

1 related measures and program decisions.

2 A recent example of this determination to act as quickly as
3 possible can be seen in the list of interim measures which the B.C. Treaty Commission
4 has compiled with input from every treaty table. I am pleased that the province is
5 already engaged in implementing a great many of the projects and proposals on this
6 list.

7 I have asked my colleague, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, to
8 ensure that we make this list a priority, so that, wherever possible, we respond to the
9 aspirations of the First Nations in the treaty process promptly and in a practical way.
10 Here, I think, is the key concept: practicality. If what we're doing in the treaty process
11 did not directly affect people's lives in a positive way, then it would not be worth the
12 large financial and political investment the government is making. But in fact, my clear
13 view, and the view of our partners in the federal government and among First Nations,
14 is that promoting the treaty process is eminently practical. Whatever the critics say,
15 we are making real progress.

16 I know that there are some British Columbians who find it difficult
17 to understand the reasons why we're all working on this great common task. I wish
18 these people could have been with me on May 12, when I had the privilege to attend
19 the Nisga'a Treaty effective date celebrations in the Nass Valley. Standing there,
20 listening to "Oh Canada" being sung in the Nisga'a language and seeing the joy
21 radiating from the faces of the people of that proud First Nations, I had absolutely no

1 doubt that we were headed in the right direction.

2 The true way is the path of justice and reconciliation. We want to
3 ensure that First Nations people become full participants in Canadian society with the
4 freedom and authority to control their own lives. But as I mentioned earlier, we have
5 reached a critical point. Either we work together to make progress now, or we miss an
6 opportunity which may not come again for a generation.

7 First Nations must decide individually and as a group where their
8 interests lie in making the process work for all it's weaknesses or in accepting an
9 uncertain future. A future with no guarantee and possibly no process at all. The
10 challenge is clear enough, and I take this opportunity to tell you the commitment of our
11 government is very clear as well.

12 The question remains: do we have the collective wisdom and the
13 courage to seize the day? For the sake of all British Columbians, Aboriginal and non-
14 Aboriginal alike, I hope we make the right decision, and I'm confident that we will.

15 Let me go off the prepared script, I want to speak to Bill Wilson's
16 remarks. Bill, from one Indian to another, I want you to know that I got into politics, my
17 friend, based on my desire to see equality, human rights, justice and compassion
18 prevail in British Columbia. We have come a long way. You and we, as First Nations,
19 have, collectively, yet to travel a longer way to achieve that equality. I want to make
20 sure that you know that I am absolutely committed as an individual, as the Premier of
21 British Columbia, to make sure that in our time all of you and all of us see justice in

1 British Columbia for First Nations. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Thank you, Premier. Mike
3 number three, Edward John.

4 GRAND CHIEF ED JOHN: Well from another Indian, justice in our
5 time, that's what we're looking for. (Native Language Spoken) We acknowledge our
6 parents and grandparents, the many generations of our people that have gone before
7 us. (Native Language Spoken) Our children and grandchildren and the many
8 generations of those young people and future people in our Nations, we acknowledge
9 them as well.

10 I'd like to thank the Tsimshian Chiefs, the Hereditary Chiefs, the
11 elected chiefs, for their welcome here this afternoon, and the presentation that you
12 have made, I acknowledge that. I want to acknowledge the Hereditary Chiefs and the
13 authority that you have over your respective Nations today. It's important as Nations
14 that we understand that we stand on Tsimshian Nation territory.

15 We are, as First Nations people around this table, trustees for the
16 responsibility of our Nations; the responsibility that we have to our ancestors, and the
17 responsibility that we have to the future generations. We cannot abandon that for the
18 sake of a real estate deal and a quick fix. We need lasting agreements, true and fair
19 and equitable arrangements with the governments of Canada and British Columbia.

20 When we talk about social justice, we talk about economic justice,
21 Premier, that is what we are talking about. I agree with you that we are at a critical

1 point. Our chiefs here, and the many chiefs who have been a part of this process,
2 fought for 117 years to get the government of British Columbia to the table. For 117
3 years that they denied that they had any responsibility to First Nations in British
4 Columbia, to the interests of our people. We stand here today at the threshold of
5 making agreements, or as you put it, losing the opportunity for maybe another or two
6 generations. It's that critical.

7 But I want to tell you that these chiefs and leaders who are here,
8 helped develop the process of negotiations as a way to resolve what we call the land
9 question. We are very mindful of your government's efforts in resolving the Nisga'a
10 Treaty. We commend them for the agreement that they have reached with Canada and
11 British Columbia and have seen their government in action for the last several months
12 with the opening also of the Nisga'a Government Lisims House. We applaud the
13 Nisga'a Nation for their tremendous step forward on behalf of their people and
14 commend your government for that.

