

Chamber of Mines News Briefs – March 30 - 31, 2015

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NUNAVUT NEWS

Hard to overlook fact Ottawa failed Nunavut

Nunavut News/North – March 30, 2015

There was some celebration last week when representatives of the Harper government and dignitaries in Nunavut jointly announced an agreement on funding level increases to Nunavut's institutions of public governance.

The result of the agreement means that millions more dollars will flow from Ottawa to boards in Nunavut who are tasked with regulatory affairs, decision making and giving consideration for a wide range of economic activity to happen in the territory.

The joint announcement breaks down the funding increases only in percentages and states that the Nunavut Planning Commission will receive 25 per cent more, both the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Water Board will get 55 per cent more, the Nunavut Surface Rights Tribunal will see a 20 per cent increase and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board will get 13 per cent more.

There is no question that these are significant increases. But let's keep it in perspective.

First, the funding increases come about as a result of a requirement to negotiate a renewed implementation contract, within the terms of the Nunavut Lands Claims Agreement, every 10 years and covers the period from 2013 until 2023. So it's two years late.

Second, the renewal of the implementation contract of the Nunavut Lands Claims Agreement does not result in the dismissal of a statement of claim by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) against Ottawa, which contends that the federal government has not lived up to its obligations as set out in the land claims agreement.

At least 10 years after the lawsuit was launched, lawyers for NTI and Ottawa reached a tentative agreement on the courtroom stairs March 9, just before the \$1-billion dispute was to go before a judge. NTI's statement of claim sets out line by line how the federal government failed to meet its obligations under the Nunavut Lands Claims Agreement. A news release announcing the increased funding makes no mention of the lawsuit but instead suggests that the "Government of Canada increases opportunity for business in the North."

What is going on with the tentative agreement of NTI's lawsuit against Ottawa?

It suggests that, since 2003, Ottawa has failed to provide proper and adequate funding to the Nunavut Planning Commission, the Nunavut Impact Review Board, the Nunavut Water Board, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and the Surface Rights Tribunal.

That is just one of 16 alleged breaches of the land claims agreement by Ottawa.

Regardless of the new funding levels announced for the next 10 years, the Inuit of Nunavut deserve to receive the full benefits set out in the original agreement, essentially a modern day treaty.

Ottawa cannot be allowed to weasel its way out of its commitments, not in the past, the present or the future.

Nunavut land claim org approves lawsuit settlement deal

NTI board also passes budget, supports Roman orthography for written Inuktitut

Nunatsiaq News - March 30, 2015

LISA GREGOIRE

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.'s board of directors voted March 24 to accept a tentative settlement in a lawsuit they launched against the federal government.

NTI President Cathy Towtongie, who just returned March 27 from three days of board meetings in Baker Lake this week, said she was excited and relieved that the agreement, which took about a year to negotiate, may soon become official.

"It's the Inuit home in Nunavut. This was an agreement that Canada entered into with Inuit. They had obligations," she said.

"You can't just sign it and that's it. The actual implementation, the action of getting those articles into life, that was worth the court case."

Details of the lawsuit settlement won't be made public until the other two parties to the deal — Ottawa and the Government of Nunavut — formally accept its terms and conditions.

Towtongie is hoping that happens within the next few weeks.

It's been a long time coming. The land claim organization launched the lawsuit in December 2006 in an effort to force the federal government into complying with obligations set out in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

On March 20, Ottawa announced big budget hikes for a number of boards and commissions which are products of the land claim, such as the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Nunavut Wildlife Board.

Part of NTI's lawsuit claimed that those boards were badly underfunded.

Towtongie said March 27 that although NTI was criticized by many for taking Ottawa to court and spending more than seven years embroiled in a costly legal battle, she feels it was important for future generations of beneficiaries.

“We the Inuit have surrendered for all time, including rights of our unborn children, to make an agreement with Canada. And if you are in my shoes, you would be worried about your future generations,” she said. “We need certainty in Nunavut.”

But the land claim lawsuit wasn’t the only important matter on the agenda last week in Baker Lake.

NTI also passed its 2015-16 budget. The board is requesting \$44,885,532 from Nunavut Trust this fiscal year, roughly three per cent more than they requested last year, distributed more or less evenly between NTI and the regional Inuit associations.

Big ticket items break down like this:

- NTI: \$20,089,142
- Kitikmeot Inuit Association: \$4,847,136
- Kivalliq Inuit Association: \$4,747,106
- Qikiqtani Inuit Association: \$6,384,887

This is the first year in a while that NTI is requesting an increase for its own operations. It has been holding steady with a budget of around \$19 million a year for about five years.

This year’s request from Nunavut Trust also includes nearly \$1.5 million for the Inuit Heritage Trust and \$1.7 million for the elders benefit plan.

Nunavut Trust is the body that invests, manages and disburses land claim compensation money that Nunavut received from Ottawa. In 2013, according to its annual report, the Trust contained \$1.366 billion in invested assets and accrued income.

