



**SPEAKING NOTES OF GRAND CHIEF DR. ABEL BOSUM**

**FOR THE**

**SIGNING OF AMENDMENT No. 1**

**OF THE**

**CREE NATION GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT**

**VAL-D'OR**

**APRIL 17, 2019**

1. Honorable Minister Bennett, Deputy Grand Chief Mandy Gull, Chiefs and Councillors of the Cree First Nations of Eeyou Istchee, Cree Elders, Women and Youth, it gives me much happiness and pride to be with you today for the signature of Amendment No. 1 of the *Cree Nation Governance Agreement*.
2. Today's Amendment is the first for the *Cree Nation Governance Agreement*, signed with you, Minister Bennett, in Ottawa on July 18, 2017. At the time, Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come stated that the Governance Agreement expresses the Cree vision of self-government and self-determination. It is about taking back control, and freeing ourselves from the colonial legacy of the *Indian Act*.
3. Today's Amendment is a watershed moment for the Crees in taking control of our economic future. For it to mean anything, self-determination requires financial independence. This is as true for individuals as it is for nations. Today's Amendment opens the door to financial independence for the Cree citizens of Eeyou Istchee.
4. On March 26, the Chiefs and Council Members of the Cree Nation Government voted unanimously to approve this Amendment. It removes the 75-year limit on land leases for Crees for residential purposes in the Cree communities. Instead, the term of these leases will be perpetual, unless specified otherwise in the lease. The underlying ownership of the land will remain with the Cree communities.
5. The previous time limit on residential land leases was a carry-over from the *Indian Act*. It prevented the Crees from benefitting financially from home ownership. In fact, it made true homeownership impossible because the land leases had to be renewed periodically, at the discretion of chief and council.
6. Today's amendment will free Cree homeowners from political whim. It will give them the security of true ownership. It will enable them to sell their homes to other Crees or to pass them on to their children. It will enable Crees, for the first time, to build up equity in their homes. If they choose, they will be able to use that equity to

fund business ventures. It will make it easier for the banks to provide mortgage loans to Crees. It will help to create a real estate market in the Cree communities.

7. This is why we say that today's Amendment will "unlock value" and "create wealth" for Cree homeowners. This will, in turn, create opportunities for Cree entrepreneurs to respond to the pent-up demand for private housing in the Cree communities.
8. Since 2011, the Cree Nation Government and the Cree communities have worked together to develop the Cree Nation Housing Strategy to address the urgent needs of community members for affordable and adequate housing.
9. A cornerstone of the Cree Nation Housing Strategy is the prioritization of private homeownership by the Crees. Today's Amendment is a critical component of this strategy. By making private homeownership possible, it will help to free community housing for lower income Crees, the elderly and the youth.
10. Over the last day and a half, we have even discussed the possibility of Cree citizens developing real estate for the purpose of providing social or low rent housing to fellow community members.
11. Under the private housing program, the Cree Nation Government has already set aside very significant resources to encourage Cree construction and ownership of at least 1,000 new private homes in the Cree communities. The Cree Nation Government has also committed significant funds for related infrastructure investments such as drinking water and waste water facilities and civil works projects.
12. Unity of the Cree Nation is what makes it possible for us to not only talk about big ideas, but to bring them to life as well. Past experiences have taught us that working together is always the better option. As we move towards innovative plans and structures, that we will have built together, we hope to bring predictability and

stability home to our communities where families and community members can plan ahead with a clearly defined process.

13. A joint Canada-Cree Nation working group has been established to develop a Cree Canada partnership to implement the Cree Nation Housing Strategy, including areas for potential federal investment, in the context of Section 28 of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* treaty of 1975.
14. In closing, Minister Bennett, we look forward to working with you and your officials to implement the next phases of our Cree Nation Housing Strategy. We are setting the stage for real economic development and prosperity in the Cree communities and for the entire region. Thank you for joining us in this effort.

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