

## **COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS**

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## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release - October 22, 2014

The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) is very disappointed to learn that the Senate voted unanimously yesterday to approve Bill S-6, the Yukon and Nunavut Regulatory Improvement Act.

"Yukoners and First Nations never had any opportunity to voice their opinions to the Standing Committee on matters that directly affect them," said Grand Chief Ruth Massie. "Instead the Standing Committee only granted hearings to resource developers and their industry organizations. Where is the sober second thought or democracy in that?"

Yukon First Nations oppose several of the proposed amendments in Bill S-6 as they undermine the spirit and intent of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* established in chapter 12 of the UFA and the First Nation Final Agreements. "Bill S-6 proposes to shorten assessment timelines for major projects, to increase Ministerial influence over what should be an impartial process and to upset the balance between the roles of federal, territorial and First Nation governments, and the YESAA Board" added Grand Chief Massie.

The Senate Standing Committee on Energy, Natural Resources and the Environment held limited hearings in Ottawa in September and October. Yukon First Nation governments requested opportunities to address the Standing Committee to voice their concerns. All requests were denied. However, the CYFN, neither a government nor a treaty beneficiary, was the only First Nation organization that was granted an opportunity to meet with the Standing Committee. CYFN shared its short time with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation.

Despite inviting only one First Nation organization to speak, the Standing Committee invited three resource extraction industry organizations, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Klondike Placer Miners Association and the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and one private mining company, Alexco Resource Corp to present.

Bill S-6 will now be referred to the House of Commons where the CYFN hopes it will undergo a second Standing Committee review. "We will be requesting that the Standing Committee hold hearings in Yukon to hear directly from Yukon First Nations and Yukoners. So far this process defies the democratic process that we, as Canadians and Yukoners, value. The federal government's decision to impose these amendments will harm Yukon's economy and threatens the independence and impartiality of the development assessment process in Yukon," said Grand Chief Massie. "We should all be concerned about that and we urge the public to support us in seeking a more democratic process and in protecting our environment."