The hunter support program is still on hold for now.

The program, which contains about \$13 million, was temporarily cancelled last year while board members and staff review it to ensure it is “meeting the needs of hunters,” and also that it is sustainable and doesn’t run out of money any time soon, Towtongie said.

Beneficiaries were highly critical of the hunter benefit program, she said, claiming the money was going to benefit members of local hunters and trappers organizations, their families and others in the community who were not full time hunters.

She said people complained that all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles purchased with hunter support money were simply being used around town for recreation and transportation and that hunters in need were going without.

“We’re looking at the trust deed to see if we can make it better reflect the realities of Nunavut,” she said.

“A lot of Inuit were not happy with it. People who were not professional hunters were getting the items and just driving them in the communities. People saw that and saw that they were not doing a community-wide hunt or supporting the disabled or elderly. That’s not what it’s meant for,” she said.

“It didn’t just start last year. It started years ago and there were complaints right across Nunavut.”

The board is hoping to have the program restructured and ready to begin hunter payments again by 2016, she said.

Another benefit plan Nunavut beneficiaries may be anxious to hear about is the resource revenue trust fund NTI is currently building from money it receives from mining companies exploring on and developing Inuit owned lands.

That fund contains between \$4 million and \$5 million right now, she said.

Determined to make it sustainable as well, NTI plans to wait until it reaches at least \$50 million before consulting financial experts and beginning disbursements to beneficiaries, she said.

Board members also voted to change the executive compensation policy to make the vice-president's job a full-time a paid position.

The land claim body used to have two vice-presidents but now it has only one — currently long-standing board member James Eetoolook.

While Eetoolook used to receive honoraria when he attended meetings, he had no salary. He will now be paid full-time. When asked what the salary range is for that position, she could not recall exact figures but thought it was between \$100,000 and \$189,000.

One last item of note from the Baker Lake meetings, Towtongie said the board passed a resolution supporting a standardized writing system for Inuktitut.

She said NTI is following suit after Nunavut's education minister, Paul Quassa, announced in the legislature March 12 that the GN would be studying such a standardized system to replace Inuktitut syllabics.

She said if Inuit want to preserve their language into the future, it's crucial they adopt a system of Roman orthography. She said she didn't expect it to impact local dialects, which would continue to be spoken orally.

Kitikmeot Inuit go back to the polls March 30 in western Nunavut

The Kitikmeot Inuit Association still seeks a new president

Nunatsiaq News - March 30, 2015

It's election day once again in western Nunavut, as eligible Kitikmeot Inuit beneficiaries vote in a March 30 byelection to choose a new president for the Kitikmeot Inuit Association.

The candidates for the position are:

- Joseph Aglukkaq of Gjoa Haven;
- Stanley Anablak of Cambridge Bay;
- Jeannie Ehaloak of Cambridge Bay;
- Attima Hadlari of Cambridge Bay;
- Donald Havioyak of Kugluktuk;
- Paul Ikuataq of Gjoa Haven;
- David A. Porter of Gjoa Haven; and,
- Walter A. Porter of Gjoa Haven.

The KIA called the March 30 byelection after a bizarre turn of events that saw Peter Akkikungnaq of Gjoa Haven, winner of the Dec. 18, 2014 president's election, drop out about four weeks later, before he was even sworn in.

Akkikungnaq had defeated Stanley Anablak, Jeannie Ehaloak and Joe Ohokannoak.

But Akkikungnaq, 69, bailed out of the job Jan. 15, telling CBC News that he was "a little too old" and "the system is larger than what I thought it would be."

So the KIA's executive committee members, who said the organization's three vice presidents were too overloaded with work to act as president, named ex-president Charlie Evalik to serve as interim president until today's byelection produces another president.

Not sure which of the nine candidates to vote for?

Many of the candidates have gone on a new Facebook page called Kitikmeot Politics to talk about their platforms.

Some posters have complained that the slate of nine is too large for any single candidate to get a decisive majority.

Many have urged all eligible voters to turn out for the byelection.

That's because turnout this past December ranged from 34 per cent in Cambridge Bay to only 24 per cent in Taloyoak. Only 1,192 eligible voters cast ballots out of a possible 3,638.

Canadian North, First Air comply with new cockpit security order

"A requirement to have two members in the cabin" follows Germanwings air disaster

Nunatsiaq News - March 30, 2015

First Air and Canadian North each say they have complied immediately with a Transport Canada directive that requires them to keep at least two crew members inside their aircraft cockpits at all times.

The move follows a Transport Canada order made March 26 in response to the March 24 crash of a jet in France, when the co-pilot locked himself in the cockpit and then crashed the aircraft into a mountain, killing all 150 people on board.

Now, on all flights in Canada, where the captain or first officer is required to leave the flight deck, a flight attendant will occupy the flight deck and will remain there until the captain or first officer returns.

