

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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FNLC Appalled by John Rustad's Alarmist Rhetoric Respecting Aboriginal Title and Fee Simple Private Ownership

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), sḵwəxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is deeply disturbed and angered by B.C. Conservative Party leader John Rustad's [letter](#) to Premier David Eby in which he calls for an immediate pause to all negotiations between the Province of British Columbia and First Nations in response to the BC Supreme Court's recent declaration of Cowichan Aboriginal title, and frames First Nations' inherent and constitutional rights to their lands as a threat to British Columbia's legal, social, and economic stability. The FNLC is similarly disturbed by Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie's alarmist commentary and related [communication](#) delivered to certain Richmond residents warning that their property's title could be negatively affected by the Court's decision.

Aboriginal title and fee simple private ownership can and do co-exist. Reconciliation through recognition of this legal and political fact is not a threat to the stability and prosperity of British Columbia; it is the foundation on which it is built. Good faith negotiation based on recognition of First Nations' basic human rights is the only path forward. This is something Mr. Rustad, who was part of a unanimous legislature that passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in 2019, knows full well despite his dangerous and cynical rhetoric to the contrary.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, "To be clear, it is Rustad's selective discriminatory rhetoric that is a threat to British Columbia's legal, social, and economic stability. By stoking baseless fears and weaponizing recognition of the basic human rights of First Nations, Rustad – who personally voted in support of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* – once again reveals himself to be a hypocrite. British Columbians deserve far better from their elected representatives. At this pivotal time in our collective history John Rustad and his rapidly disintegrating Conservative Caucus are the last ones British Columbians should be looking to for a rational, steady, stable voice."

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, remarked, "Advancing and achieving reconciliation is foundational to the collective prosperity of British Columbians. By calling for an immediate pause to all negotiations between the Province of British Columbia and First Nations, Rustad is advocating for an approach that will only exacerbate the very issues he purports to be so concerned about. Reconciliation via good faith negotiation is key if we are to move forward together, a fact repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada."

"Division, distrust, and divestment is sown not by the recognition of basic human rights, but by those who vehemently oppose them. Treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and Crown governments are a key component to true and lasting reconciliation," stated Robert of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. He added, "the counter-factual and alarmist narratives being spun by Mr. Rustad, the Conservative Caucus, and Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie pose the greatest threat."

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The First Nations Leadership Council is 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). Further information can be found at www.fnlc.ca.



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