

*Government Orders*

through the agreement will allow the major resource development projects to proceed. The moratorium on oil and gas exploration will be lifted. I remind hon. members that the government is committed to putting Canadians to work. This agreement will help us do that.

Because of the many benefits it will bring to the settlement area, the Government of the Northwest Territories is also a strong supporter of Bill C-16.

The opening sentence of the preamble in the Sahtu land claim agreement states:

The Slavey, Hare and Mountain Dene of the Sahtu region have traditionally used and occupied lands in the Northwest Territories from time immemorial.

The location of that statement as the first sentence in the preamble is significant. It is the reason we are here today.

The land claim agreement and the bill before us recognized that the Slavey, Hare and Mountain Dene as the original inhabitants of the Sahtu region have aboriginal and treaty rights. These rights have been translated and affirmed through negotiation into the rights contained in the land claim agreement before us. It is a fact that the rights of the original inhabitants of the Sahtu have not been adequately dealt with in the past. The agreement returns to the Sahtu some measure of control over what happens to land and resources in their homeland.

I draw the attention of hon. members to the objectives of the land claim agreement. The objectives stress the cultural and economic relationships which the Sahtu Dene and Metis have with the land. The preservation and the strengthening of these links, along with the clarification of land and resource rights contained in the agreement, provide the basis for a renewed partnership in a very important region of the western Arctic.

The Sahtu settlement area encompasses some 280,000 square kilometres of land in the Mackenzie Valley. Under the land claim agreement the Dene and Metis will own more than 41,000 square kilometres of that area, including the mineral rights of about 1,800 square kilometres. The Sahtu Dene and Metis will also own a wide range of specified substances under settlement land. These include carving and construction stone, gravel, gypsum, peat, sand and other substances.

Under the agreement there will be two categories of Sahtu land. The first category is settlement land, which will be outside municipal boundaries. Sahtu municipal land, the second category, will be those lands located within municipal boundaries. Certain special conditions will apply to settlement land to ensure that it is never lost to the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

For example, these lands may never be sold, mortgaged or seized under court order. They will enjoy special tax treatment. If any of the land is expropriated, the government guarantees that it will be replaced so that the initial amount of settlement land is never reduced. Sahtu municipal land will be treated like other privately owned municipal land in that it may be sold or mortgaged. However, if Sahtu municipal land is sold or granted to an individual, it will no longer be considered Sahtu land and the provisions of the agreement will not apply to it.

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In this agreement third party interests will be protected and will continue. As I mentioned earlier, the certainty of ownership and rights this agreement will bring about are important for the non-aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories, as well as the aboriginal beneficiaries.

The settlement agreement should lead very quickly to new investments in the oil and gas sector, which in turn will mean employment and business opportunities for all northerners. Before any oil and gas developments can proceed, however, Canada must provide the Sahtu Tribal Council with an opportunity to present its views on the matter. This is a key principle of the land claim agreement.

As well, any operator proposing such activities must consult with the beneficiaries on such issues as environmental impact, potential impacts on wildlife harvesting, and Sahtu Dene and Metis employment opportunities. Similar consultations will also be required prior to the development or production of other types of minerals.

The settlement agreement also provides a fair and equitable financial settlement to the beneficiaries. Over the next 15 years the Sahtu Dene and Metis will receive payments totalling 75 million in 1990 dollars. They will also receive a share of the resource royalties from projects in the Mackenzie Valley. This will amount to 7.5 per cent of the first \$2 million of resource royalties received by the government and 1.5 per cent of additional royalties.

Special efforts will be made to strengthen the traditional economies and economic self-sufficiency of the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

As the minister has already stated, governments are committed under the agreement to providing economic opportunities related to guiding, lodges, naturalist activities and commercial fishing.

These and other provisions will enable the five Sahtu communities in the settlement area to improve their social and economic opportunities to control their own destiny. It is they who will make the decisions. Promoting self-determination by aboriginal communities is a goal that is shared by all Canadians.