When making the announcement in the House of Commons March 26, federal transport minister Lisa Raitt said the new directive, which applies to all airlines in Canada, was seeking to fill a gap in the rules.

"Now, currently, there is not the requirement to have two members in the cabin. After this order, there will be a requirement to have two members in the cabin," she said. First Air's president and CEO Brock Friesen told Nunatsiaq News that First Air had immediately complied with the new directive, as did Canadian North.

"The safety of our passengers and crew is, and will always be, our number one priority," said Steve Hankirk, president of Canadian North in a March 27 news release.

"We have immediately taken the extra steps that have been requested by Minister Raitt in response to the tragic events of March 24, 2015 concerning Germanwings/Lufthansa flight 4U9525, so that we can give those that travel with us additional peace of mind."

Western Nunavut Inuit elect new land claims org president

Stanley Anablak to serve three-year term; only 21 per cent of voters turn out

March 31, 2015 - 7:13 am

The Kitikmeot Inuit Association, which represents beneficiaries of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in western Nunavut, will get a new elected president.

Stanley Anablak of Cambridge Bay was elected president of KIA in a byelection March 30, the KIA's chief returning officer, Martina Maniyogina, said in a March 30 news release.

Anablak will serve as president until December 2018.

In his campaign materials, Anablak promised to promote programs for beneficiaries, especially for youth and elders, to lobby the government, exploration companies and mining companies to train Inuit for jobs, and to follow up on all KIA resolutions to make sure these are implemented.

Anablak, a former mayor of Kugluktuk, has worked for oil and mining companies as well as for several regional and territorial organizations.

Joseph Aglukkaq, Stanley Anablak, Jeannie Ehaloak, Joe Allen Evyagotailak, Attima Hadlari, Donald Havioyak, Paul Ikuallaq, David A. Porter and Walter M. Porter competed for the position in the

byelection which called after Peter Akkikungnaq of Gjoa Haven, elected this past December, dropped out before he was even sworn in.

The overall voter turnout March 30 was dismal — about 21 per cent — and lower than in the Dec. 18, 2014 election where up to 34 per cent of the 3,638 eligible voters in some Kitikmeot communities cast ballots.

Inuit who are Canadian citizens, 16 years of age and older, and enrolled or eligible to enroll under the NLCA were eligible to vote.

But as voting results indicate, few bothered to go to the polls:

- Joseph Aglukkaq, 59 votes
- Stanley Anablak, 165 votes
- Jeannie Ehaloak, 90 votes
- Joe Allen Evyagotailak, 138 votes
- Attima Hadlari, 124 votes
- Donald Haviyok, 80 votes
- David Porter, 28 votes
- Walter Porter, 23 votes

NWT NEWS

Being a good neighbour

Tlicho hunt in Lutsel K'e not in violation of any hunting legislation

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

Meagan Leonard

A caribou hunt several days ago on the east arm of Great Slave Lake was not in violation of any legislated restrictions, a spokesperson for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources confirmed last week.

Controversy began to swirl March 21 after a video of Tlicho hunters arriving in Lutsel K'e for the community hunt was posted on Facebook - provoking Yellowknife Catholic Schools aboriginal programming co-ordinator David Radcliffe to refer to the participants as "animals" and accuse them of contributing to the caribou's extinction.

However, Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) spokesperson Judy McClinton told News/North the Tlicho were perfectly within their rights to conduct a hunt on the Beverly and Ahiak herds in that region.

"There's no harvest restrictions on that herd, even residents can get a tag to hunt caribou in that management unit," McClinton said.

"I think people misunderstood where they were actually hunting."

She added ENR encourages community hunts and provides resources to help make them happen.

"The support we provide helps to cover the cost of gas and groceries for them and the hunters go out and hunt for the whole community and bring it back, bring back the meat and share it."

Environment Minister Michael Miltenberger announced a ban on hunting from the Bathurst herd early this year; save for 15 bulls for ceremonial purposes, which require a permit first. The Bathurst herd has reportedly declined to 15,000 from 460,000 in 1986.

Iris Catholique posted the video of the Tlicho arriving by snowmobile. She said the band allows their neighbours to come hunt on Akaitcho territory and is part of a way of life that has been the norm for hundreds of years.

She said Lutsel K'e Dene Band provided guides to take the hunters to the caribou and ensure proper procedures were followed.

"The caribou herd in our region is healthy and we're not low in numbers and it's a healthy herd so we've always worked in partnership with other First Nations when it comes to harvesting," she said.

"We have no issue of allowing them to come over here as long as they respect the harvest and the way we practice."

She emphasized more education is needed so people in the North are aware of the integral role caribou hunts play in their culture and understand strict guidelines are followed during hunts.

"We would expect the same co-operation and hospitality from other First Nations if we needed to go to their region to harvest caribou to feed our families," she said. "It's our way of life, we live off the caribou."

