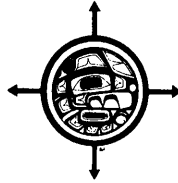


OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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PRESS RELEASE
April 22, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BC Rail Deal **BC Government Attempts to Derail Aboriginal Title and Rights**

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, April 22, 2004) Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), commented today on the continuing First Nation backlash to the recent disclosures concerning the Campbell Government's attempt to privatize BC Rail. Chief Phillip stated "The Campbell Government's shameless crusade to secure economic certainty to fast-track the sale and privatization of BC's assets knows no bounds. It is abundantly clear that the government is attempting to prey on the poverty of those First Nations along the rail-line to complete the BC Rail Deal. I am of the opinion that the BC Rail Deal is nothing more than a 990 Year rip-off."

Chief Phillip continued, "The Campbell Government is engaged in a risk-management approach. This approach is premised on the continuing denial that Aboriginal Title and Rights exist, while offering accommodation or benefits agreements to lessen their legal liability in the event that First Nations prove Aboriginal Title and Rights and that the government is found to have infringed those rights."

The UBCIC commissioned a legal review of the BC Rail Deal. One of its findings is that the Campbell Government "will use proof of economic benefit to argue that the damage suffered by Indigenous Peoples was mitigated or lessened (that Indigenous Peoples participated in, and benefited from their decision to privatize B.C. Rail), and also possibly to show consultation. In the event that any Indigenous communities who were part of the Trust choose to challenge the transfer from B.C. Rail to Canadian National Railway in the future, government would likely argue that it met this test, in part, by seeking 'workable accommodations' as evidenced by the creation of the Trust."

"The UBCIC categorically rejects the notion that the BC Rail Benefits Trust comes with no strings attached," said Chief Phillip. "To-date, the language of the provincial assurances state that the Campbell Government does not believe Aboriginal Title or Rights are involved in the transfer because it's a transfer of existing interests, rather than the creation of new ones therefore consultation or accommodation are not required. The UBCIC is absolutely convinced that the existence of the Trust will be used by the Campbell Government as a 'workable accommodation' in the event of a legal challenge."

Chief Phillip observed "The UBCIC recalls that the Honourable Member Joy MacPhail was ejected from the legislative chamber last November for seeking an honest response from Campbell regarding the BC Rail Deal. In the face of the recent deliberately deceitful and misleading statements, clearly it is the Campbell Government that will be ejected from the legislative chamber in May 2005."

- 30 -

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