

## **Morales Expected Throne Speech Suggestions**

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Promises made in the provincial throne speech don't surprise Robert Morales.

But they do leave the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group's chief negotiator with a feeling of cautious optimism.

In its speech from the throne Feb. 12, Premier Gordon Campbell's Liberal government pledged to support fast-tracked negotiations at common tables.

"The HTG has been advocating for probably the past 18 or 24 months for the establishment of a common table," Morales said. "We've been saying that is a way to speed up the process."

In 2006, the HTG represented some of the nearly 50 tribes from across B.C. that signed the Unity Protocol. The protocol provides a common voice to ask negotiators to address six key barriers to treaty signing: certainty, constitutional status of treaty lands, governance, co-management of lands and resources, fiscal relations and taxation, and fisheries.

Last month, the federal and provincial governments agreed to form the common table tribes have been calling for and Morales viewed the throne speech as confirmation of that.

"I'm optimistic it has potential to help," said Morales, who has been chosen by First Nations to lead negotiations at the table. "It really depends on the will of the parties to find common ground.

"If we cannot collectively come together and reach some common ground, there is little prospect of the government moving off its one-size-fits-all agenda."