

# hqot'in, brings justice to chiefs lured and killed at faked peace talk

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cess that comes when we choose to negotiate rather than litigate," Anton said.

The B.C. business community for decades has navigated the daunting landscape of the province's few treaties, many land claims and hundreds of one-off provincial benefits agreements.

Greg D'Avignon, president of the Business Council of B.C., said the ruling provides greater certainty about the land base but it immediately spurred comment about projects like the Northern Gateway and Trans Mountain pipelines.

"The Supreme Court of Canada has made it clear that aboriginal title is very much like private property rights, at its core it is the right to decide what use is made of our land and waters,"

said acting Chief Clarence Innis of the Gitxaala, a nation that has launched legal action against the Enbridge pipeline.

Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy said the decision will have ramifications for major projects in his province, including the Ring of Fire and Energy East pipeline.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation says a landmark court decision will significantly impact development of the Ring of Fire.

NAN Grand Chief Harvey Yesno said the ruling sends a strong message that the government must recognize and respect Aboriginal title and deal honourably with First Nations.

"There's a number of First Nations that are in land claims negotiations," he said.

"I'm hoping it'll be a positive impact to settle or accelerate."

That includes the

much-talked-about chromite-rich mining area known as the Ring of Fire, located in the James Bay Lowlands of northern Ontario.

"There's no question that this ruling is creating, I think, a reason ... to enhance the positions that First Nations have been taking," Yesno said.

Northern Development and Mines minister Michael Gravelle said the province will review the ruling.

But he noted there's a significant difference between BC and Ontario because, unlike the Ring of Fire, the BC land in question doesn't fall under a treaty.

"Regardless, I certainly recognize — as does our government — how important it is to meet, if not exceed, our duty to consult, [and] work as closely as we can with our First Nations ... and our Aboriginal peoples on



**SCOC grants land title to B.C. First Nation. Chiefs on hand for announcement were surprised with the decision and reactions ranged from jubilation to tears. (CP-Photo)**

all major projects."

Still, Ontario might need to do more than consult, as the Supreme Court decision places a greater burden on governments to get consent — or justify — development on Aboriginal land. Chief Joe Alphonse, tribal

chairman of Tsilhqot'in National Government, saw in the ruling the possibility of ending the crushing poverty of his people.

"Today, we can barely afford to have houses for our people," he said. "We can barely afford to

give our elders enough fuel money to go to Williams Lake to go see a doctor. A former tribal chief used to call our reserve a glorified concentration camp. I sure as hell hope we broke down some of those barriers today."