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## News Release

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### **Read the Fine Print before Signing Treaties**

OTTAWA—"Reports today that Alberta natives are suing to enforce a 106-year old treaty that promised to give them twine to make fishing nets is a reminder that treaty commitments will last forever and must be kept not just today and tomorrow but until the end of time," said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond East).

Treaty 8, an 1899 treaty covering northern Saskatchewan, Alberta and northeast B.C., was a simple affair that covered one page. It offered natives livestock and equipment needed to farm. Natives who wished to continue hunting and fishing were provided with shot for hunting and twine to make fishing nets. It did not guarantee them a quantity of fish or game.

The 2006 Tsawwassen Treaty covers 212 pages together with an additional 366 pages of appendices. The real substance involving taxation, fisheries and other matters is not always found in the 578 pages of treaty and appendices, but is to be found in the many side-agreements provided for in the treaty.

Unfortunately none of the side-agreements have been published.

What we do know though is that the treaty provides not merely the opportunity to fish, like every other Canadian, but a guaranteed quantity of fish that takes priority over every other Canadian. It provides the best farmland in the country - but not for farming. This land is to be removed from B.C.'s Agriculture Land Reserve so it can be used for a port expansion at great expense to Delta and the nearby residents of the Tsawwassen Reserve.

The hundreds of pages of special rights and privileges which give the Tsawwassen priority over other Canadians are to be set in constitutional cement and will forever become part of our Constitution.

Like the 1899 Alberta treaty, the Tsawwassen Treaty will be part of the supreme law of the land for all time, but unlike the 1899 treaty it will govern the sorts of laws the Parliament of Canada can enact in the future with regard to fisheries and many other matters.

International treaties normally have a cancellation provision where one of the parties can opt out. The *Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement* can be cancelled by either side. The Tsawwassen Treaty can never be cancelled. The special privileges given the Tsawwassen Band will exist forever as will the responsibilities of the Government of Canada to enforce and protect these special privileges.

"Indian Affairs Minister Prentice was wrong to sign on behalf of all Canadians on December 8<sup>th</sup> prior to allowing Canadian citizens the opportunity to learn what he was committing them to," concluded Cummins.

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