



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver BC, October 22nd, 2014

Province transferring ownership of public lands to non-profits while land claims remain outstanding

Urban Aboriginals seek respectful place-based strategy to secure social housing on crown land recognized as unceded territory by City of Vancouver.

Urban Aboriginal residents in Vancouver's inner city are demanding that the Province of British Columbia immediately end plans to transfer ownership of public assets to unspecified non-profit housing organizations, citing a complete lack of community involvement in the decision making process and a failure to recognize traditional Aboriginal interests in the disposition of crown lands.

Scott Clark, Executive Director of Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement Society (ALIVE), says the society has been inundated by questions from local residents upset that they have no say in the future of their housing. *"Residents and our partners who are working under tremendous challenges to support our most vulnerable children and families firmly believe that we must be consulted to ensure that any devolution process involves all key partners who are committed to building on our existing, evidence-supported, place based approach"*, observed Clark.

The Stamps Place family complex and Nicholson Towers seniors housing were offered for purchase by BC Housing on October 6th, setting November 6th as the due date for expressions of interest. The posting clearly states that applicants must be existing housing providers in good standing with BC Housing, with the financial capacity to support the housing in question. Community consultation is designated to take place only after a provider has been chosen. The issue of consultation with First Nations with existing claims on the lands in question is not

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addressed. BC Housing has announced plans to ultimately transfer ownership of 350 such properties from the public realm to non-profit interests.

ALIVE's urban Aboriginal members see the current process as disrespectful of their rights and ignorant of the important reconciliation work underway within the community. ALIVE has worked closely with residents and community organizations for almost a decade, promoting a place-based, neighbourhood-focused strategy to foster inclusion and build the capacities of the city's Aboriginal residents. Clark fears the proposed sale of public housing properties to unaccountable non-profits may undermine years of progress. *"This creates a great deal of concern for our organization and many of the over 80 other groups who work with us through the place based strategy which supports our most vulnerable children and families here in Vancouver's Inner City"*, said Clark.

ALIVE, an urban Aboriginal organization with over 900 members, calls on BC Housing and the Province to immediately:

- Stop the land transfer process under the Non-Profit Asset Transfer Program
- Engage the community, citizens, and First Nations now
- Respect June 26, 2014 Williams decision of the Supreme Court re Aboriginal rights
- Retain public ownership of public assets and crown land

We request that:

- The non-profit housing sector respect our rights and ongoing place-based strategies and not participate in this Process
- That members of the public express their concerns by writing to Housing Minister Rich Coleman, their MLA's, and the Premier

These are our public lands, our homes, our neighborhoods. STOP and RESET this process. Our communities and citizens must be meaningfully engaged from the beginning in any Strategy involving our Public Assets.

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