

COWICHAN NEWS LEADER AND PICTORIAL

Text □+

Governments stalling on treaty talks, say Crowder and HTG

By Krista Stiefken - Cowichan News Leader and Pictorial

Published: November 30, 2008 6:00 AM

0 Comments

Fifteen years into treaty negotiations, the provincial and federal governments still aren't coming to the table ready to settle, says to the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group.

The HTG, which represents Cowichan Tribes and five other First Nation communities, is still sitting at Stage 4 in the five-stage negotiation process, along with 42 other First Nations, according to a report released by the B.C. Treaty Commission Wednesday.

Robert Morales, chief negotiator with the HTG, said there are two major hold-ups in the process.

"We have been participating in the Common Table (created to expedite the treaty negotiation process), which met during the spring and early summer," said Morales. "We have been waiting for the governments' response to that, and the second biggest issue is the private land issue, and we've been to Washington, D.C. to see that process will continue."

The HTG made a formal complaint against Canada with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in October, and is now waiting for the federal government to move forward with their side of the case, which happens in March.

"That's what has held us back, and at the present time the government isn't prepared to engage in negotiations," said Morales. "They're basically taking their marbles and going home. They're not going to play with us.

"They refuse to travel to Duncan from Victoria because of the premier's carbon neutral policy. Those are the kinds of tactics the government is taking."

At the B.C. Treaty Commission, communications manager Brian Mitchell said the negotiation process hinges on the response to the Common Table as well as a new federal mandate regarding fish and fishing rights, an issue under review by the federal department of fisheries and oceans at this time.

Cowichan MP Jean Crowder, meanwhile, publicly criticized the federal government for "stalling" on treaty negotiations.

"The government has no urgency to come to the table at all," she said Thursday. "I think both federal and provincial governments are talking about reconciliation, and one of the ways government can signal their intention is to move forward with the treaty process."

But Patricia Valladao, a spokeswoman for Canada's Indian and Northern Affairs, said the federal government is making progress.

"We have made great strides in treaty negotiations in B.C. in 2008," she said, adding the government is well aware of the necessity of moving forward with negotiations.

"We're working on a number of fronts to make this happen."

But Morales said government has little incentive to get a treaty signed.

"It's cheaper for the government to negotiate than to settle," he said. "They can set ridiculously low objectives on their side of the table, and they know the First Nations are going to reject it, and yet the continue to hold on to their positions, because there is no public pressure and no incentive for government to move. That's what we're trying to do, create pressure, and the Common Table and the petition (to the international tribunal) are two of our strategies to get the government to sit down and negotiate with us."

Crowder agreed there is little motivation to get government to settle.

"It's cheaper to litigate," she said. "They have deep litigation pockets. They can throw lawyers at a case until the cows come home. That's not the case for First Nations."

But Mitchell with the B.C. Treaty Commission disagreed.

"The governments have told us, and there is certainly evidence, that the governments are prepared to move ahead and sign agreements," he said. "We have two agreements that have been ratified (in 2008), so they've indicated they're willing to go ahead if the conditions are right."

Stephen Harper's IQ = 128

Can you Beat his Score? Take our 1 minute IQ test.

miniIQtest.com/stephen-harper

Master Negotiation Skills

Executive Negotiation Program from Notre Dame-100% Online-Learn More.

www.NotreDameOnline.com

CSM

Professional Class 1,2,3&4 Driver Training.
csm1977.com

Ads by Google

[Email](#) [Print](#) [Letter to Editor](#) [Share](#)



Internet Solutions



TELUS
authorized dealer



TD Waterhouse Canada Inc. - Member CIPF

FREE 30-DAY ACCESS TO INVESTMENT RESEARCH

GET IT NOW

www.tdwaterhouse.ca/tdw30

Better Tools. Better Trades. **Waterhouse**
Wealth of Experience

COMMENTS

COMMENTING ETIQUETTE: To encourage open exchange of ideas in the BCLocalNews.com community, we ask that you follow our guidelines and respect standards. Simply, don't say anything you wouldn't want your mother to read. [More on etiquette...](#)