FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wet'suwet'en, BCCLA, and UBCIC Release Explosive Letter Revealing BC Solicitor General Authorizing RCMP Deployment, Contradicting Public Statements

VANCOUVER/ (Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səl̓ilwətaʔɬ/sel̓ílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) territories, February 6, 2020 – Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, BC Civil Liberties Association and Union of BC Indian Chiefs are releasing a letter dated January 27, 2020 from BC Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth to RCMP Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Strachan.

In the letter, Farnworth declared a "provincial emergency" under the *Provincial Police Service Agreement* and explicitly authorized the "internal redeployment of resources within the Provincial Police Service." Article 9 of the *Provincial Police Service Agreement* stipulates that, if in the opinion of the Provincial Minister an Emergency in an area of provincial responsibility exists, then the Provincial Police Service will be redeployed at the written request of the Provincial Minister and the Province will pay the costs of the redeployment.

This explosive revelation of the BC Solicitor General authorizing additional RCMP resources and redeployment comes on the heels of repeated statements by the provincial government that they lacked jurisdiction or authority over RCMP actions in Wet'suwet'en territories. On January 20, Premier John Horgan was reported as saying "Our government has no authority to vary that injunction, nor to direct the RCMP in the fulfillment of its responsibilities." On February 10, Horgan again stated, "Governments do not direct the courts, nor do we direct the RCMP."

According to **Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Na'Moks**, "The province bears responsibility for the heavy RCMP deployment and for the policing of our people on our own territories. In many of our discussions, the province was passing the buck for RCMP operations but this letter spells it out in black and white. The provincial government can no longer deny responsibility for the Indigenous rights and human rights violations happening on our territories. We have come to the table with respect and truth but the province is not demonstrating respectful or truthful conduct. We have always asserted our laws and presence peacefully, yet the province authorized the extra deployment of RCMP against us. Canada and BC must answer to this mistruth and absolutely must change its ways."

"It is incredibly troubling and shocking that the provincial government would declare the peaceful assertion of Wet'suwet'en law and jurisdiction as a provincial policing emergency. The Wet'suwet'en people and the people of British Columbia have a right to know on what basis this unprecedented authorization was made. It is inconsistent for the provincial government to, on the one hand, legislate the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as well as state non-interference in policing operations and, on the other hand, authorize a RCMP deployment aimed

at over-policing and criminalizing Indigenous peoples on their own territories," says **Harsha Walia, Executive Director of the BC Civil Liberties Association.**

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, "This letter by Mike Farnworth reveals the blatant hypocrisy and lies of the provincial NDP government on the Wet'suwet'en crisis. Farnworth sat silently while Premier Horgan unabashedly lied that the Province did not direct RCMP actions. This is an act of government deceit not only against the Wet'suwet'en but of the public at-large. The province's rhetoric about reconciliation rings even hollower. We call for the immediate resignation of Mike Farnworth for dishonourable conduct and for declaring the Wet'suwet'en people a policing emergency and a threat on their own territories."

Media inquiries:

Chief Na'Moks: 250-643-0771

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC: 250-490-5314

Harsha Walia, Executive Director, BCCLA: 778-885-0040