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Office of the Premier
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Tsawwassen First Nation

MILESTONE REACHED IN LANDMARK TSAWWASSEN AGREEMENT

TSAWWASSEN – Premier Gordon Campbell, the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, and Tsawwassen First Nation Chief Kim Baird today witnessed the joint initialling of the first Lower Mainland Final Agreement reached under the British Columbia treaty process.

“I commend Chief Kim Baird and all the negotiators for their perseverance and strong determination to reach a final agreement that will materially improve the lives of the Tsawwassen First Nation and create social and economic benefits for the entire region,” said Campbell. “This is a critical step forward to reconcile Tsawwassen First Nation’s Aboriginal rights and title and give the community the ability to become an independent and active participant in the local economy.”

“This agreement demonstrates how much can be accomplished through commitment, creativity and courage,” said Minister Prentice. “It charts a future based on respect and co-operation, in which Tsawwassen First Nation can regain its vitality as a community and share in all the benefits of a stronger Canada. As the first Final Agreement in B.C.’s Lower Mainland, it serves as an excellent showcase for reconciliation among communities and their governments.”

“This treaty, the first in the Lower Mainland, abolishes the Indian Act through self-government – not assimilation,” said Chief Kim Baird. “It gives us the tools to build a healthy community and the opportunity to participate fully in the Canadian economy.”

Tsawwassen First Nation lists its membership at 358 Coast Salish people whose traditional winter village and modern village is situated on the southern side of the Lower Mainland on land between the BC Ferries Terminal and Deltaport Container Terminal/Roberts Bank Coal Port. The community straddles Highway 17, along the Georgia Strait shore.

The land component of the Final Agreement is approximately 724 hectares; the capital transfer is \$13.9 million over 10 years. The costs of the Final Agreement will be shared by the provincial and federal governments. The Final Agreement includes self-government provisions and defines Tsawwassen First Nation’s rights to resources such as land and fish.

The initialling of the Final Agreement allows Tsawwassen First Nation to proceed with a community vote on the Final Agreement. If the Tsawwassen First Nation community ratifies the Final Agreement, British Columbia will then proceed through its ratification process. A minister from the provincial Cabinet must recommend the agreement for approval, and settlement legislation will then be introduced into the Legislative Assembly for debate. If British Columbia ratifies the Final Agreement, Canada will proceed through its ratification process. A federal cabinet minister must recommend the Final Agreement, and settlement legislation would be introduced in Parliament for debate. Once enacted through legislation, the Final Agreement will become a treaty and will be brought into effect on a date agreed to by the parties.

The Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada have initialled a Final Agreement with Lheidli T'enneh Band near Prince George, and Final Agreement negotiations with the Maa-nulth First Nations on Vancouver Island are nearing completion. Agreements-in-Principle have been signed with Sliammon Indian Band, Yekooche Nation, and Yale First Nation. Final Agreement negotiations with these First Nations are ongoing.

The draft Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement is available online at www.gov.bc.ca/arr; www.tsawwassenfirstnation.com; and www.aincinac.gc.ca/bc/treapro/ston/nwdev/nwdev_e.html.

Information about the Tsawwassen First Nation is available online at: www.tsawwassenfirstnation.com

For more information, please call the toll-free line for the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 1 800-880-1022.

1 background(s) attached.

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