15 How do we impress upon you and your government the
16 importance of the process of negotiations as a fair way to resolve these matters, as
17 the best way to resolve these matters through fair, good faith negotiations? We asked
18 the B.C. Treaty Commission, this independent, impartial third party, to oversee and to
19 facilitate the process of negotiations. Some months back we asked the Treaty
20 Commission to prepare a paper on our behalf and at our joint request on good faith
21 principles for good faith negotiations. Treaty Commission gave us the report, "Here's

1 what we think should be included”, tabled it with us, only to find that both Canada and
2 British Columbia said they are not prepared to talk about the principles of good faith
3 negotiations, because this matter might end up in court.

4 I asked myself: where is the political will, why do we have to refer
5 and resort to the courts of this province and this country to resolve these matters?”
6 Political will should be good enough for us to sit down and resolve these matters.
7 Principles of good faith negotiations, something as simple as that, and we can’t even
8 talk about it.

9 Somehow the lawyers have gotten into the mix and have created
10 chaos in the process, where parties are able to sit down and try to find a good way to
11 resolve this big issue of the land question. We want fair, equitable and lasting treaties.

12 I am mindful of the events that took place in South Africa not that
13 many years ago. We see the efforts of Nelson Mandela and many others, to find
14 justice in their time, in their place for their people and they achieved that.

15 In India, we’re all aware of the history of that great human being,
16 Gandhi. The efforts that he took to free his people and to find social justice for his
17 people at his time and at his place. We commend the Indian people for that huge step
18 forward.

19 In this land we have been citizens of our respective Nations for
20 countless generations, for countless centuries. We remain citizens of our respective
21 Nations right across this continent. We have our ways, we have our cultures, we have

1 our languages. We have our stories, and we have our legends, we have our dreams
2 that help guide us, and we have our spirits. What connects us to this land is all of that.
3 This land is so fundamentally important part of us that sometimes when we talk about
4 land claims, I think that the non-Aboriginal people do not understand what we are
5 talking about.

6 We cannot sever our relationship with our history. We cannot
7 sever the relationship that we have with our ancestors. We cannot sever the
8 relationship and the responsibility that we have to the future generations for the sake
9 of the deal. As indigenous peoples, we are extricably tied to our land. We cannot
10 change that. That is who we are. When we dream, we dream about our lands, and we
11 dream about our mountains, and we dream about the rivers, and we dream about the
12 spirits, and we dream about the future generations in our land, in our territories. So we
13 cannot sever these, this relationship, we cannot extinguish them.

14 What we are talking about with Canada and British Columbia is
15 not about a real estate transaction, it's much more fundamental than that. Because
16 we've never ever had an opportunity — in this country's history and this province's
17 history — to sit down with the governments of Canada and British Columbia to find out
18 what the nature of the relationship should be.

19 Our ancestors welcomed your ancestors here with open arms; fed
20 them and helped them survive on this land. We know that because these stories have
21 been passed on from our ancestors to us on how we had the responsibility to take care

1 of those who came to our lands and to share with them what we had. We didn't realize
2 that, at some point in time, they would take that land away from us and subjugate us
3 under their authority and make second class citizens out of us. We never knew that
4 would happen. Our hearts were open, our lands were open, and we shared what we
5 had.

6 Talk to any tribe around this table and any Nation here, they will
7 tell you that. That is the legacy that we all have. That is the legacy that we contributed
8 to the early development by the non-Aboriginal peoples of our territories, their
9 development. I say it in that sense because we had the use of the lands, we developed
10 the lands and the resources in accordance with the traditions of our people and used
11 it accordingly.

12 We're at a process of negotiations right now. What we have seen
13 and witnessed are eight offers. I use the term "offers" advisedly. Eight of those offers
14 that have been put forward have been rejected summarily. That someone would give
15 us land is beyond me to understand, how someone could give us our own land. That
16 is a difficult concept for the Indian Nations in this province to understand.

17 What we have said is we need to share the resources, we need
18 to share the benefits of the land with each other. When one in three of our children
19 does not complete highschool, despite the fact that we spend \$75 million a year in
20 tuition fees to the school boards in the province of British Columbia. When we have
21 60,70,80 percent unemployment in our communities, we cannot accept that. So we

1 agree with you, Premier, when you talk about social and economic justice, because
2 we'd like to see that, desperately.

