



News Release

First Nations Leadership Council & Union of BC Municipalities call for withdrawal of Bill 15

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((x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.)) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and its member organizations joined with the Union of BC Municipalities today to call on the Province to withdraw Bill 15 – the *Infrastructure Projects Act*.

If passed into law, Bill 15 would give greater powers to Cabinet to expedite the approval of projects it deems to be “provincially significant”. First Nations and local governments have expressed concern with the lack of consultation prior to the legislation being drafted. First Nations leaders have also highlighted the Province’s failure to fulfill its constitutional, legislative, and environmental obligations and commitments, including those under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, the Interim Approach on the Alignment of Laws, and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

First Nations Chiefs and leadership recently met with Premier Eby to express their collective opposition to Bill 15 which has the potential to greatly impact First Nations’ inherent and Aboriginal rights, title, and jurisdiction. Local governments also met with Infrastructure Minister Bowinn Ma and have expressed concern that Bill 15 would provide Cabinet with extraordinary powers to override local regulations, including local government Official Community Plans, zoning bylaw amendments and subdivision approval processes.

Bill 15 has passed second reading and moved to Committee last week, slated for completion of Committee and a third reading in the legislature next week before final vote.

Quotes

Councillor Trish Mandewo, President, Union of BC Municipalities:

“ The provisions in Bill 15 constitute an unnecessary over reach by the Province into local decision making. Local governments welcome provincial efforts to expedite project development, but not through transferring power from communities to Victoria. If the goal is to reduce the regulatory burden on major projects, local

governments are more than willing to work with the province to improve the system – let’s work together. It’s time for the Province to withdraw Bill 15 and find a new path forward”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs:

“It is time for the Eby government to action their commitments to reconciliation and uphold their own laws and processes. Despite repeated earnest efforts to reason with Premier Eby, Minister Ma, and others within the Province, the Province continues to stubbornly advance Bills 14 and 15 regardless of the political and relational costs. First Nations are not opposed to responsible development, and we understand the need to expedite the approval and construction of hospitals, schools, and other critical infrastructure. But Bills 14 and 15 go well beyond that, and the process that led to their development flouted First Nations’ basic human rights and the Province’s own law, policy, and processes. There’s only one way forward: the Province must withdraw the bills as currently drafted, and we must work on principled solutions to the myriad of crises we face together.”

Robert Phillips, Political Executive Member of the First Nations Summit:

“We are at a serious crossroads in First Nations-Crown relations in BC.

“We have literally spent decades building principled frameworks and processes to lead us to reconciliation and shared prosperity in this province. The most recent is the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, passed unanimously by the Legislature in 2019, establishing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation. Instead of leaning into this framework and related process, the Province has decided to ignore it and attempt to empower itself with extraordinary control and discretion that are in direct contrast to reconciliation. This rollback of reconciliation will put us back decades and is an affront to First Nations and a disservice to all British Columbians,”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BC Assembly of First Nations:

"We stand united in our call for the immediate withdrawal of Bill 15 – Infrastructure Projects Act. This legislation undermines our rights and title by granting the BC government unprecedented powers without proper consultation with First Nations. I strongly urge Premier Eby and the provincial government to immediately engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue instead of pushing this ill-conceived legislation through, which fundamentally threatens our sovereignty and governance and will negatively affect future generations."

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