Under the Lutsel K'e band's jurisdiction, local monitors are assigned to each hunting party, all of the meat must be salvaged instead of sold and each hunter is only allowed three-to-five caribou maximum over no more than two days of hunting.

The Ahiak and Beverly caribou herds are estimated to have populations of 71,000 and 124,000 animals respectively.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND ENERGY NEWS

All work and no play

High cost-of-living still preventing many mining workers from moving to the territory: study

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

Meagan Leonard

More than half of those working in the Northwest Territories mining industry do not live here, and the biggest reason for it appears to be the high cost-of-living.

The NWT Bureau of Statistics released a survey last week which examined the demographic profile of employees, their experiences working at the mines, health and wellness, community of residence and factors considered when thinking about relocation.

Non-resident mine employees said the main thing keeping them from moving to the NWT was they liked their home community and wanted to remain close to family and friends.

For those who had never lived in the territory, 80 per cent of respondents said the high cost of living made them reluctant to move, while one in three said they were likely to look for another job in the next year.

Industry, Tourism and Investment Minister David Ramsay remained optimistic about the survey findings but acknowledged the territorial government needs to find ways to address the issue.

"We have probably about \$350 million on an annual basis that leaves the territory and we really need to continue to look at ways to get people to live here," he told News/North.

Ramsay offered a few ideas for lowering energy costs, including an infrastructure plan abandoned by the GNWT last fall, as possibilities for reducing high energy costs in the territory.

He told News/North he hopes to see the territorial government connect its hydro grid to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Finance Minister Michael Miltenberger announced to the legislative assembly in October 2014 that a project to link the Taltson dam in the South Slave to the southern grid was no longer feasible, because a GNWT-commissioned study estimated it would come with a \$1.2 billion dollar pricetag, a number almost double what the government had previously anticipated.

To complete infrastructure projects to reduce energy costs, Ramsay says he is in support of Finance Minister Michael Miltenberger's initiative to increase the territory's borrowing limit. Miltenberger is still in negotiations with the federal government to raise the limit from its current amount to \$1.8 billion.

Ramsay says the government is also taking smaller steps, such as increasing minimum wage, to address the issue.

As well, he said his department is also working closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to promote awareness and training about mining jobs both in the territory and out.

"We just have to keep putting our best foot forward when it comes to trade fairs, attracting workers and telling them what a great place the NWT is to live," he explained. "The finance minister made a commitment to try and attract 2,000 people in the next five years. That's a goal I think is attainable but it's going to take a lot of hard work to get us where we need to go."

Tom Hoefer, executive director of the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, said he was not surprised by the findings and saw little change from the previous study in 2009.

"The consistent result is that we still see a lot of people living down south and they are still providing the same message on why they do that," he said. "It's the cost-of-living that's the issue and it's not surprising because a lot of us who live here are saying the same thing."

Hoefer says one of the biggest barriers when it comes to finding homegrown workers is lack of education - young people aren't aware of the job opportunities available and don't have the skills necessary to fill positions. He said one possible way to address this is by incorporating mining education into the school curriculum so students can be guided toward the post-secondary education they need to be successful.

"We need to plant seeds in their minds that mining is a good career ... that it isn't taking a shovel and pick and digging up rocks," he said. "Our mines are a community ... you've got a whole range of jobs, you've got clerical staff, mechanics, trades people, cooks, engineers (and) geologists."

With the mining industry continuing to grow, he said this will be more important than ever - especially in light of the territorial population decreasing, he said.

"The population decreased by 338 persons last year so how do you plug that leak?" he mused, stating that if Northerners aren't given the necessary skills they will never be able to replace southern workers and the cycle of unemployment and high cost-of-living will continue.

"We have a lot of bills up here and especially if you've got high unemployment, you've got a lot of people adding to the bill and not generating the revenues," Hoefer said.

"Give them the skills they need to replace southern workers (and) stem the outflow of existing workers."

Eco-tourism, mineral development possible in Thaidene Nene

Government and First Nations negotiations on same page over 'made-in-the-North' approach to proposed park

NWT News/North –March 27, 2015

Kassina Ryder

Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and the territorial government are working towards a "made-in-the-North" agreement on Thaidene Nene which could leave the possibility for mineral development within the proposed reserve.

Talks that have been taking place between the parties could be concluded this summer, say officials from both groups.

"We have compressed probably two to three years of the old traditional style negotiating into literally a very few months," said Environment Minister Michael Miltenberger. "And we're going to continue that extremely compressed process so we can try to resolve this before the end of summer."

He added negotiations around establishing the 33,500 square kilometre park reserve that encompasses the east arm of Great Slave Lake will also include other groups, such as the NWT Metis Nation, the Yellowknives Dene and the Deninu Kue First Nation.

"We also want to consult in the next few weeks and months or so with the other aboriginal governments of the Northwest Territories," he said.

