



Canadian House of Commons

A Sitting on the Issue of:

Indigenous Rights

and

Canadian Rare Earth Mining

Chair: Tate Lonsdale

Co-Chair: Thomas Feeney

3/1/2025



Table of Contents

I. Letter from the Chair (3)

II. Letter from the Co-Chair (4)

III. A Note on Procedure (5)

IV. Key Terms (6)

V. Introduction (6)

VI. History (7)

VII. Current Situation (9)

VIII. Critical Questions (13)

IX. Positions (14)

X. Bibliography (17)



I. Letter from the Chair:

Honorable Delegates,

My name is Tate Lonsdale, a junior here at Boston College High School, and it is my distinct pleasure and privilege to chair this sitting of the Canadian House of Commons. I have been involved with MUN for almost four years, and during that time have participated in numerous conferences, most recently attending the UCLA BruinMUN conference in Los Angeles, advocating for the rights of Morocco in the Universal Postal Union. Outside of MUN, I am the Deputy Editor of the BCHigh school newspaper, The Eagle, and a member of the Hyde Center for Global Education.

My hope in giving this difficult topic to you is that it challenges your perspective of some of the most important issues of our time. While it is easy to say that Canada should open up more mines to help build wind farms and solar plants, it is equally important to take into account the side of the First Peoples, who have maintained the land on which these new mines would be built for almost four millennia. Is the salvation of the planet worth the destruction and ecological devastation of these sacred lands? I encourage you to take a look at this issue from both sides prior to writing your position paper, which can be sent to me at T.Lonsdale26@students.bchigh.edu, CCing my Co-Chair t.feeney25@students.bchigh.edu. Please email your paper to us in order to be eligible for the Ben Maher'11 Best Position Paper award. I also welcome any questions.

I look forward to an intriguing and entertaining committee,

-Tate Lonsdale '26, Chair

t.lonsdale26@students.bchigh.edu



II. Letter from the Co-Chair:

Honorable Delegates,

My name is Thomas Feeney, and I will be your Co-Chair for the Canadian House of Commons Committee. I am a senior at Boston College High School and have been involved in the Model UN club since 7th grade. I have attended many other conferences, and this is my second time being a co-chair. I am very excited for this opportunity to learn and to meet all of you. In addition to Model UN, I am involved in many other extracurricular activities at BC High including the Hyde Center, which encourages better habits to make our world a more environmentally friendly place, as well as St. Louis Project, where the other leaders and I bring out a group of students to care for the homeless.

As for the committee, I am interested in Co-Chairing this because it presents a unique opportunity to examine the intricate challenges of resource development in Canada. The extraction of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) is critical to advancing green energy and maintaining NATO's technological edge, but it also raises important questions about Indigenous rights and environmental stewardship. I hope this committee will provide a space for thoughtful debate on how to balance these competing priorities while respecting the cultural and ecological significance of Indigenous lands. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your chair, Tate, or myself with any questions or position papers.

I look forward to meeting and working with all of you!

-Thomas Feeney '25, Co-Chair

t.feeney25@students.bchigh.edu



III. A Note on Procedure:

Although this is a sitting of the House of Commons, for simplicity we will be maintaining regular MUN procedure, with the exception of resolution papers, which will be divided between bills and motions. A bill is a specific law that the House wishes to pass, named from C-1 to C-1000. An example could be bill C-123, outlawing witchcraft. This, if passed, is a law or order that will have immediate effect. Private citizens are permitted to introduce and vote on bills, as well as motions.

A motion can either be an order or a resolution. An order is something the House wishes to do within the Government, like forming a committee on banning witchcraft.

A resolution is a type of motion where the House **asks** the government to work on something, like a resolution asking Mr. Trudeau to look into the prevalence of witchcraft in Canada.

I have linked to a site with videos on this topic. Please click on the box labeled “Bills and Motions”. If this does not work, please email me, again at T.Lonsdale26@students.bchigh.edu.

