



Squamish Nation News Conference

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Speaking Remarks: Chief Gibby Jacob

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

We are a nation of over 3,600 people living in the greater Vancouver area on land with just about the highest real estate value in Canada. And yet, right now there are 1,000 of our people on the waiting list for adequate housing. This is our number one priority for the Squamish people.

Our vision is to provide opportunities for Squamish people to live together in the future. And we need to plan for that future so we can accommodate our young people and our growing population. To do that we have to develop portions of our reserve lands to generate earnings to fund land acquisition, infrastructure, housing and services for our people. But this plan is also dependent on access to modern tools of governance and finance to ensure we earn fair value on our lands.

But the stage is not set right now for this to happen. A lack of adequate regulations on-reserve is preventing First Nations from competing for and finalizing large scale commercial and industrial projects. Off-reserve, regulations have been created, amended, modified and improved many times. The legislation tabled this morning to amend FNCIDA will create the path to enable us to establish a modern regulatory framework to support such large scale and industrial development projects. Only such projects will allow us to realize the full value of our lands. We will be able to attract investment by giving investors the same level of confidence in a property system that they would expect off-reserve.

But the amendments introduced today take us only half way to realizing our vision. It still denies us a revenue stream to support this regulatory regime.

Squamish Nation plans to draw on the revenue stream generated by the property transfer tax to compensate the province of British Columbia for use of its legal regime, particularly the land title system.

With several land reserves strategically located in metropolitan Vancouver and along the highway to Whistler, we the Squamish Nation are working on a project to build high-value residential condominium units on the north shore of Burrard Inlet in line with developments in neighbouring municipalities. The project, once approved by the membership, will bring valuable economic benefits beyond the Squamish Nation to the regional economy, to British Columbia, and to Canada.

This is not only an opportunity for Squamish Nation but it is also Vancouver's next great opportunity. This will be one of the most significant urban renewal projects in the world. Within the next several years, Vancouver is slated to grow by one million people and the Squamish Nation has the resources to support that growth through development of oceanfront land in a highly desirable neighbourhood. Demand for housing will affect all of Vancouver and we can play a big role in supplying this demand. It is time for us to be part of city building.

We now have an opportunity to create livable communities for our people. To plan, manage and, most importantly, finance this development of our lands. For the past xx years, our lands have been the springboard for Vancouver's development. We have allowed our lands to be used for bridges, to be crossed by roads, railways and water mains and to house sewerage treatment plant. Now it's our turn to develop our lands to their best and highest use. To develop our

lands for our people. So Squamish people can live together surrounded by our cultural heritage.

We are asking the federal government to use legislative tools to make it possible for us to levy the PTT on our lands. This will ensure that we are able to support the costs of establishing and maintaining a regulatory regime and enable us to compete in the Vancouver real estate market. In other words, it will create a level the playing field.

The Squamish Nation's plans for development of our land will enable us to finally achieve self sufficiency and to provide for our people up to the standards of all Canadians – by using the same laws and regulations that all Canadians under their provincial laws have at their disposal. If we are to be truly self sufficient we will need all the modern tools of governance and public finance to ensure fair value for our lands.

As a people struggling to survive in a competitive and value-driven society, it is becoming increasingly important for us to weigh the costs of using a scarce resource – land - with the benefits we would get from development including the creation of employment opportunities and the generation of revenue for public programs and services.

To be clear, we come not with hand outstretched to receive a hand out from government, but with handshake in a sign of partnership, to work with governments for the mutual benefit of all.