

## **Bill 191, The Far North Act**

Should Bill 191, in its current form, receive royal assent, the potential for responsible economic and social development in the Far North will be severely impeded. While well-intended, the protection component of the bill is arbitrary, poorly developed and lacks the foundational science and socio-economic assessments necessary to evaluate its impacts, let alone support it. Bill 191 should not be passed without further consultation and revision.

### **Economic Impact**

This legislation will not only place Northern Ontario in a state of economic uncertainty, but will have broader implications for Ontario's natural resources industries and the entire provincial economy. By eliminating development in 225,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the Far North, Bill 191 will lessen resource extraction in Ontario, which will have serious negative impacts on Ontario's economy. This, combined with potential large losses due to the impending caribou strategy, means huge losses of land from production which will have immediate, longstanding impacts on industry jobs and the ability for one-industry communities to sustain themselves into the future. We see this as dangerous, short-sighted and having the potential to severely inhibit economic development in Northern Ontario.

With the impending developments in the Ring of Fire, an area estimated by some to generate mining economic wealth equivalent to that of Sudbury, it is more prudent than ever that the provincial government set laws and policies that encourage responsible development rather than diffuse it.

### **Socio-Economic & First Nations Impact**

In theory, the act demonstrates a willingness to work with First Nations communities. We support land use planning but maintain that this can be done with the collaboration of First Nations on the entire land base. That way protected areas will be identified through a valid socially-, scientifically- and economically-supported processes.

This legislation will have a devastating impact on many remote First Nations communities that rely heavily on resource extraction as a source of employment and economic survival. The jobs that are created in natural resources sectors, like mining and forestry, represent the most tangible job prospects for First Nations people in the Far North. In fact, the mining industry employs more people of Aboriginal descent than any other industry. In limiting development, the province will deny First Nations the ability to participate in new economic development opportunities and thereby perpetuate the cycle of poverty that First Nations have lived in for centuries. Furthermore, many First Nations are vehemently opposed to the bill, stating publicly that the bill violates treaties and disrespects their jurisdictional rights. Many First Nations leaders have gone on record stating that they have not been sufficiently consulted and their concerns have not been heard.

An appropriate balance must be struck between environmental and economic interests. Social stability in this region will not be attained while environmental interests are protected at the expense of the well-being of Northern Ontarians.

### **Recommendation**

We request that the Province of Ontario government delay Bill 191 until the completion of the scientific studies, socio-economic impacts analyses and sufficient consultation with affected First Nations and Northern communities is completed, and accordance is achieved among the people most significantly affected by the bill.