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/procedure/our-procedure/videos-e.html>

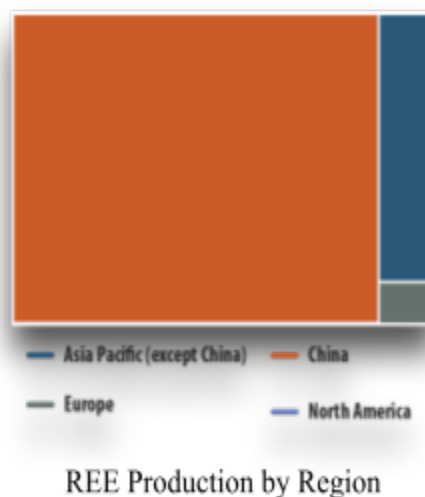


IV Key Terms:

- REE(s): Rare Earth Element(s), such as Neodymium, used for advanced technology
- Indigenous Peoples: Overarching name for members of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit tribes, synonymous with First Peoples of Canada
- Provinces: The 10 regions which comprise Canada, which share power with the Canadian Government over their territory, such as Ontario or Saskatchewan.

V. Introduction

While many NATO countries are pushing Canada to increase exploration, mining, and ultimately export of REEs, within Canada many Indigenous people see this as the desecration of their sacred land. The Indigenous community wonders whether the ecological destruction of important landscapes for both protected species and the religions of many Indigenous tribes is worth the gain of these valuable metals. In addition, due to a treaty which was orally negotiated with the British, Indigenous peoples could have a claim to the metals found under the soil, as well as the oil and gas deposits, which would make them one of the richest Indigenous groups in the world. There is no doubt that REEs are critical for the green

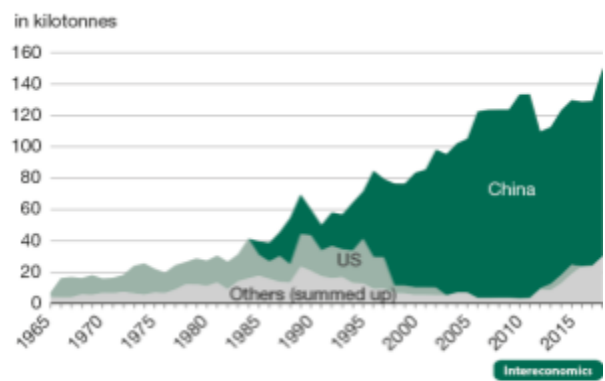




energy transition, to run things like electric cars and wind turbines, but they also possess military significance. REEs are used in the construction of advanced weaponry and other military technology, and given that China, the largest exporter of REEs, is viewed as a threat to NATO, many Western military strategists see the need for a NATO member to begin harvesting these metals to ensure that in times of war or peace, NATO can maintain a technological edge over its enemies.

VI. History

While the discovery of REEs in Sweden dates back to the 1700s, it was not until the end of the 2nd World War that large-scale refinery methods were created and implemented to harvest these elements. A Canadian-American scientist named Frank Spedding, while working on the Manhattan Project to create the Atomic Bomb, created the earliest method of separating REEs from less useful elements, using ion-exchange. In the 50's and 60's, more efficient methods of refinement and concentration were created, and it became viable to use REEs in commercial and civilian applications, such as computers and cameras. From the 50s up until the late 90s, the US largely had control over production of REE's, with mining occurring either in California or in South Africa. In the new millennium, however, China has taken the lead, and with strategic alliances with countries like Mongolia and Myanmar for mining deals, they have a veritable monopoly on



USGS-Production of REEs over time



the export of REEs, especially heavy REEs of which they are the sole producer. China produced 81% of all REEs in the world in 2017, and has shown its willingness on several occasions to use REEs as a pawn in its ongoing trade wars with the US and Japan. In 2010, China committed two



Locations of REE deposits

acts using REEs as a trade weapon. Firstly, they decreased the amount of REEs that companies in China could produce and export, similar to OPEC and oil, which increased prices globally, making it more expensive and difficult to build advanced technology. Secondly, they stopped export of REEs to Japan following a dispute over a

Chinese fishing boat colliding with the Japanese coast guard. This incident creates the possibility of China using its monopoly over REEs in future disputes to punish countries their authoritarian government sees as being in the wrong.

As for Indigenous rights in Canada, there is a long history of abuse suffered at the hands of the government claiming they are doing something for the greater good. During the late 1800s, the Canadian government focused on assimilating and destroying the Indigenous culture and language, through the use of boarding schools. The government took children from their homes, and gave them a “christian” education, believing it was the humane thing to do.

