

Announcement of Central and North Coast Land Use Plans

Premier Gordon Campbell

February 7, 2006

It is a pleasure to be here today on Coast Salish traditional territories to talk about a very important decision and a very important process for the province of British Columbia.

We're joined by a number of important guests. The Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Tom Christensen, is with us today; the Minister of the Environment, Barry Penner, is with us today. And we're joined by MLA Lorne Mayencourt as well. We're also joined by former Premier Mike Harcourt today, who's now sitting on the treaty commission. I want to say welcome to all of you today, and thank you for coming.

As we think about what is happening today, I think it's important for us to reflect on the history of what's taken place. We use the term "historic" sometimes a little bit too loosely. But today is truly an important event, and the future will decide how historic it is or is not.

What's critical is this process of looking at the Central Coast of BC started ten years ago, in 1996. It was launched by three former ministers of the Crown: David Zirnheld, Dan Miller, and Paul Ramsay. It has been carried on since 2001 by three additional ministers: George Abbott, Stan Hagen, and now Minister Bell.

What's important about this landmark decision is not what governments have done. What's important is what the people of the province have done, what the First Nations of the Central and North Coast have done as they have bridged the chasm of trust, to say: let us join with you and plot a future for all of us in British Columbia. It is what environmentalists and conservationists have done. It's what industry has done, and it's what coastal communities have done.

Some will ask why has this taken so long? It's taken so long because we decided to do this from the ground up, inside out, involving all the people who would be directly affected, especially the people who knew the land the best, the First Nations. We said to them: help us shape this plan; help us plan a future that respects your traditional territories, that respects your culture, that understands your past and looks to build an even brighter future for the province of British Columbia.

Today we announce the culmination of an unprecedented collaboration between First Nations, communities, conservationists, industry, and government, in support of a provincial land use decision for the Central and the North Coast of British Columbia. Each party had a greater interest in finding a long-term solution than continuing with the conflict and the controversy which often took place in the past. It has taken the goodwill, the hard work, and the dedicated commitment of all who were involved at these tables to

bring us to this day. Most importantly, we reached today because people were looking for a solution.

The land use decisions we're announcing today cover the Central Coast and North Coast land and resource management plan areas. Together, these areas represent 6.4 million hectares — an area more than twice the size of Vancouver Island. Now, for many of us in British Columbia, you think of Vancouver Island as a small chunk of land down in the southwest corner of the province. Maybe if I said it this way people would start to see the context of how large this area is: it's twice the size of the country of Belgium.

Already we are hearing international voices praising those who were at the table and who have worked so hard to bring us to this day. The front pages of the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, are congratulating the participants and saying: "You put the long-term interests of your province and the community first."

It is an important step in collaborative planning. There are 100 new protected areas that will be established; more than 1.8 million hectares of some of the most ecologically diverse and important wilderness anywhere in the world will be protected. That's three times the size of the province of Prince Edward Island.

This will forever preserve some of the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, and within that rainforest we will conserve more than 200,000 hectares of habitat in the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy. This is an enormous step. The Kitasoo have come and dedicated over 50 percent of their traditional territories to protecting the habitat for British Columbia's world-famous Spirit Bear.

First Nations legends say that the raven created the Spirit Bear to remind us of how fortunate we are to have a land as rich and abundant as the coast. Through this agreement the Spirit Bear will forever continue to fulfil its purpose in the forests and valleys where it has always walked, and I want to thank the Kitasoo particularly for making this important first step on behalf of the Spirit Bear and the future of British Columbia.

Outside of these protected areas, approximately 3 percent of the Central Coast and 10 percent of the North Coast land will be designated as biodiversity areas where mining and tourism will be permitted, and fully two-thirds of both the Central Coast and the North Coast will be designated for ecosystem-based management operating areas. This innovative ecosystem-based management approach will see resource development in these areas focus on community stability, economic diversification and opportunities for local employment. As one of the chiefs said to me, we have to remember that people are part of the ecosystem, and community stability is critical for the long-term future of our land base and the ecosystems that we've all come to rely on.

As significant as these agreements are, in some ways the most significant aspect is that we have reached these agreements together. I want to thank all those who came to the table and who have worked so long and so hard to bring us to this day. They've been willing to listen to one another; more importantly, to learn from one another; and then to

act together. They've been open to new ideas, to new ways of examining our land base and the ecosystems that we all rely on so that we can provide for stability as well as long-term sustainability.

This is something that governments can't achieve. But it is something that people can achieve when they're willing to work in good faith and with open hearts with one another as they build the kind of future they want for the next generation.

This is something that British Columbians have achieved. It is something that British Columbians should be proud of. It is my hope that this will stand as an example of what we can do in this province when we step forward with a genuine desire to do what we think is right and what is best for the land that we all share.

So I want to thank those who are involved in the coastal industries — in forestry, in mining, in tourism — for their willingness to find a way forward. I want to thank Greenpeace and Forest Ethics and the Sierra Club of Canada and all those in the environmental movement who have been willing to pursue an agenda of consensus over conflict in the north coast. I want to thank the thousands of British Columbians who have been willing to put their values forward in the search for solutions for the long term.

I want to thank the communities and the people who live in those communities, who share the region. I want to thank them for their voice, for their ideas and for their vision of the future.

And I want to thank the 25 first nations who have been such an important part of this process which has brought us together. They are the bridge-builders to the future, and we owe them a real debt of gratitude for their hard work and their commitment. Nobody knows the true value of this part of the world or of our province more than the First Nations who have lived there since time immemorial. These agreements respect First Nations history on the coast and they strengthen the future of First Nations on the land that they have called home.

We have made a commitment with First Nations to forge a new relationship in the province of British Columbia. It is a new relationship built on a foundation of respect, recognition and reconciliation. I think there is no better symbol of that relationship than what we've been able to accomplish in the Central and North Coast plans. Indeed, with the support of First Nations, the spirit of that relationship has been extended to all of those involved in these agreements, and for that worthy accomplishment I want to say thank you to all of the leaders and First Nations, to their chiefs and their elders and to the next generation who will follow them, for the commitment that they have made to these plans.

Whenever we try to do something different or we try to do something new, whenever we try to transform the processes that we've gone through and that we're used to, there will be difficulties. There is no question in my mind that this transformation is well under way as we make this announcement today, and the transformation is going to take place as a

result of the leap of faith that has been taken by all who were at the table, every player: communities, environmentalists, First Nations, industry, governments. They have been willing to say: let us build a bridge of trust between each of us to do what's best for the long-term future of British Columbia.

And think of our province, our Pacific province, and think of the world as they come here across the Pacific to know that on the doorstep of British Columbia lies one of the world's truly great temperate rainforests. It has been protected. We have managed it in a sustainable, long-term way for future generations. It is an example the world can follow, and British Columbians should be proud of that example.

British Columbians have been blessed. We live in a place of exceptional beauty, of exceptional diversity, but we've also been blessed because we live in a place where First Nations and community leaders have been willing to reach out to one another to protect and preserve that beauty as we built stable, long-term communities with jobs and opportunity and stability for the future. On behalf of all of the people of British Columbia, let me say thank you to each of the players at the table for the work they have done.

It was said a long time ago that people should be willing to dream, and I'll leave you with this thought. Whatever you can do or dream you can do, you get it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. The boldness of the participants in the Central and North Coast has given us all a little bit of magic.