



NEWS RELEASE
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MINISTER PENNER FACES MANY CHALLENGES IN ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

VANCOUVER – The Treaty Commission expects Chilliwack MLA and former environment Minister Barry Penner to continue the pace set by his predecessor George Abbott in reaching agreements that provide immediate benefits to First Nations and are linked to comprehensive treaties.

The Treaty Commission welcomes Penner to his new role as minister of aboriginal relations and reconciliation which was announced earlier today. He was environment minister for five years and the MLA for Chilliwack-Hope since 1996.

“We were surprised to see minister Abbott moved from the ministry of aboriginal relations and reconciliation after less than 18 months in the role,” said Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre. “We had an excellent working relationship with the minister, are completing treaties and getting results with innovative solutions on the path to treaties.”

As environment minister, Minister Penner has an understanding of the many challenges facing First Nations on their traditional territories, said Pierre.

The Treaty Commission will meet with the minister at his earliest opportunity to discuss the many initiatives in the treaty process that are underway to improve the lives of aboriginal people in the province.

The current Treaty Commission status report shows there are six ratified final agreements – one with Tsawwassen and five with Maa-nulth First Nations, three completed final agreements yet to be ratified and two final agreements close to completion for a total of 11. There are seven First Nations close to concluding agreements in principle and another 27 First Nations that remain active in treaty negotiations, a total of 41 of the 60 First Nations in the treaty process. The 60 First Nations represent 110 Indian Act bands and 67% of the registered Indian population in the province.

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