3 That unemployment in our communities contributes to a lot of
4 problems that we face on a day-to-day basis. That is why we are here, because we
5 think that if we have access to the lands and the resources, we'll be able to take care
6 of ourselves like our ancestors did. We don't need handouts from governments, we
7 can take care of ourselves. But we don't have the resources or access to the
8 resources to be able to do that. So we put forward this process.

9 But when the governments come back and offer the Lheidli
10 T'enneh .0005 percent of their territory to them, it makes no economic sense
11 whatsoever, and the \$7.5 million. It doesn't make any sense. How are they going to
12 be able to sustain themselves with that?

13 We seek social justice. About this land question, what we have
14 said.... How do we impress upon you that we need to have a say in what goes on in
15 our territories? How do we impress upon you that control over our territories simply
16 should not lie in Victoria or in Ottawa? We watch with keen interests the activities
17 taking place at Burnt Church. It's not about lobsters — everybody loves lobsters
18 around here. It's about who has the authority to make decisions regarding the use, the
19 allocation and receive benefits from the resources, whether its lobsters or crabs or
20 timber or water, minerals, whatever it is. Who benefits from that? How are decisions
21 made with respect to that?

1 The true test of social justice is before us. We can simply walk
2 away, we can hide behind lawyers and the court cases, or we can roll up our sleeves,
3 find the political will and find the solutions that we need. So that that social justice
4 which has been so evasive to us at our tables, we can find that. That's what our
5 objective is.

6 We have a number of AIPs that could possibly be concluded. Are
7 the governments, is your government prepared to put the financial resources to the
8 tables, however many there are, for them to be able to concluded Agreements in
9 Principle within the political framework or within the political time line that exists,
10 whether it's six months or eight months or whatever? Do we have the political will to
11 conclude these interim measures agreements that we need for those tables who are
12 not able to reach Agreements in Principle?

13 We have a list, you made reference to a list that was prepared on
14 our behalf by the B.C. Treaty Commission, and we have to thank and commend the
15 B.C. Treaty Commission for their initiatives.

16 All of these tables here, all of the people that are sitting here, are
17 sitting at the tables and are frustrated with the lack of progress. We have borrowed
18 \$120 million collectively here, we have nothing to show for it. That is not social justice;
19 that's simply highway robbery to this day. We need to change that. We call on you as
20 the Premier and Minister, to be able to do that. We have to act in haste, we have to
21 act with more diligence, and we have to move hard and fast to find some agreements.

1 We don't know what the political winds hold for us when an
2 election is called. It could be a bad wind, or it could be good wind, we don't know. We
3 all know where the bad wind comes from. Bill, I want to know what you had for supper
4 last night.

5 We're all here to stay, and that's what the Supreme Court of
6 Canada said in that famous decision in Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa. We have to find
7 solutions to reconcile our people's interests, our people's Aboriginal rights and title,
8 and the Crown's interests and the Crown's title. We, as First Nations people, should
9 not have to be put to the proof that we are Aboriginal peoples. We sit around here and
10 we know we're Aboriginal peoples, that we are the descendants of our ancestors here,
11 and that we have responsibility to the future generations.

12 Why is it that the governments tell us that in order for us to be
13 Aboriginal peoples, we have to go to the courts to prove who we are? Why is that the
14 governments say that in order for them to recognize any rights of our people, that we
15 have to go to the courts and put our people to the proof that we have rights in our
16 territories? We know we have those rights.

17 Social justice. I think the governments need to quit hiding behind
18 the lawyers, find that political will. Find it in your heart to say: "Look, these First
19 Nations have rights. These First Nations have Aboriginal rights and we recognize
20 those. That these First Nations in the province of British Columbia, without exception,
21 have Aboriginal title and they don't have to go to court to prove it." That's social

1 justice.

2 That those peoples whose lands have been taken away from them
3 and they cannot use those territories anymore, like the Musqueam people or the
4 Squamish Nation people, that for them, because the land is not available to them, that
5 there should be some form of compensation without having to go to court to prove that
6 they Aboriginal rights or Aboriginal title. That's social justice.

7 I think what we have tried to say to you in the short time that we
8 have, and we thank you very much for coming here today, we do know that you were
9 suppose to be with us in March when we lost our chief. We thank you very much for
10 your acknowledgment for our great loss, not just the loss of First Nations people, but
11 all people in British Columbia and this great country called Canada.

12 That we are moving ahead with the people that we have, we have
13 lost many people over the course of time, but the torch that we carry here and the
14 responsibility that we, as First Nations people, have now, we'll carry that torch until our
15 time passes here and we'll pass those torches onto our children and our grandchildren
16 and the future generations. And hopefully, the torch that we carry and pass onto your
17 children and our children, that that torch is a good torch, that no one gets burned by
18 it. And that we share in the wealth of this great land, and that we co-exist in a peaceful
19 way with each other as decent human beings. That's what we want to see as social
20 justice in this province.

