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FORESTRYCOUNCIL.CA

Sent by Email

September 8, 2021

Honourable John Horgan, Premier of BC
Office of the Premier
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8V 9E1
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Horgan,

RE: First Nations Involvement in Modernizing Forest Policy in BC

We are collectively writing to express our concern and frustration with regards to the process of engagement put forward by the Ministry of Forests Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development (MFLNRORD) for the modernization of forest policy in British Columbia.

The engagement process is flawed and does not support meaningful consultation. First Nations are rights holders not stakeholders. Under the *Declaration Act*, changes being proposed to forest legislation, policies and regulations require the prior and informed consent of Nations; at the outset, not after the fact.

- The process is being expedited during a time of crisis due to wildfires. **The timeline for consultation is disrespectful, compressed and expedited, and does not allow for meaningful and informed consultation.**
- The Intention Paper for Modernizing Forest Policy in BC was developed internally by ministry staff with no input from First Nations.

The Intention Paper does not mention or reflect many of the actions and priority areas of work outlined the BC First Nations Forest Strategy. The Ministry has ignored the input First Nations have provided for over a decade regarding changes needed to inform and guide the implementation of the *Declaration Act* to reflect our rights, legislate joint decision-making, including the current forest revenue sharing model.

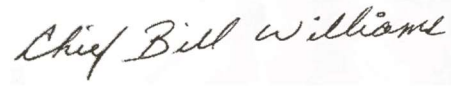
The forest policy topics proposed by the Province are very technical in nature. The First Nations Forestry Council was established to provide technical communications and outreach to First Nations regarding ongoing changes to forest policies, legislation and regulations in BC, and leading key areas of work to advance the implementation of the BC First Nations Forest Strategy.

The Forestry Council requires the resources from the Province to engage with Nations and do the technical work required for Nations to understand the impacts and implications of the proposed changes on their licences, governance and stewardship responsibilities. This is needed to support their meaningful and informed input into changes to forest policies, to advance their rights and priorities in the modernization of forest policy in BC.



We reject the current consultation and call for the redrafting of the Intention Paper and the redesign the proposed consultation and engagement process, to ensure that Indigenous priorities, rights and principles are reflected in changes to modernize forest policies in BC.

Sincerely,



Chief Bill Williams

President, First Nations Forestry Council

BC First Nations and Organizations in Support of this Letter:

- Ashcroft Indian Band
- Canim Lake Indian Band
- Cook's Ferry Indian Band
- Foothills First Nation
- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Gitwinksihlkw | Nisga'a Lisims Government
- Katzie First Nation
- Kitselas Nation
- Lhtako Dene Nation
- Lil'wat Nation
- Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band
- Nk'Mip Forestry
- Skin Tyee First Nation
- Stswecem'c-Xgat'tem First Nation
- T'Se'Kame Forestry Ltd.
- Tla'amin Nation
- Tsay Keh Dene Nation
- Upper Nicola Band
- Williams Lake First Nation

This list of signatories should not be considered to be exhaustive.

cc: Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister MFLNRORD
Rick Manwaring, Deputy Minister, MFLNRORD
Chief Judy Wilson, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations
Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit