

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Press Release

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FNLC Calls for a State of Emergency due to Unprecedented Climate Weather Events in BC



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(X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) In the wake of the extreme weather events that continue to devastate First Nations across BC, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) calls on the Provincial government to declare an indefinite State of Emergency in BC, effective immediately.

Over the weekend and continuing today, BC is experiencing an “atmospheric river event” with extreme rainfall and wind causing widespread flooding, mudslides, forcing the closure of major highways and roads leaving people stranded without power, food, water and communication. Many First Nations are under evacuation order or alert and are left navigating an onerous and complicated provincial emergency funding system that fails to meet their unique needs.

"As extreme weather events ravage across BC, First Nations continue to bear the brunt of climate change impacts and have been forced to flee their homes again. The unprecedented and continuing weather events prove that this is no longer a climate crisis; we are in an ongoing climate emergency, and lives and communities are at imminent risk. This is no time for the province to forge ahead with antiquated fossil fuel projects and logging of old growth forests that will only continue to worsen the absolute environmental catastrophe we are experiencing. The response to climate change must be cross-ministerial and cannot be silo-ed into one ministry- the province must start to actively connect the climate crisis dots," stated Grand Chief Stewart Philip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

As dozens of flood warnings and evacuations continue to be issued by BC, the safety and security of those directly impacted is at risk. BC must deploy all available resources and enact extraordinary measures. This can only happen by declaring a State of Emergency. Weather forecasts indicate that the emergency may have just begun, "The Province continues to treat these weather-related emergencies as isolated incidents and intermittently declare a State of Emergency as if they are light switches going on and off with ease. Let me be clear, these are not isolated incidents. These are the ongoing repercussions of human-caused climate change that threaten our existence. BC and Canada's failure to address climate change and its' impacts on First Nations is inhumane," stated BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

As climate-related disasters continue to disproportionately impact First Nations communities, First Nations leaders continue to call on BC and Canada to advance meaningful government to government relations that recognizes First Nations jurisdiction in all areas, including emergency management. Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive stated, "Make no mistake: the failure to address the climate emergency will lead to further devastating losses in our communities. First Nations require immediate and on-going supports to address the recurrent devastating impacts of climate change. We need action and we are not going to wait around for this action any longer. The

government response continues to underestimate the emergency we are facing and it's time for First Nations to lead the work required to protect our communities for our future generations.”

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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