

WHITEHORSE: (Sandi Coleman) Yukon first nations went to Ottawa last week to lobby federal politicians and listen to debate in the House of Commons over a bill that would amend the YESAA. Bill S6 is now in its second reading. As we learned last week the Yukon government had asked for changes outside the official review and the federal government obliged and included them in proposed amendments. Four of those amendments are controversial. One allows the federal government the power to issue binding policy instructions to the assessment board. Another allows exemptions for projects up for renewal. A third lets the federal government delegate its power to the territorial government and we also heard claims from MP Ryan Leef and premier Darrell Pasloski that the CYFN had been given \$100,000 dollars as part of its consultation specifically to look at the four Yukon government amendments. During the course of its meetings Yukon first nations heard their status as governments brought into question by the federal aboriginal affairs minister. Ruth Massie is the grand chief of the CYFN and she was in Ottawa. She attended the hearings and met with officials and politicians and we have reached her.

Coleman: Let's start with - I don't know where to start here but we'll start with whether you felt you left Ottawa with any of what you'd gone for.

Massie: No we're not satisfied whatsoever. We wanted to have meetings with the minister to see if we could have any changes or have them listen to any of our concerns over the four amendments and that didn't happen. What happened was we got a lecture from our minister about the UFA.

Coleman: And you did request an apology. Did you get that by the end of the week?

Massie: Well, in a round about way. We certainly didn't get one directly. We did through minister Leef. He said the minister wants to extend his invitation to come back and what for?

Coleman: What about the fact you had the Yukon premier also taking the unusual step of publically calling out the federal minister over his comments and asked him to correct the record.

Massie: I was a little bit surprised about that as all of us were because he was at our leadership just before we went to Ottawa so as the days went on we learned a little bit more and we were surprised to hear the minister tell us that the premier sent those proposed amendments and then the premier stating back that he only submitted two of them so I don't know - anyways they're all there.

Coleman: They're all there and they seem to be moving ahead but you say you were surprised. Again we are hearing the premier says first nations were copied on the correspondence, that the first nations, CYFN was told that these amendments are going to be there and Ryan Leef's office says documents show that the federal government was billed for consultations.

Massie: Well that consultation was when we had the five year review. It was before these

amendments came through. We didn't receive these amendments or our officials didn't receive them until February. I didn't receive them -or the chiefs didn't receive them till June when they were a draft.

Coleman: You did receive cash for consulting on those specific amendments or are you saying on the five year plan?

Massie: Well no. That \$100,000 dollars was for the whole five year review process. Those four amendments had nothing to do with the five year amendment process.

Coleman: They came later and outside of that process?

Massie: Absolutely.

Coleman: So your reaction to having it lumped together this way?

Massie: Well, we actually tried to clarify that at the minister's office but they weren't hearing it. They made up their mind and that's all there was to it so you could sit there and argue with them or you could sit there and try to discuss what the current situation is and how are we going to work with these concerns.

Coleman: You mentioned those amendments. You having a chance to look at them in June. Has there been ongoing attempts to discuss them ahead of travelling to Ottawa to hear them being read?

Massie: Well, we tried to get a meeting in June but it wouldn't happen. That's when I phoned Ryan Leef and I got a meeting with him with my technician and we met with Ryan Leef and senator Lang and they told us at the time don't worry about it, we'll fix everything in regulations.

Coleman: So that's what you were waiting for?

Massie: Well, we weren't waiting for anything. We were very, very concerned. We said we have to go to Ottawa to get a meeting but everybody was recessed for the summer so we had to wait for everybody to get back to parliament.

Coleman: So you headed to Ottawa. You've attempted to have those meetings. You say you're not satisfied with what you've come away with. What's the strategy next?

Massie: Well we had asked them - we had explained to them what our concerns were with those amendments and why don't they just drop them. We don't have a problem with S6, the rest of it because the amendments through the five year review are an improvement to S6. It's the 4 amendments that came out of nowhere that we want removed.

Coleman: And how successful do you think you're going to be?

Massie: Well, they're pretty stubborn and already they're calling on a committee and we brought that message down from the Yukon as well that we wanted a committee to come to the Yukon so everybody that's concerned up here with it can have an opportunity to address it.

Coleman: Did you get any indication whether some would be taking you up on that invitation?

Massie: There's lots of people that want to come to the Yukon. They all want to come to the Yukon but it's a legislative procedure and they have to continue the debate until they all agree that a committee can come to the Yukon so that's even outstanding.

Coleman: I sense the frustration in your voice so what will you be doing next?

Massie: We will write some letters back to Ottawa, try to explain to them. Ryan wants to continue having meetings and I'm not sure where that's at so I'll have to sit down with our leadership and we'll question our process and our progress from here on.

Coleman: We appreciate your time.