

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Press Release

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FNLN Welcomes BC's Interim Commitments Towards Watershed Protection



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(X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and sə̱lilwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) welcomes Premier Horgan's announcement to commit \$30 million towards projects that protect watersheds in BC, including \$15 million to be allocated towards Indigenous-led or co-led projects.

"First Nations are disproportionately impacted by the climate emergency yet contribute the least emissions in Canada. We welcome the Province's reconciliatory commitments to prioritizing First Nations-led projects and supporting First Nations climate leadership in BC", stated BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

"Our watersheds play a vital role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. A healthy watershed improves our water cycles by acting as nature's sponge in its capacity to absorb and release water sustainably. The recent floods, heat domes and fires in BC indicate that our watersheds are vulnerable and unable to cope in the climate emergency. Our fish, wildlife, and communities depend on the immediate action that is needed to protect and restore our watersheds," stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

BC's announcement stems from its commitment to creating a permanent Watershed Security Fund as part of BC's Watershed Security Strategy. "This interim funding is important, but we cannot lose sight of the need for a sustainable, long-term Watershed Security Fund that is co-created with First Nations in BC," stated First Nations Summit Political Executive, Cheryl Casimer. "First Nations have been calling for sustainable funding that supports our capacity to monitor our watersheds, and ensure that our wetlands, riparian areas, streambanks and floodplains are intact and resilient. We applaud the Province for taking steps towards launching this long-awaited Watershed Security Fund and we look forward to working with the Province to advance the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in the co-development and co-implementation of this important fund."

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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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