



NEWS RELEASE

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BCAFN Welcomes B.C. Government's Throne Speech and Calls for Action to Build Strong First Nations Communities

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC) – The B.C. provincial government's future political agenda has been outlined with the presentation of the throne speech today. After a devastating year of wildfires, flooding, and heat domes caused by extreme weather events, overdose deaths, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, much effort will be put into rebuilding and recovery with significant resources allocated to long-term economic development planning.

"First Nations must be prioritized and engaged in all planning for future economic, infrastructure, and social planning in B.C. So many communities and individuals have been disproportionately impacted, and in some cases devastated, by a long-standing cultural foundation of neglect and discrimination within all levels of government and society," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "We have long called for significant social, economic, and cultural transformations. These are becoming even more urgent as climate change escalates impacts to the environment, wildlife, and human populations. Our communities must prepare and be an integral and innovative part of the strong fabric that will create a resilient province."

"A critical component to building stronger First Nations communities and families are the significant mental health, social, and cultural resources and supports that will be needed," continued the Regional Chief. "The ongoing confirmation of so many of our lost children in unmarked graves at the Indian Residential schools have laid bare overwhelming grief and anger. Substantial efforts and resources must continue and grow for the important work being done to expose the truth and move First Nations on our healing journey."

Major commitments in the throne speech significantly impacting First Nations include:

- addressing disproportionate First Nations representation in the criminal justice system,
- launch of a new ministry to support reconciliation by advancing relationships of consultation, collaboration, and co-management of land and resources as envisioned in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019),
- and in addition, the B.C. government, industry, and First Nations will continue to work collaboratively to preserve biodiversity by reaching agreements on the deferral of old-growth logging.

These commitments made by the B.C. government are precursors to further changes to laws and policies that will build the government-to-government relationships as per First Nations inherent rights and treaty rights, and as required under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019). The BCAFN is looking forward to a provincial budget that will fully support this work of reconciliation.

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