

Devolution comes to the Northwest Territories

By: Marilyn Scales, *Canadian Mining Journal*
2013-03-11

dev•o•lu•tion (noun) ~ *The transfer of power or authority from a central government to a local government.*

I learned a new word today, one I had not come across before: devolution. I saw it in a headline, *Devolution agreement for NWT follows years of negotiations*, in the local newspaper. Intrigued, I read on.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper was to be in Yellowknife, NT, today (March 11) to make the historic announcement of a final devolution agreement that gives the territory control over the Crown lands and resources within its boundaries. The importance of the agreement is that the territory also gets to collect taxes and royalties from the resource sector.

Thus far the federal government has owned almost all the public lands and waterways in the Northwest Territories. It made the decisions on oil and gas as well as mining development. For its trouble, the feds kept almost all the taxes and fees paid for development. After devolution, the territory will have control of public lands and resources, making decisions, and receiving up to 50% of the revenues (up to an annual limit of about \$60 million).

The territorial government has promised up to half of its share of revenue to Aboriginal governments that sign the final devolution agreement. The deal has been inked by the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Sahtu Secretariat, the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Tlicho government. The Akaitcho Territory government and the Dehcho First Nations have not signed.

The other half of the territory's resource revenue will be used to pay down territorial debt and invested in infrastructure. None of the moneys are earmarked for day-to-day government operating expenses.

Offshore oil and gas decisions will remain in the hands of the federal government for now. The Canadian and territorial governments will begin negotiating offshore decision making and revenue sharing within 60 days of the signing of the devolution agreement.

The 175 federal employees of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development will become employees of the territorial government. Additional jobs will be created as more people will be needed to handle the work was previously done by other federal departments.

An earlier devolution agreement was signed with Yukon in 1993.

Details about the benefits of devolution, implementation, resource management, revenue sharing and more are available at the website Devolution.gov.nt.ca.