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Unfinished Treaty Business: First Nations Chiefs ready to meet with Canada's new government on First Nations water rights under the Treaty Bilateral Table on Water and Related Infrastructure

(EDMONTON, AB – May 1, 2025) - The Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services (CSC) congratulates Mark Carney as Canada's 24th Prime Minister, as well as Members of Parliament who will soon be named to the Ministries of Indigenous Services and Crown Indigenous Relations.

The CSC's mandate includes water, wastewater, and the related infrastructure needs of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 First Nations in the Alberta region. The CSC provided significant concerns on key issues with past water legislation, including Bill C-61, which fell short of Treaty Chiefs' expectations.

Chiefs note that Prime Minister Carney, while still campaigning, committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by stating, "We do respect provincial competencies but with the discharge of our federal responsibilities, the commitment of my government, if Canadians do select us, is fundamental and unwavering in its implementation."

"We look forward to meeting with Prime Minister Carney and his new government on protecting and meaningfully recognizing First Nations' inherent and Treaty rights," says Chief Rupert Meneen, Tall Cree Tribal Government in Treaty No. 8 territory. "Canada has an obligation to Treaty peoples to address existing needs and gaps in services and infrastructure, to protect and sustain vital water sources for our peoples, now and for future generations."

Treaty Chiefs also note that each of Canada's national political parties made commitments to infrastructure in their campaign platforms and are looking forward to next steps on the Treaty Bilateral Table on Water and Related Infrastructure, established in December 2024 as a forum for engaging in government-to-government dialogue on water and infrastructure, sustainability, planning, and addressing issues and concerns with federal initiatives.

As the new Liberal Government of Canada proceeds in the coming days, Treaty leaders remind the Crown that unfinished Treaty business cannot be ignored any longer.

"Water, this precious resource, is protected by the Treaty covenants and we expect strong dialogue that leads to real commitments that ensure water source protection and water availability to all peoples," says Chief Vernon Watchmaker, Kehewin Cree Nation, Treaty No. 6 territory.

On July 30, 2021, Canada agreed to settle a class action for approximately \$8 billion plus additional commitments. One of the terms of the Settlement Agreement was to modernize the federal First Nations drinking water legislation – the *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* (Act) – including the repeal of the Act and the development and implementation of the proposed



legislation. Bill C-61 died on the order paper in January 2025, and it is expected that new legislation is on the horizon.

“Recognizing the Treaty relationship as paramount and actively engaging with our leadership and Treaty knowledge keepers on any future legislation focused on water and related infrastructure is our bottom line,” states Chief Troy Knowlton, Piikani Nation, Treaty No. 7 territory. “We know that for the past several years, Canada has set the stage under reconciliation – what we expect going forward is real action on the business left unfinished under Treaty.”

The Chiefs Steering Committee calls on Prime Minister Carney and Canada to follow through on all of Canada’s legal commitments, and work for cooperative, meaningful change.

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About the Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services

The Chiefs Steering Committee on Technical Services sets the mandate for the Technical Services Advisory Group (TSAG) and participates as Steering Committee members, directing TSAG’s program and service delivery while holding the organization accountable to their values and operating principles. For a list of CSC members, visit <https://tsag.net/chiefs-steering-committee>.

Media Contact

Vaughn Paul, CEO
First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group (TSAG)
vaughnpaul@tsag.net
780-919-0069