



News Release

FIRST NATIONS ANNOUNCE COURT ACTION ON CHANGES TO YESAA

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For immediate release:

Whitehorse, Yukon - Today, three Yukon First Nations - the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council - announced they are pursuing court action against the federal government for passing Bill S-6, which amends the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA).

This announcement coincides with the Prime Minister's visit to the Yukon on his campaign trail.

The YESAA is a federal act, which gives legal effect to implement the unique development assessment process that is founded in the modern Yukon First Nation land claims agreements.

All Yukon First Nations strongly opposed several of the changes to the YESAA as they are a breach of modern Treaties. The majority of Yukon First Nations with Final Agreements are supporting the three Plaintiffs in this case, and the action will be brought on behalf of all Final Agreements.

"Yukon First Nations made every effort to resolve this issue through discussions and presenting sound options," explained Chief Carl Sidney of the Teslin Tlingit Council. "Both the federal and territorial governments refused to engage in meaningful discussions. The current government seems determined to undermine or repeal environmental legislation throughout Canada, but Yukon First Nations' rights to effective legislation were constitutionally guaranteed under our Final Agreements."

"We tried numerous times to work with Canada to resolve the key issues," said Chief Steve Smith from Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. "Rather than treating our First Nations as partners in government-to-government dialogue, the federal government acted on their own and left us no choice but to use the courts to address these matters."

"We will protect the integrity of our Agreements. We will not stand by and let Canada erode them," stated Chief Eric Fairclough of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. "By passing Bill S-6,

this conservative government has demonstrated that they are not willing to truly work with First Nations governments and has brought uncertainty to our territory. This is just one more case of the Government of Canada failing to honour modern treaties in Canada.”

Gregory McDade, Q.C. of the B.C. legal firm Ratcliff & Company has been retained as the litigator. Mr. McDade has extensive experience with working with First Nations across Canada and Ratcliff & Co.’s practice focuses on Aboriginal rights and title litigation. Mr. McDade has been legal counsel before the Supreme Court of Canada in a number of recent ground-breaking Aboriginal cases.

The firm has begun preparation and a formal court action is expected to be filed within the next month. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council will provide more detail in the coming weeks.

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