21 That, chiefs and Premier and elders, thank you very much.

1 Mussei.

2 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Thank you. I'd like to tell the
3 delegates that the Premier has a little time to answer some of those serious questions
4 that Edward John has put forth to him, and hopefully that he'll give us some serious
5 answers on those things. So I'm going to give him that opportunity to reply to some of
6 the issues that Ed John put forth. Apparently he's suppose to be leaving at 2:30, but
7 I've been told that he may push it a little longer.

8 HONOURABLE UJJAL DOSANJH: Thank you. Well Ed, those
9 were great remarks. I can answer some of the specific issues, and I would love to, but
10 let me address one first. I believe from the First Nations' point of view, your point, that
11 the Crown makes the offer to you. It may be derogatory, it may be insulting to your
12 view, of the way you view the matter of Aboriginal land claims or Aboriginal claims.
13 That's why I believe that the process Tsawwassen has followed may be the process
14 to go through with, and I encourage all of us to try and find new ways and explore new
15 ways of arriving at the goal of social and economic justice.

16 Let me just tell you in general terms, I am absolutely inspired by
17 your remarks. Because when you speak in those terms for equality and for social
18 justice and economic justice for First Nations, that is not just limited to First Nations.
19 If we have equality, if we have justice, if we have some economic prosperity, some
20 control and self-governance amongst the First Nations, that makes British Columbia
21 a stronger place. That makes Canada a stronger country, that makes us as a society

1 more caring and more compassionate.

2 I want to tell you that when I came to this country as an immigrant
3 in 1968, I didn't know the history. I learned that history. I am absolutely committed to
4 making sure that we have a British Columbia where there isn't a huge dropout rate
5 amongst the First Nations in schools; where there isn't the poverty that exists amongst
6 the First Nations; where there isn't the suicide rate that exists amongst the First
7 Nations; where there isn't — and I can tell you as the Attorney General — the
8 disproportionate number of First Nations' individuals languishing in our prisons. I want
9 to make sure that we change all of that. We're not going to change all of that without
10 dealing with the First Nations' treaty issues.

11 And that's why when we formed government in '91 and I was
12 fortunate to get elected in '91 with Mike Harcourt, we changed the course of events in
13 this province. You have a process with all of its weaknesses and worts. You have a
14 process that needs to be injected with some energy, with some more vigor, and I think
15 we're doing that, and we're prepared to do more.

16 I am prepared to do, within reason, what needs to be done to
17 make sure that we make progress, that we make progress within the next six months,
18 and after the next election when I win, in the next six years. I want to make sure that
19 we make progress. And that's why I'm here, to recommit my government, our
20 government and your government, to ensure that we make progress together, that we
21 bring you in, that you come into British Columbia, that you come into Canada as

1 equals, and we march forward to a better future for all British Columbians, including
2 the First Nations. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Kathryn Teneese.

4 KATHRYN TENEESE: Mr. Premier, delegates, elders, Grand
5 Chief Edward John, I'd like to thank both of you for the words that you have spoken
6 today, and hopefully that the messages that Chief John delivered on our behalf will be
7 examined, and we will find the solutions towards reinvigorating the process that needs
8 to happen.

9 Your words about social justice are words that we welcome, but
10 hopefully they turn into more than just words. We want to change the circumstances
11 of the lives of the people that live in the communities that make up the First Nations
12 that sit around this table. We hope that in the work that we undertake with your
13 government and with the government of Canada, that we indeed are able to achieve
14 that dream.

15 It's a lifelong dream of all us that sit around this table, and it's one
16 that we pass on to our children and our grandchildren. But hopefully in our lifetime that
17 we will be able to find those answers that go beyond a real estate deal, that recognize
18 our connection to our lands, that recognize who we are as a people, the fact that we
19 are talking about our homelands. We didn't come from anywhere else and we're not
20 going anywhere else. So I look forward to continuing to work with representatives of
21 your government, and thank you very much for taking the time to be here with us

1 today, and look forward to meeting with you on future occasions. You have a standing
2 invitation to attend the sessions of the First Nations Summit, and we hope that your
3 schedule will allow you to meet with us on a regular basis. Thank you, again.

4 CHAIRPERSON JUSTA MONK: Thank you, Kathryn. We'll take
5 a five minute break and then continue.

6 --- MEETING RECESSED AT 2:30 P.M.

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