

**MOTION 5-18(3):
APOLOGY AND COMPENSATION TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION
RELATING TO DAMAGES FROM THE GIANT MINE**

OCTOBER 20, 2017

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion "Apology and Compensation to the Yellowknives Dene First Nation Relating to Damages from the Giant Mine."

WHEREAS the Yellowknife Dene First Nation abused and occupied the lands and waters around Yellowknife Bay for thousands of years and continue to do so;

AND WHEREAS the workings of Giant Mine were located in their territory without compensation or permission from the Yellowknife Dene First Nation;

WHEREAS the operation of Giant Mine contaminated the lands and waters surrounding the water to the extent that some traditional activities including hunting, fishing, and gathering by the Yellowknife Dene First Nation had been harmed and potentially will never again be possible;

AND WHEREAS the massive stockpiles of arsenic created by the Giant Mine threatened to cause a major environmental catastrophe that could prevent Yellowknife Dene First Nations' usage of its traditional lands and water;

AND WHEREAS the treaty entitlement and lands right agreement has yet to be completed with Yellowknife Dene First Nation and that the impact and damages created by Giant Mine are an extraordinary and exceptional nature;

AND WHEREAS on July 1, 2017, the Prime Minister of Canada publicly stated that indigenous peoples of this country have faced oppression for centuries and as a society, we must acknowledge and apologize for past wrongs and chart a plan forward for the next 150 years;

AND WHEREAS the Giant Mine oversight board in its 2017 establishment report recommended that in the interest of reconciliation, the decisions and actions of past governments are acknowledged and that an apology is made for the impacts of these decisions and actions have had on the Yellowknife Dene First nation.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable for Frame Lake that the Legislative Assembly calls upon the government of Canada to make a formal public apology for the damage done by Giant Mine, and more specifically to the Yellowknife Dene First Nation

AND FURTHER that the Assembly call upon the government of Canada to enter into negotiations with the Yellowknife Dene First Nation to provide compensation for these damages and loss.

AND FURTHERMOR that the Premier of the Northwest Territories convey this motion without delay to the Prime Minister of Canada with a letter requesting a reply.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. There is a motion in order. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A short addition to this: to speak to the motion, we have known that the issue of the arsenic at Giant Mine and all of the other contamination damage around the area has caused problems for many years. For the Yellowknife First Nation, I know that the elders had spoken previously about when they were fishing right in the bay. I remember when the N'Dilo was a smaller community at the time. Right in the front, the elders would fish right in the bay back there until they started to see lesions and other types of problems with the fish and so on.

Now that they're saying there is some contamination in all the birds and all the fish in the area, and I think we all know that the vaults of arsenic that are underground, frozen underground around the Giant Mine property has potential for great catastrophe, if there should be anything going wrong in there. So we felt that there was a time for the federal government to discuss their responsibilities with what occurred at Giant Mine. When the mine was first created, it was done without a thorough consultation with the people from Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I've been at a lot of meetings about Giant Mine over the last 30 years, and certainly whenever I've been at meetings where there have been elders for the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, they've raised this issue of an apology and compensation. They've been waiting a long time for that to happen, and unfortunately some of them are no longer with us.

How do you explain to somebody who used to be able to go to the lake and take water out of it that they actually now have to pay to get safe water delivered to their house? So why is this motion before us today? I think the Giant Mine Oversight Board erased this issue in their first report, and I asked the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources in this House whether our government had a position on this, and he said, "Well, not really. We haven't thought about it very much."

This motion, I think, is an expression of our collective will, moving forward, and to get this on the federal radar. An apology and compensation is important. It's very significant, an unfinished piece of business, and this needs to be done in the spirit of reconciliation. There's nothing in legislation that would prevent another Giant Mine from happening. There are a lot of lessons that we still need to learn, and we need to implement those lessons through our post-devolution legislation.

This issue will continue to give the mining industry a black eye, but there are progressive people in the mining industry. They recognize that, and they want this issue dealt with, as well. That's what this motion is about, is helping put this issue on to the federal radar and getting this issue dealt with properly and the way that it should be. I look forward to the support of all Members of this House. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of this motion and I'd like to commend the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh for bringing this forward. A reconciliation is more than words. It requires real action from governments; not just ours, but governments across Canada and, of course, the federal government. We've seen a lot of movement towards repairing the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the country.

It's a long road ahead. It may take hundreds of years to get us to a place where we have healed the wounds of colonization, and restored the balance in this country. For this motion in particular, it speaks to something that's very near and dear to the hearts of Yellowknives Dene First People, their traditional territory that has been severely impacted by the Giant Mine facility.

Yes, it is a historical incident, but it has forever changed the history of the Northwest Territories. If we're going to speak to reconciliation, if we're going to talk about building strong partnerships with Indigenous nations of the Northwest Territories, we have to do more than just make Members' statements on it. We have to put it into practice with formal motions like these that call on specific actions, and I encourage all Members, all honourable Members of this House, to stand up in support when the vote is called. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the motion. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Schauerte): Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Member for Nahendeh. Member for Frame Lake. Member for Yellowknife Centre. Member for Nunakput. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Member for Range Lake. Member for Yellowknife South. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Member for Hay River South. Member for Thebacha. Member for Hay River North. Member for Mackenzie Delta. Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. The results of the vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. Motion carried.

---Carried