The negotiators are going for a made-in-the-North approach to the park, which means Northern values will be incorporated into its management strategy, said Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) chief negotiator Steve Nitah.

"I think it's important that Northerners and aboriginal people know that their usage of Thaidene Nene is not going to be impeded in any way," he said.

While parks in other jurisdictions have rules restricting firearms and vehicle usage, Nitah said rules in Thaidene Nene would reflect Northerners' unique needs.

"We value the fact that in the Northwest Territories, people that go into Thaidene Nene should be able to go in there and protect themselves by bringing rifles and other things that they could use on the land if they need to protect themselves from bears and stuff like that," he said. "The ability to bring their dogs into their camping environment, it's very important for us."

Nitah also said LKDFN is not opposed to development. Determining where and how that development could take place is part of the ongoing negotiations with the territory, he said.

Miltenberger said he agreed.

"We want to make sure areas that we know are rich in minerals, we want to make sure we don't lock them away," he said.

The territorial government has only entered negotiations around the proposed park recently. LKDFN has been negotiating with the federal government since the '70s, but now that devolution has come into effect, the territorial government has taken over these discussions. Now, instead of being designated a national park reserve under federal legislation, Thaidene Nene could receive protection as a wilderness area through the NWT Territorial Parks Act.

Nitah said though the players have changed, the goal remains the same - to create a protected area that balances economic development with conservation.

"I think the Government of the Northwest Territories, Lutsel K'e and the federal government want to maximize the tourism opportunities in that area," he said. "So we're all on the same page in that area."

Nitah said part of that balance means establishing an economy based on eco-tourism, which would provide the LKDFN with a revenue source other than non-renewable resource extraction. Creating a tourism-based economy would provide jobs to LKDFN members as well as provide economic spinoffs to surrounding areas, such as Yellowknife.

"Anytime that somebody goes into Thaidene Nene, the majority will probably go through Yellowknife," Nitah said. "They will be staying in the hotels in Yellowknife, shopping in local shops."

Territorial negotiators are scheduled to meet with the LKDFN again in April, Miltenberger said. The federal government is also being invited to weigh in on the discussions, he added.

"While they've stepped back, they're not left out of the process completely," he said.

Nitah said he believes aboriginal governments will be able to reach an agreement that works for everyone.

"There are a lot of support for protecting Thaidene Nene and managing Thaidene Nene that's going to maximize the benefits for all Northerners," he said.

Feds appeal land and water board ruling

Tlicho lawyer calls federal appeal 'garden variety,' doesn't expect judge's decision to be overturned

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

John McFadden

A lawyer for the Tlicho Government does not think the NWT court of appeal will overturn a recent court decision that delays the scrapping of the territory's regional land and water boards in favour of one super board.

Nuri Frame said that the appeal, filed by the Harper government on March 23, will likely be heard in October but he doesn't expect it to go anywhere.

"It's a garden variety appeal. They've gone ahead and said the judge was incorrect in her ruling and the injunction shouldn't have been granted," Frame said. "We obviously disagree on every single point they make. (NWT Supreme Court Justice Karan) Shaner wrote a very strong decision which was clear, concise, well grounded in the law and I don't think there is anything there that is challenge-able at all."

On Feb. 27, following a Supreme Court hearing in December, Shaner granted the injunction called for by the Tlicho government.

Tlicho lawyers had argued for the preservation of the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board. The federal government countered that the board should be eliminated and replaced by a pan-territorial super board. The super board was the most controversial provision within the devolution agreement between the territorial government and federal government which went into effect on April 1 of last year.

Changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA) under the devolution bill would also see the elimination of the Sahtu and Gwich'in regional land and water boards.

The decision by Shaner remains in effect unless and until such time that an appeal overturns her decision and the injunction remains in place, Frame said.

Whether Shaner's decision delaying the implementation of a super board is overturned or not, the constitutional issues remain the same, Frame said.

"Canada unilaterally, over the strong objections of the Tlicho government and other aboriginal governments in the NWT, chose to amend the MVRMA, chose to eliminate the really successful system of regional land and water boards and chose to do so despite being told by the Tlicho and others that this was unconstitutional, that consultation had been inadequate and the changes couldn't be done without the agreement and support of the aboriginal people," Frame said.

Even if the appeal is successful and the judge's decision is overturned, a trial will still take place to decide whether the amendments to the MVRMA are constitutional, Frame said.

He expects the trial wouldn't begin until sometime in 2016.

In its legal brief, filed on behalf of Canada's attorney general and the minister of aboriginal affairs and northern development, the feds stated that the judge erred in finding that the Tlicho Government would suffer irreparable harm if the MVRMA amendment was proclaimed. That was one of six grounds for challenge the federal government made to Shaner's ruling. An e-mail from Emily Hillstrom, press secretary for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bernard Valcourt, stated the government strongly believes the economic future of Canada's North, and in this case the Mackenzie Valley, requires a strong and efficient regulatory framework. The changes enacted in 2014 provide that framework and will help to safely spur economic growth in the NWT, it stated.

