

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



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October 13, 2021

The Honourable John Horgan  
Premier of British Columbia  
Via email only: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

The Honourable George Heyman  
BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Via email only: [ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

## Open Letter: Overhaul of CleanBC to reflect climate emergency

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister Heyman:

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), writes to express our deep concern with the direction that the Province is heading with respect to our climate commitments, and the need for urgent action that reflects the climate emergency.

In recent weeks, we have heard loud and clear in a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which the UN's Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called a "code red for humanity". What was made clear by the IPCC was that governments don't have the time or luxury to continue delaying the fundamental shifts in how our communities and societies live and relate in order to avoid deepening the climate disaster. The IPCC said that today's choices will have long-lasting consequences.

Closer to home, we experienced another devastating fire season, one that was coupled with the worst heat wave our Province has ever experienced. Many lives were lost and whole communities razed. And this is just a taste of what is to be more frequent and intense. We have been warned that what we are seeing now is just the tip of the iceberg – if we don't act with urgency, we simply may not survive.

One of many things we have in common is a commitment to our children and grandchildren. They do not deserve to be inheriting the world that we are creating. We must do better for them.

This leads us to where BC stands on climate change. We know that the CleanBC plan falls short of BC's targets and based on what we know about the forthcoming provincial *Roadmap to 2030*, BC will still fail to raise the bar enough to meet the IPCC's warning and call for action. Anyone suggesting that these plans are 'good enough' will haunt our Province's legacy in the future.

Instead, we ask for your commitment to overhaul CleanBC in ways that substantively enhance our climate response and shift our economy and society to a liveable future. These need to include:

1. Updating BC's GHG emissions targets to be aligned with the IPCC and to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
2. Halting incentives, resources and subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, and accepting that a phasing out of this industry needs to happen in the near-term, accompanied by an immediate and long-term investment to transition the people and communities that currently rely on this part of our economy.
3. Addressing the failure to reflect Indigenous Rights, Title and Treaty Rights in the CleanBC plan and policy development, and ensuring that all climate laws, policies and initiatives going forward reflect the *Declaration Act*, and make space for First Nations as true partners with inherent jurisdiction. With respect, we believe this is more than simply holding engagement sessions and then dismissing our input.
4. Acknowledging that climate change is connected to the damage that has been done to our communities and territories, such as the severe threats to biodiversity and subsequently, our food security. Understood this way, a revamped CleanBC is an opportunity to address the biodiversity crisis, to support conservation and Indigenous stewardship, all which support both reducing GHG emissions and our ability to adapt to the effects of human-caused climate change.
5. Advancing the development of local renewable energy as a focal point for BC's transition to net-zero emissions. Many First Nations in BC are prepared to lead this process. An updated CleanBC plan must strongly support First Nations capability to participate in the production, generation and transmission of clean energy. Creating Indigenous Utilities is connected to this approach.

In 2019, BC and the FNLC committed to engage on climate change through the BC-FNLC Technical Working Group on Climate Change (TWG) to engage in dialogue, exchange information and develop recommendations on climate change laws and regulations undertaken by the Province and First Nations. To be clear, the purpose of the TWG is to engage in constructive staff-level dialogue, not to rubber stamp the Province's work.

During the last two years the FNLC technical staff has been providing input to many government initiatives. Despite the value of the TWG, there are major limitations that constrain the TWG's work, primarily the failure by BC to meaningfully reflect our input or First Nations' feedback on the need for systemic changes, such as the ones mentioned above. The overhaul of the CleanBC should enhance the mandate for the TWG that includes addressing the substantive and cross-sectoral aspects of climate change.

Furthermore, we know we are not alone with the concern that the CleanBC plan is insufficient to respond to the global urgency of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. More than two hundred diverse organizations, including the FNLC member organizations, have issued an [Open Letter](#) calling on your government to implement 10 bold actions to confront the severity of the climate emergency. We reiterate our support for these actions here.

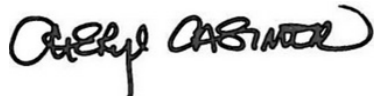
Our respective organizations and member First Nations have a lot to share. We lived carbon neutral for millennia. Our peoples and communities retain important Indigenous Knowledge and ways of relating as humans and communities that are urgently needed at this time in order to survive as a species and adapt to the climate crisis.

We ask for your commitment to listen to this deep well of knowledge, to do what is needed and to act now. We are ready to do our part.

Sincerely,

**FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT**



Cheryl Casimer



Robert Phillips



Lydia Hwitsum

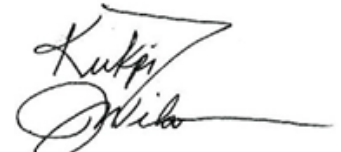
**On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS**



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Don Tom



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

**On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:**



Regional Chief Terry Teegee

CC:

First Nations in BC

FNLBC-BC Technical Working Group on Climate Change