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West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations warn Ministers of billion-dollar lawsuit if Site C goes ahead

🕒 November 21, 2017 👤 Chris Newton 📁 News, Regional, Site C
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An aerial view of the south bank excavation at Site C, including the stilling basin and the powerhouse buttress, in September 2017. Photo by BC Hydro

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FORT ST. JOHN, B.C. — The leaders of both the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations are warning the provincial government that it faces a \$1 billion lawsuit if it proceeds with construction of the Site C dam.

West Moberly
First Nations
chief Roland
Willson and
Prophet River
First Nation chief
Lynette Tsakoza
said that they
gave the warning
to Energy, Mines
and Petroleum
Resources
Minister Michelle

Mungall and Indigenous Relations Minister Scott Fraser during a meeting in Fort St. John on November 14th. The two First Nations chiefs said that the lawsuit would be brought about because they say that Site C would result in infringements to Treaty 8, of which the two are members.

In a release, both Willson and Tsakoza say that at last week's meeting, they pointed out the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* that was signed in 1975 when Hydro-Quebec was developing its James Bay project. The agreement resulted in a \$225 million settlement with First Nations residing in northwestern Quebec, which amounts to \$1 billion when accounted for inflation today.

"The leading energy expert Robert McCullough estimates that cancelling the dam would save British Columbians about \$4 billion," said Chief Willson. "You can make that \$5 billion because if the NDP approves this boondoggle they'll force us to seek damages for infringement of our Treaty."

The release from the two First Nations also says that continuing Site C would violate at least four articles of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the NDP government has said it would uphold while in power. They added that the impact benefit agreements signed between BC Hydro and other area First Nations also don't satisfy the terms of UNDRIP.

The two First Nations leaders said that they presented the two Ministers with a proposal to cancel the project that would benefit the local economy in the Peace Region. They also said they sent an invite to Premier John Horgan to attend a feast in their communities and to speak with local First Nations Elders and leaders. Chief Tsakoza said that the two First Nations leaders are currently awaiting the Premier's reply.

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