"We have appealed the court decision. We have been clear that we will vigorously defend the new regulatory framework and in the meantime are committed to ensuring that the NWT regulatory regime in place functions smoothly, she stated.

Decentralization: 22 vacancies remain

Phase three of initiative gives small communities precedent for all new positions

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

Meagan Leonard

The majority of vacant government positions created after decentralization have been filled according to a GNWT news release issued last week.

Despite previous skepticism from some MLAs about the success of the GNWT's decision to move jobs into the smaller communities, officials state all but 22 of the spaces have already been filled.

"Figures released today show that the Government of the Northwest Territories has successfully filled 108 of 128 positions," the release reads.

Data stating 121 of 150 positions remained vacant was provided to MLAs in the legislative assembly March 9. Cabinet communications officer Roya Grinsted told NWT News/North this was a reflection of vacancies when decentralization was implemented and did not include current statistics.

"The tabled document provided a response to the written question from (Wendy Bisaro) ... 'of the 150 GNWT positions decentralized, advise how many of the positions were vacant at the time the positions were transferred,'" said Grinsted.

In further response to Bisaro's questions the territorial government revealed any new department position will now go through a legislated review to determine if it is ideal for decentralization, if not, substantial rationalization must be provided.

Cabinet spokesperson Shaun Dean said prior to decentralization, the territorial government could consider the best location for new positions, but they were not required.

"Departments looking to establish new positions have to submit their request to the financial management board," Dean explained.

"In those papers they now have specifically say whether or not the position is good for decentralizing, relocating in another community - before it wasn't a requirement."

Dean said factors considered in the process will include who position's frequent contacts are, where they are located and whether it the position provides a service designed to deliver programs to people in communities.

"I think before they would do some thinking about where the position would best be located but with decentralization, the formal commitment from government is we consider every position," he said.

When contacted for her response to the press release and answers provided to her questions, Bisaro said the numbers are encouraging but she is still wary of the methodology used to decide which positions go to the smaller communities.

"It's how you interpret that language. Presumably every position should be considered, but there's definitely some positions that shouldn't be in a community of 50 people," Bisaro said.

"We are not bending over backward to deal with vacant positions, it seems to me we're telling departments okay, here's your quota, go find jobs that can move."

Although the press release says 85 per cent of the positions have been filled, a detailed breakdown of information outlining the location and department of those jobs will not be available for another few months. Grinsted said it is expected to be tabled in the May/June sitting of the legislative assembly.

When asked why the government needed three months to provide a breakdown, Dean said the numbers were currently unavailable.

"(The finance department) might not have the updated table ready, I don't know what it takes to produce that information," he said, adding the numbers in the news release should be enough to persuade people decentralization is working.

Snap Lake water quality decision now in hands of Mackenzie Valley board

De Beers says fate of diamond mine hangs on what board members decide

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

Stewart Burnett

There are no guidelines governing an acceptable level of pollutants in Snap Lake, meaning a high-stakes decision is wholly at the discretion of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

De Beers Canada is threatening to shut down its Snap Lake Mine if the board does not nearly triple the allowable level of total dissolved solids (TDS), which, in the case of Snap Lake, mainly consists of salts.

Cracks in the walls of the underground mine means groundwater with an extremely high concentration of salt is seeping in and is being pumped to the surface of the lake.

This higher-than-expected discharge led De Beers to request an increase of TDS levels from 350 milligrams per litre to 1,000 milligrams per litre.

The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board is currently deliberating on the request.

"The board has full discretion to set effluent quality criteria in any licence it issues," said Zabey Nevitt, executive director of the board.

"The board considers any evidence brought through the public hearings process. That may include any relevant local, regional or national standards."

Tom Hofer, executive director of the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, told News/North he could not find any hard guidelines for TDS levels in mining operations around the country.

The Mining Association of Canada said TDS is not regulated federally.

In De Beers' original 2004 water licence approval, the board noted that British Columbia set a 150 milligrams per litre guideline for chloride in surface water and that the 350 milligrams per litre would achieve an equivalent quality result.

The 350 milligram figure was originally requested by De Beers under assumed water discharge levels that proved inaccurate.

Although the raised level is expected to change the taste of the water until four to seven years after the closure of the mine in 2028, De Beers maintains the fish will be safe to eat and the water safe to drink.

Todd Slack, negotiator with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, lobbied the board for a maximum TDS level of 684 milligrams per litre in Snap Lake.

Erica Bonhomme, environmental manager at Snap Lake Mine, told the board that 684 milligrams per litre would result in closure of the mine and cannot be met.

Closing the mine risks almost 800 jobs, 300 of which are for NWT residents.

Mackenzie Land and Water Board Members are expected to reach a decision by the end of the month.

