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**AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak Calls for Continued Support for B.C.
Land Act Amendments**

(February 29, 2024 – Unceded Algonquin Territory, Ottawa, Ontario) – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, expressed disappointment and concern, following the British Columbia (B.C.) government’s decision to pause the proposed amendments to the B.C. Land Act.

“I am disappointed by the B.C. government's decision to pause the proposed amendments to the B.C. Land Act. These proposed amendments are essential to the alignment of public land decision-making processes with the British Columbia Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act),” said AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak. “We have seen success in areas like forestry, child welfare, and emergency management, which highlights the value of working together to ensure Canadian and Provincial laws are aligned with international law. In addition, the spread of misinformation from opposition leaders and other parties leading to this pause is unacceptable. The amendments are critical for B.C. to fulfill its Declaration Act obligations and to ensure decision-making processes respect the UN Declaration and the inherent and Treaty rights of First Nations to manage their lands and resources.”

On January 26, 2024, the B.C. government began public consultations on the proposed amendments to the B.C. Land Act, which are intended to involve First Nations in public land decision-making processes. On February 21, 2024, the B.C. government announced a pause to the proposed amendments due to misinformation by opposition parties and individuals, which led to a public backlash towards First Nations in B.C.

“First Nations must be included in all decision-making processes that impact their lands and resources. The amendments to the Land Act will bring wealth and prosperity to B.C. while ensuring the sustainable and equitable use of lands and resources for future generations. Additionally, the changes to the Land Act will make space for the recognition and implementation of First Nations’ inherent rights to govern their lands and resources in their territories, through negotiation and agreements with the

province, in accordance with the Declaration Act. This is a step forward in ensuring that First Nations in B.C. are recognized as full and equal partners in land decision-making.”

“The proposed amendments, co-developed with the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Leadership Council, have the potential to serve as a model for other provinces and territories to follow and take steps towards the full implementation of the UN Declaration. The AFN supports these amendments. We urge all members of the B.C Legislative Assembly, as well as British Columbians, to work collaboratively and engage in constructive, non-partisan dialogue about the amendments in good faith and for the benefit and well-being of all British Columbians.”

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The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a national advocacy organization that works to advance the collective aspirations of First Nations individuals and communities across Canada on matters of national or international nature and concern.

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