



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Carolyn Bennett MD

Member of Parliament / députée – Toronto-St. Paul's

June 25, 2015

Grand Chief Ruth Massie
Council of Yukon First Nations
2166 - 2nd Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 4P1

Re: Bill S-6: *An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and the Nunavut Waters and Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal Act*

Dear Grand Chief Massie,

Thank you for forwarding the letter regarding Bill S-6 from the 11 Yukon First Nations Chiefs, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the President of the Gwichin Tribal Council to Governor General David Johnson. I am responding on behalf of the Liberal Caucus in my capacity as Liberal Aboriginal Affairs critic.

The Liberal Party agrees that the changes to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESSA)* in Bill S-6, which was pushed through by Mr. Harper's government without adequate consultation or collaboration with Yukon First Nations, are inconsistent with Canada's treaty obligations and constitutional duties. The Conservative government has failed to meet its legal obligations and duties under the Yukon land claim agreements regarding development assessment in the Yukon and, therefore, has diminished the honour of the Crown.

In addition to undermining ongoing treaty relationships between the Crown and Yukon First Nations, Bill S-6 will jeopardize development in the Yukon by eroding legal certainty. This will have significant adverse consequences for all Yukoners.

Our Party proposed a number of amendments to the bill during the committee process. Unfortunately the Conservative majority on the committee voted down all of our proposed amendments, which were specifically put forward to deal with the four unilateral additions by

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the federal government outlined in your joint letter. While the Liberal Caucus voted unanimously against Bill S-6, the Conservative government used its majority in Parliament to push the legislation through unchanged.

It is also disappointing that your Conservative M.P., Ryan Leef, refused to stand up for his constituents, and instead acquiesced to the Prime Minister's wish to actively help push this flawed bill through Parliament.

If the Liberal Party forms a government, we will repeal the four problematic elements of Bill S-6 and work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and other partners to ensure the YESSA process reflects a true consensus. Liberals are committed to working towards renewed nation to nation relationships with Aboriginal communities rooted in Aboriginal rights, Treaties, the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in the spirit of partnership, respect, and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Thank you again for your correspondence on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Hon. Carolyn Bennett M.D., M.P.
Toronto-St Paul's