

YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

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WHITEHORSE, YUKON, Y1A 2C5



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Dear editor,

The Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation recently won a court decision to prevent YTG from granting a 65 hectare agricultural lease to farmer Larry Paulson. According to the Yukon News, they believed the lease could have an adverse effect on elder Johnny Sam's trap line as well as on the surrounding environment, wildlife values and the First Nation as a whole because they would no longer be able to hunt on that parcel of land, and because the lease would have overlapped one half of one percent of the trap line. Apparently, they therefore assumed that there would be fewer animals to harvest. This assumption, however, is not correct.

Ask any farmer who has had many years of observation and experience on the land and he will tell you the population of wild birds and animals increases on and near agricultural land. From field mice and game birds, to coyotes, bears and elk, wildlife is attracted to agricultural land and the surrounding area because that is where the best food is to be found. This means the animals available for the First Nation to hunt and trap would likely have increased despite not being able to hunt directly on that 65 ha parcel. Moreover, the locally produced food supply for Yukoners would have also increased, however, that agricultural production is now lost to us because the court ruled in favour of the First Nation.

I am truly puzzled why Little Salmon Carmacks objected to Larry Paulson's agricultural lease, which, in my view, would have been environmentally harmonious, complementary to the welfare of wildlife including supporting an increased wildlife population, respectful of First Nations needs and rights, a boost to our local food security and supply, an economically sustainable and permanently beneficial activity for our Territory, and a social and economic boost to the rural community, - in short, good for everyone.

Now, according to the June 1 edition of the Yukon News, this court decision has given First Nations the right to block any project they don't like. Aside from the fact that we need more farms, not fewer, if we are to move towards self sufficiency in food instead of trucking in everything from the South, this decision, if allowed to stand, will seriously affect the rights of every Yukoner to make a living and to use crown land, all of which the First nations love to refer to as their traditional territory.

If there had been an intent to give First Nations virtual veto power over all economic activity in Yukon, the settlement agreements would have said so directly. They don't, and I believe the court decision which has now accorded them that additional right is seriously flawed. Yukoners of all interests and political stripes should work together to fight this.

As for the issue of consultation, I have no problem as I believe community input from First Nations and non First Nations alike is a good thing. In the Little Salmon Carmacks case, the Band claimed they were not consulted. If this is true, perhaps there is some merit to their complaint, however, I'm tired of having agriculture used as a kicking board for every thing that the First Nations & environmentalists don't like.

The fact remains that agriculture feeds us and benefits everyone, and, it enhances the food supply for all wild life near any farm, therefore, it also directly benefits hunting and trapping. There is, however, a regulation that prohibits trapping near a farm. This I can see as a sore point with trappers, and we should work together to have this regulation changed. Most farmers that I talk to would love to have trappers get to work near their farms to help manage the wildlife population.

Farmers are good stewards of the land and are people of good will who are pleased to work cooperatively with anyone. We, in turn, would appreciate it if others would reciprocate and accord us and our industry high value in the overall fabric of our society and economy, and in the use and management of the land in this, our wonderful Territory.

Al Falle
President, Yukon Agricultural Association

