaders. Our heartfelt Klecko (thank you),” stated Hawilth Wii-tsuts-kuum, Chief Anne Mack, Toquaht Nation. “To our muschim (citizens) – thank you for giving us the courage to carry on. There’s much work ahead: planning, developing, coming together to build our Nation. My heart soars.”

“The Maa-nulth Treaty is an expression of our vision for the future. It is a vision that permits us to see a future filled with opportunities,” commented Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes, Uchucklesaht Tribe. “It is a vision that confidently embraces a new relationship with Canada and British Columbia. It is a vision that permits us to move forward and leave the pain of the past behind.”

“This treaty has inspired countless individuals to set goals, challenge themselves and experience the world in new ways,” added Chief Councillor Violet Mundy, Ucluelet First Nation. “Each of us within Maa-nulth has learned different skills and been taken in many directions, and we are united in our determination to seize the moment!”

The next steps in Canada’s ratification process include review and passage by the Senate and Royal Assent. This legislation, when given effect, will provide certainty for the Maa-nulth First Nations by providing rights regarding self-government and the ownership and management of lands and resources, including rights with respect to the harvest of fish and wildlife. Certainty creates the foundation for a renewed relationship with Canada and an improved quality of life for the Maa-nulth First Nations.

“This quick passage by the House of Commons sends an important signal: that the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement is important and that the Government of Canada was prepared to take action to conclude a treaty under tight time lines and with the cooperation of the other three parties in the House of Commons,” said Sophie Pierre, chief commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission. “Concluding treaties is important because of the economic and other benefits all Canadians, but especially British Columbians, will gain.”

Located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, the five Maa-nulth First Nations belong to the Nuu-chah-nulth linguistic group. The Maa-nulth communities are comprised of approximately 2,000 people. The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement includes roughly 24,550 hectares of land, and a capital transfer of \$73.1 million for the five First Nations provided over a 10 year period. The costs will be shared by provincial and federal governments.

This news release, along with the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement, Backgrounder and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on INAC's website (www.ainc-inac.gc.ca).

For more information, please contact:

Minister's Office

Nina Chiarelli
Press Secretary
Office of the Honourable Chuck Strahl
(819) 997-0002

Maa-nulth First Nations

Martha Johnson
(250) 724-1802

Media Relations

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
819-953-1160

British Columbia Treaty Commission

Brian Mitchell
Communications Manager
604-482-9215 or cellular 604-788-5190