

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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URGENT

August 18, 2010

Honourable John Duncan
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

SENT VIA FAX: (819) 953-4941

Honourable George Abbott
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
PO Box 9100STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9B1

SENT VIA FAX: (250) 953-4856

OPEN LETTER: UBCIC CALLS UPON BC AND CANADA TO SET ASIDE JURISDICTIONAL
SQUABBLING DURING THE FOREST FIRE CRISIS

Dear Minister Duncan and Minister Abbott

The Executive of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs urgently wrote a letter to your respective offices on August 6, 2010 stating our grave concerns regarding the escalating forest fire situations impacting upon the Tsilhqot'in.

This afternoon, the UBCIC has been advised that the situation has grown far worse and is now dire. The fires have grown in size and intensity. Community evacuations have now occurred with other communities on evacuation alerts or notices. We have been advised that the representatives of the federal and provincial governments have spent more time squabbling about who is to pay for what than addressing the immediate health and safety issues of the Tsilhqot'in families, Elders and children.

The UBCIC immediately calls upon both the federal and provincial governments to make absolutely certain that jurisdictional battles will not compromise the health, safety and well-being of the Tsilhqot'in people at this time of crisis.

As we have previously stated earlier this year, the UBCIC and the First Nations Forestry Council called on the federal government, Ministers and MPs from BC to be accountable and responsive in dealing with the potentially deadly consequences of the forest fire season that is now upon us.

The UBCIC finds it completely unacceptable and reprehensible that the Federal and Provincial governments continue to risk the safety and security of First Nation communities with inadequate funding in respect to addressing the massive mountain pine beetle infestation to the point where it has proven to be the single greatest contributing factor to the forest fire impacts on the Tsilhqot'in communities.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Phillip', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President

CC: Tsilhqot'in National Government
BC First Nations Forestry Council
BC MLAs
BC MPs