

Government Orders

The settlement agreement accommodates the government's objective of increasing the participation of aboriginal peoples in the decision making process.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis will be full and equal partners in a renewable resources board that will be created to manage wildlife harvesting in the settlement area.

The board will also have the power to establish policies and propose regulations for all aspects of wildlife harvesting and commercial activities relating to wildlife.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis will also participate fully on boards responsible for land use planning, environmental reviews and the regulation of land and water use in the settlement areas. These boards will be institutions of public governments within the settlement area. The agreement will also provide constitutional protection of the special wildlife harvesting rights the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have in that settlement area, including the exclusive right to trap.

If for conservation reasons harvesting quotas must be set on certain wildlife species or populations or in certain areas, the harvesting needs of the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have first priority.

The wildlife harvesting provisions of the agreement are extremely important to the Sahtu Dene and Metis and other northerners. Each Sahtu community will establish a renewable resources council to manage the harvesting rights provided under land claim agreements.

I am pleased that Bill C-16 provides for the negotiation of self-government agreements with the Sahtu Dene and Metis. It guarantees them a role in any process to reform the constitution of the Northwest Territories.

I assure my hon. colleagues the agreement that will be put into force by Bill C-16 does not affect any aboriginal rights the Sahtu Dene and Metis may have to self-government.

A great deal of effort has been devoted to ensuring full and proper implementation of the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claim settlement agreement. In mid-1992, when the terms of the agreement were taking effect, a special working group was established to develop a 10-year implementation plan. This plan, which was signed at the same time as the land claim agreement, identifies all the obligations contained in the agreement, the activities required to fulfil those obligations and various other responsibilities, time frames and resource requirements.

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The implementation plan however is an accord among the parties to the land claim settlement. It is not part of the settlement agreement and therefore will not receive constitutional protection. Nevertheless it is a vital document because the

land claim settlement must be properly implemented in order to fulfil its aims.

The implementation plan is extremely detailed. It reflects the commitment of all parties to ensure that the letter and the spirit of the agreement are fulfilled. It sets out more than 100 separate obligations, some of which may involve up to 20 distinct activities. All parties to the plan have responsibilities to fulfil many of these obligations. This underlines the fact that the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claim settlement imposes obligations not just on Canada but on the aboriginal beneficiaries and the Government of the Northwest Territories. It also emphasizes the need for all parties to work together in implementing the agreement.

A key focus of the implementation plan is to give substance to the commitments in the land claim agreement that the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have genuine and meaningful participation in the institutions of government.

To further the goal of successful implementation of the agreement an implementation committee will be formed comprising representatives of Canada, the territorial government and the Sahtu Tribal Council. The committee will guide the implementation process for at least the first 10 years, monitor the status of the implementation plan and, if necessary, amend the plan. It will also report each year on the implementation of the Sahtu agreement.

One of the first orders of business will be to establish an enrolment board which will determine eligibility for benefits under the agreement. Eligible Dene and Metis living within or outside the settlement area may also enrol with the board as beneficiaries of the agreement. To be eligible they must be Canadian citizens and Sahtu Dene or Sahtu Metis as defined in the agreement.

An aboriginal person who is not Sahtu Dene or Metis but lives in the settlement area and is a Canadian citizen may also be eligible to enrol after the settlement is in effect. This will be achieved through a community acceptance procedure which will be decided by the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

The Sahtu claim is the second regional Dene and Metis claim to be settled. The first settlement with the Gwich'in in the Mackenzie Delta came into force in December 1992. This agreement is now being implemented.

With the co-operation of hon. members on both sides of the House we can ensure the Sahtu Dene and Metis will also soon be benefiting from their own land claim agreement.

I urge my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-16. This claim will benefit all Canadians.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, it seems a bit like the further we get away from the first presentations the more murky some of the debate becomes.