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BCAFN Affirms First Nations Sovereignty and Land/Water Protection in Response to Canada-Alberta Bitumen Pipeline MOU

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the federal government and the Province of Alberta exposes a fundamental contradiction and ongoing disregard for the rights, laws and sovereignty of First Nations on whose territories the proposed bitumen pipeline is proposed to be built. Canada's words of commitment to reconciliation and climate action are weakened and deceptive as they make plans to prioritize a project that poses profound risks to First Nations' lands, waters, and communities, risks that many First Nations strongly oppose.

Ignoring the will of First Nations violates the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), the *British Columbia Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), and First Nations laws, which emphasize free, prior and informed consent as a non-negotiable foundation for any development impacting their territories. Economic incentives, co-ownership, and piecemeal consultation processes do not replace genuine consent, nor do they absolve governments from their legal and ethical commitments.

The proposed regulatory shortcuts under the Building Canada Act and other frameworks threaten to bypass meaningful consultation and undermine the rights of First Nations. Such political manipulations exacerbate the legacy of colonial dispossession and perpetuate cycles of distrust and resistance. The BCAFN stands in solidarity with the Coastal First Nations and all First Nations communities, who firmly reject this pipeline.

True reconciliation demands that Canada and Alberta fully respect First Nations' sovereignty and laws, uphold their legal obligations under UNDRIP, and engage in genuine partnerships that prioritize environmental protection, First Nations leadership and equal economic opportunities. We call on all governments to abandon this pipeline project and work instead toward sustainable, First Nations-led solutions that honour their rights and ensure the survival of the land and all its peoples.

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