Kennady shares volatile

Stock price fell as much as 8.41 per cent last week

NWT News/North – March 30, 2015

Karen K. Ho

Kimberlites may be shaped like carrots, but the price of Kennady Diamonds looks more like a roller coaster.

Shares of the diamond exploration company (TSX-V:KDI) were extremely volatile this past week, especially after Kennady announced it had found the igneous rock known for sometimes containing diamonds in drill holes at its Kennady North project.

On Wednesday, the stock fell from \$3.40 to close at \$3.12, a drop of 8.24 per cent and its sharpest decline for that week's trading. After dipping to a low of \$3.02 on Thursday morning, the price of shares rose sharply by 18 cents, to close at \$3.30, a jump of 5.77 per cent. However, the stock has still fallen 15.17 per cent from its 30-day high of \$3.89 and is down 28.26 per cent year to date.

However, on March 24, Kennady announced in a written statement the company had recovered approximately 1 tonne of kimberlite from Faraday. Processing of the resulting core samples yielded 4.76 carats greater than 0.85 mm, with a resultant "commercial" sample grade of 4.54 carats per tonne. Approximately 300 tonnes of the bulk sampling from the Kelvin kimberlite has already been recovered.

President and CEO Patrick Evans called it an exciting development, noting the company plans to keep testing the continuity and is drilling further to the northwest and southeast of the discovery holes.

Senior mining analyst Matthew O'Keefe also pointed to Kennady recently closing a round of financing, which tends to lead to some volatility, as well as the high concentration of its small number of shares among a limited number of investors.

"That can move stocks one way or another rather abruptly," said the vice-president of Dundee Capital Markets, who estimated Thursday's total volume of 37,440 shares at less than \$150,000. "It can come back just as easily as it's come off, it doesn't take a lot of shares to move it up."

O'Keefe also pointed to the share prices of other diamond explorers, such as Lucara, Mountain Province and Stornaway, facing similar downward pressures over the last month. The Dundee analyst called this the "hard work phase" for the company, "The upside is going to be harder at this point, to show something exciting at this stage," he said, noting it will take most of 2015 for Kennady to prepare a resource statement. "It tends to be an expensive and not always exciting time."

Even after this week's volatility, O'Keefe remained confident in the Kennady North project, which is comprised of thirteen leases and claims located in NWT immediately north and west of the four leases controlled by the Gahcho Kue joint venture between De Beers Canada and Mountain Province Diamonds. "We think it's a very good project, there's just a lot of work to do ahead of them, which is less exciting."

Peregrine Diamonds busy in March

Three big announcements about Nunavut projects this month

Nunavut News/North – March 30, 2015

Karen K. Ho

The month of March has been a busy one for Peregrine Diamonds Ltd. (TSX:PGD) and its projects in Nunavut, with announcements about high diamond counts, an update on diamond resource development and transfer of assets.

On March 10, the company announced the results from analyzing drill core samples from four kimberlite pipes from its Chidliak diamond project located 120 kilometres northeast of Iqaluit. Kimberlite, a carrot-shaped, igneous rock formation which sometimes contains diamonds, often requires extensive exploration and bulk-sample processing in order to determine whether an area has commercially viable stones. Peregrine said results from one of its kimberlite pipes "contains some of the highest total diamond counts defined to date at Chidliak."

Analysis of another pipe's samples revealed coarse diamond distribution extended to a vertical depth of 210 metres.

Peregrine's President and CEO, Tom Peregoodoff, said results from last year's diamond resource development program showed there was tremendous potential to add "significant carats" to Chidliak. "Our work in 2014 added over one million carats to our inferred resource at (kimberlite pipe) CH-6, an increase of 15 per cent," he said in a news release. "The new results from CH-7 define a previously unknown geological domain that has the potential to exceed the resource grade of 2.58 carats per tonne established at CH-6."

On March 24, Peregrine also announced it had transferred the Nanuq and Nanuq North properties in Nunavut to its wholly-owned subsidiary Peregrine Exploration Ltd. In a news release, Peregrine stated the projects had excellent exploration potential.

"With diamond prices projected to rise due to strong demand, it is a great time for Peregrine Exploration to advance its diamond properties and focus on finding the next diamond district," said Brooke Clements, president and CEO of the new subsidiary.

At press time, shares of Peregrine Diamonds closed at 21.5 cents, down one cent or 4.44 per cent.

Canada has a critical opportunity to protect healthy Arctic homeland

With Lancaster Sound, Canada has an opportunity to protect a homeland. It's an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to this region, and to the people and nature who have thrived there in harmony for thousands of years.

Hill Times – March 30, 2015

DAVID MILLER , JOHN AMAGOALIK

The Eastern Gateway to the Northwest Passage, Lancaster Sound (Tallurutiup Tariunga in Inuktitut) is more than just a region of awesome coastal beauty—it's also one of the Arctic's most biologically productive areas, and is recognized around the world for its rich marine environment and iconic species.

