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## Ministry of Natural Gas Development and Responsible for Housing



### T8TA News Release

*For Immediate Release*

*Ministry of Energy and Mines and*

*Ministry Responsible for Northern Development*

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March 24, 1998

### **AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND TREATY 8 TRIBAL ASSOCIATION PROVIDES GREATER CERTAINTY FOR OIL & GAS INDUSTRY IN NORTHEAST**

VICTORIA--The government and the five member First Nations of the Treaty 8 Tribal Association of northeastern British Columbia have signed an agreement which provides greater operating certainty for the oil and gas industry in that area, Energy and Mines Minister Dan Miller and Tribal Chief Judy Maas announced today.

Under the six-month agreement:

- The B.C. government and the five Treaty 8 First Nations of the Tribal Association agree to work towards establishing new referral procedures for oil and gas applications to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, procedures which will respect treaty and aboriginal rights and create greater operating certainty in order to encourage a more favorable business climate for resource development in northeastern B.C.;
- The B.C. government agrees to provide interim funding to assist the Treaty 8 Tribal Association and its member First Nations to develop and implement the new procedures and to build a long-term business relationship with the industry;
- The B.C. government and the Treaty 8 Tribal Association will have six months to make best efforts to negotiate a long-term agreement to address how they will work together and with industry in the future.

"This agreement will help to ensure more efficient permitting processes for the oil and gas sector in the Northeast, and supports our Jobs for BC strategy in this region," said Miller. "I commend the Treaty 8 Tribal Association and its member First Nations for their commitment to a business-like approach to working with this important sector of B.C.'s economy."

Maas agreed the oil and gas industry is important to local economic development, benefiting aboriginal and non-aboriginal people alike. "We recognize the importance of this industry to B.C. and to our area in particular," she said.

"The agreement is a first step towards achieving a win-win situation for everyone, and I'm very pleased the B.C. government has recognized that First Nations must have a meaningful role in the planning and regulation of oil and gas development so our treaty and aboriginal rights can be protected. A lot of unnecessary conflict has resulted from these rights being ignored and, by signing this agreement, I hope we've taken a major step toward avoiding such conflict in the future," added Maas.

The agreement is part of an overall initiative the B.C. government is working on following Premier Glen Clark's September 1997 meeting with the chiefs of the five Treaty 8 Tribal Association member First Nations, and his December 1997 meeting with the industry in Calgary.

B.C. is Canada's second largest gas producing province, with 13 percent of total production. The oil and gas sector provides British Columbia with:

- a record-breaking year in 1997 with investments of \$1.7 billion in the province associated with the drilling of 582 wells, and \$217 million in government revenues from the sale of oil and gas rights alone;
- an estimated 14,500 direct jobs from industry activity--5,300 primarily in the Northeast in exploration and production;
- another 23,000 jobs associated with indirect economic development.

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(Attachment)

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Dear Oil and Gas Company:

#### **RE: Treaty 8 First Nation Standard Referral Processing Fees**

We are pleased to inform you that the Treaty 8 Tribal Association, its member First Nations, and the Government of British Columbia have signed a letter of agreement to defer standard First Nation referral processing fees for a period of time.

This interim agreement will lead to the development of a long term Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on oil and gas development and the protection of treaty and aboriginal

rights. It will include arrangements for mutually agreeable consultation processes, referral timelines, structures and authorities, and a dispute resolution mechanism. The government of B.C. has provided interim funding for the Treaty 8 Tribal Association and its five member First Nations to assist them in hiring referral technicians. Having such technicians on staff will improve the First Nations' ability to process new provincial oil and gas referrals in a timely fashion, and to begin to address the current backlog. Some additional funding has been provided to partially offset the costs of participation by the Chiefs and Councilors in the approval process. The Government of B.C. and the Treaty 8 Tribal Association will be jointly approaching the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers with a proposal for industry participation in, and assistance for, this process over the long-term. While the MOU and the provision of limited funding by the provincial government to the Association will help alleviate many of the problems now recognized by all parties, industry still has a role to play, as does the Government of Canada. We hope to work together to explore additional ways in which the referral process can be further refined. The agreements are good news for government, First Nations and industry. However, it is important to note that First Nations may still have project-specific concerns, and the Government of B.C. remains committed to discharging its lawful obligation to ensure infringements of treaty and aboriginal rights are avoided prior to issuing any permits or project approvals. Please join us in building on this first step toward a new relationship with First Nations, a relationship which strives to balance the needs of industry with respect for First Nation treaty and aboriginal rights. With your cooperation, we can make it work.

**The Hon. Dan Miller**  
Minister of Energy and Mines and  
Minister Responsible for Northern Development

**Tribal Chief Judy Maas**  
Treaty 8 Tribal Association



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