



NEWS RELEASE

Issued Wednesday, October 12, 2011

TREATY COMMISSION SEES LACK OF URGENCY IN NEGOTIATIONS

VICTORIA – Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre says no one should be satisfied with the progress being made in treaty negotiations in British Columbia.

British Columbians and Canadians should be asking: Has there been a sufficient return on investment in the BC treaty process given the time and money spent? Has it been worth it?

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the BC treaty process in 2012 it is time to realize a return on the significant investment that has been made to achieve treaties.

“There are hopeful signs in treaty negotiations, but no real sense of urgency by the parties and some disturbing developments,” said Pierre at a news conference to release the Treaty Commission’s 18th annual report. “Perhaps the next big opportunity to focus on moving treaty negotiations forward will be the 20th anniversary.”

The Treaty Commission sees the potential for 16 treaties in the near term. Tsawwassen First Nation and Maa-nulth First Nations have implemented treaties and a third, with Yale First Nation, is expected to be ratified by Parliament this fall. Lheidli T’enneh First Nation and Sliammon First Nation have completed final agreements, but the parties have not yet completed ratification. In-SHUCK-ch First Nation and Yekooche Nation each have issues to resolve but are considered to be close to final agreements.

K’omoks First Nation has completed an agreement in principle and 8 First Nations are close to concluding agreements in principle. Another 26 First Nations are active in treaty negotiations.

“The lack of urgency in treaty negotiations, for which all parties must accept some of the responsibility, remains a concern for the Treaty Commission,” said Pierre. “It is disturbing that 19 years into treaty making and we don’t know when a final agreement is approved in the federal system so the parties can proceed with ratification; time-limited deals are the priority for the BC government; and there are fewer human and financial resources for treaty negotiations.”

Given the emphasis on the economy, British Columbians should know that treaties are an effective way to ensure there is economic growth in all regions of the province. Treaties are an untapped source of economic growth and when a First Nation prospers the whole region prospers.



The Treaty Commission will continue to focus on the catalysts to move treaty negotiations forward:

- Seeking a 20th anniversary recommitment to the BC treaty process;
- Promoting the economic benefits of treaties for all British Columbians;
- Promoting interim measures agreements, including Incremental Treaty Agreements, that provide benefits to First Nations now, and are directly linked to treaties;
- Helping to resolve territorial issues among First Nations; and
- Helping with human resource capacity development to strengthen and prepare First Nations for governance after treaty.

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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, British Columbia and First Nations in BC. It has three roles: facilitation, funding, and public information and education.