Remarkably, 70,000 narwhals—three-quarters of the world's population—make their summer home in Lancaster Sound. The sound is also home to more than 7,000 bowhead whales, famous for their size and ability to break through thick sea ice. Year-round, the largest Canadian sub-population of polar bears is found in this area, as well as millions of sea birds and significant populations of seals and walrus.

This abundance of marine life has enabled Inuit to flourish here for thousands of years. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) reminds us that Lancaster Sound is a homeland, where people and nature have sustainably coexisted for generations.

The federal government has been considering the protection of the sound since the late 1970s, and the good news is, it is nearing designation as a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA). NMCAs are areas established by Parliament to help support ecologically sustainable use and conservation-oriented management practices in marine environments. With the federal government's renewed commitment to protecting Canada's natural heritage through the 2014 National Conservation Plan and creating new marine protected areas, there is momentum to make this happen, now.

Inuit communities have long supported the designation of Lancaster Sound as an NMCA because it provides the legislative tools needed to shape the management of the Inuit traditional homeland: It establishes protection from oil and gas development, while allowing development desired by local communities such as fishing and shipping. Conserving the sound also means sustaining access to culturally important marine species necessary for livelihoods and subsistence for generations to come.

In 2010, the government of Canada announced its most recent boundary proposal for the NMCA, and Parks Canada, the government of Nunavut, and the QIA embarked on a joint feasibility study. The study considers the ecological, cultural, and economic factors relating to the sound and integrates both Inuit traditional knowledge (Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit) and scientific research.

One of the foreseeable challenges is that QIA would like to expand the proposed boundaries of the NMCA farther west into Barrow Strait and east into Baffin Bay, to include areas identified as highly important by Inuit communities. The release of the feasibility study is a critical next step in the NMCA process, and given the long history of Inuit and the federal government finding working solutions together, there is hope that the long-awaited designation of a robust conservation area will finally occur.

With marine protection in place, there will be more certainty for sustainable economic development to proceed in the region, and Canada will further exercise its sovereignty over the Northwest Passage and Canada's internal waters in the High Arctic. As the largest of many marine protected areas currently under consideration, designation will also significantly contribute to the government's target of protecting at least 10 per cent of Canada's oceans by 2020—an international commitment made through the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. There is a growing international movement to safeguard important marine environments—but still only about one per cent of Canada's oceans are protected.

With Lancaster Sound, Canada has an opportunity to protect a homeland. It's an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to this region, and to the people and nature who have thrived there in harmony for thousands of years.

David Miller is the president and CEO of WWF-Canada. John Amagoalik is the former chief commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission and recipient of the Order of Nunavut. Join WWF and the All-Party Ocean Caucus on Tuesday, March 31 for an 'Oceans on the Hill' event highlighting the cultural and ecological importance of Lancaster Sound.

WWF to host Ottawa summit on protecting Nunavut's Lancaster Sound

Federal approval still pending on conservation designation

Nunatsiaq News - March 30, 2015

World Wildlife Canada officials are hosting a talk with federal members of parliament in Ottawa this week focused on protecting Lancaster Sound as a National Marine Conservation Area.

The WWF's all-party ocean caucus will host an event called Oceans on the Hill March 31 to discuss the proposed conservation area, which has been winding its way through a federal regulatory process since 2010.

The all-party caucus first formed in 2012 to tackle environmental issues in Canada's oceans, led by Fin Donnelly NDP MP for New Westminster-Coquitlam, Bruce Stanton Tory MP for Simcoe North, and Green Party MP and leader Elizabeth May.

Lancaster Sound, which separates northern Baffin Island from Devon Island, is home to more than a million birds, Canada's largest polar bear subpopulation and an estimated three quarters of the world's narwhal population.

But its seabed is said to contain 13 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 4.5 billion barrels of oil, making it a target for development.

That's why, in December 2010, the federal government announced a proposed boundary for a national marine conservation area which would cover a span of more than 40,000 square kilometres of the area. Parks Canada called the sound a "globally significant ecological treasure."

There have since been calls from Inuit organizations to expand any conservation area's boundaries both west and east, at each opening of the Sound, while the proposal itself undergoes a feasibility study.

In 2010, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association got an injunction to prevent a German research vessel from conducting seismic testing in Lancaster Sound. The QIA claimed the sound from underwater air guns used in seismic mapping could threaten marine mammals and fish and that communities who rely on marine harvesting were not properly consulted.

The case differs from the current seismic testing dispute off the east coast of Baffin because Lancaster Sound waters lie within the Nunavut Land Claim Settlement Area and are therefore subject to different levels of protection.

The Baffin Bay and Davis Strait project, if it goes ahead, will be outside the land claim.

"Long supported by Inuit, a conservation area will ensure that the abundant marine mammals and seabirds in the region continue to thrive, while significantly increasing Canada's total area of marine protection," WWF said in a March 30 release.