
NEWS RELEASE

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Treaty Negotiations Office

TSAWWASSEN TREATY ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

VICTORIA – The province approved an Agreement-In-Principle, or AIP, with the Tsawwassen First Nation during an open cabinet meeting today. It is the fourth AIP that government has approved over the past eight months and marks an unprecedented level of success in treaty negotiations in British Columbia.

“This AIP represents a framework for the first urban treaty on the Lower Mainland and brings us closer to achieving certainty and economic and social benefits for all citizens in the region,” said Geoff Plant, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Treaty Negotiations. “As we move forward in 2004, I am delighted that so many members of the Tsawwassen First Nation support the progress made at the table and are ready to accept the challenge of negotiating a modern-day treaty.”

The Tsawwassen First Nation is a group of about 235 Coast Salish members who entered the treaty process in 1993. They have one reserve, which is on the Strait of Georgia near the Tsawwassen ferry terminal, approximately 25 kilometres south of Vancouver. The Tsawwassen First Nation has a business relationship with more than 200 lessees who reside or conduct business on the reserve. In a ratification vote last December, the Tsawwassen community endorsed the AIP by almost 75 per cent.

“I’m pleased that the Tsawwassen people have approved the AIP as a basis toward a treaty that recognizes our rights and supports us in building a self-sufficient First Nation society in the Lower Mainland,” said Chief Kim Baird. “As we move into Final Agreement negotiations, the outstanding issues will need to be resolved through hard work and creative and flexible approaches.”

About 427 hectares, or 1,055 acres, of provincial Crown land will make up the majority of the land package. The current Tsawwassen reserve will also become treaty land. The federal government will provide a cash transfer of \$10.1 million.

One of the important achievements in the AIP that Cabinet approved today involves an arrangement regarding the Brunswick Point lands, which were expropriated in 1968 to support the Roberts Bank development. Current lessees of the Brunswick Point lands will be offered the first opportunity to purchase the lands in the future. The Tsawwassen First Nation will have second rights of refusal to purchase lands not bought by existing lessees. This arrangement is intended to balance the interests of multiple parties.

An AIP is the fourth stage in the six-step process through the British Columbia Treaty Commission, which was launched in 1993. An AIP is not legally binding. It sets the foundation for Final Agreement negotiations and represents broad agreement on matters such as the land component, capital transfer, fish and wildlife provisions and governance authorities.

The provincial and federal governments signed three AIPs with First Nations in 2003: the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation in July, the Maa-nulth First Nations in October and the Sliammon First Nation in December. Final Agreement negotiations are expected to take between 18 months and two years.

For more information, visit:

[http://www.gov.bc.ca/tno/negotiation/First Nations in the process/tsawwassen.htm](http://www.gov.bc.ca/tno/negotiation/First_Nations_in_the_process/tsawwassen.htm)

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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