For many current Indigenous peoples of Canada, the legacy of these schools, where many died of disease and abuse, has caused distrust in the government, and led to demands for the protection of Indigenous culture, language, and most significantly, land. In a series of 11 treaties



signed between Canada and the First Nations, Canada was given the rights to the usage of the land in exchange for providing, among other things, medicine and farming tools to the First Nations. These treaties are viewed skeptically by those in the Indigenous community, as not only was coercion and blackmail likely used by the Canadians, but by putting Indigenous People's children in boarding schools and removing others from their lands, Canada violated the agreements.

VII-Current Situation

In the present day, many in the First Nations communities still feel violated and abused over the broken promises outlined in these treaties. In addition, some now maintain that the Indigenous of Canada have the legal claim to the trillions of dollars of REEs stored under their



Archives of Canada-"Indigenous people receive money from treaty"-1930

land, due to the idea that an oral agreement was made with the Canadian Government when the treaties were being signed that leased only the land "as deep as the plow" to the Government, while the Indigenous Peoples kept the resources below "the plow". Unfortunately, the Canadian government has not recognized the validity of these oral agreements, as they fall outside of the norms of conventional law relating to treaties. In an article

published by the CBC, Heather Bear, vice chief of the FSIN, said that "'At treaty, we agreed for the settlers — in order to have agriculture — to share a plough deep—the minerals were never



on the table.”(McLernon). The reason many Indigenous Peoples in Canada are fighting the expansion of REE mining is the damage it could do to their sacred lands, and to their own health, as many Indigenous communities live on or rely on the water tables that would be affected by the chemicals used in pit mining. In section 6.3.1.3 of her 2021 paper on the subject of Indigenous health and REE mining, Xiangbo Lin says that “Indigenous peoples near REE mining areas in Canada may be more affected by environmental issues associated with REE development than



Lin-Effects of REEs

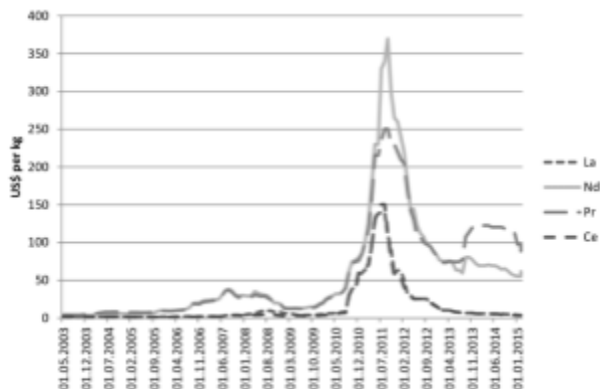
other groups, because they may rely more heavily on local biota for their daily lives (e.g., food, medicine, and traditional activities on the land”(Lin, 2021). Thus, Indigenous peoples of Canada have both an ownership claim and serious concerns on the subject of REE mining.

However, it is also important to recognize the

benefits that REEs will have, especially in areas of green energy, defense, and technology production, especially coming from Canada. Currently, China has a stronghold on the REE market, and as such can dictate the price and supply. Simple economics and history show that if China chooses to restrict the supply of REEs as it has done in the past, the price would skyrocket, making it much harder for countries to continue the green energy transition needed to slow global warming, as REEs are needed in everything from wind turbines to nuclear power plants. Having REEs mined in Canada would allow them to push cheaper REEs onto the market during a time of shortage, therefore lowering the price and reducing the cost of the green transition. When China has used tariffs and trade restrictions before, prices ballooned for an element like



Lanthanum, going from 7\$/kg in 2007 to almost 250/kg in 2011. This came as the result of a souring in relations between the US and China, and many experts saw this as a political move over an economic one. China, by restricting the export of REEs, was able to use more of them



Price of Lanthanum-Research Gate

within its own border, allowing it to fast-track development of things like advanced chips, ICBMs, submarines, and more. Without the vast amounts of REEs it has access to, China would likely not be the military superpower and NATO rival it is today. Indeed, many in NATO see it as imperative to find other sources of these valuable metals, to protect their supply lines in case of a

global conflict in which China suspends all export of REEs, crippling the creation and research of the advanced weaponry that NATO member countries have come to rely on. In a paper for the German Security Academy, Jakob Kullik says that “a US Virginia-class submarine, for example, requires some four tons of rare-earth materials, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer requires more than two tons and even an F-35 fighter aircraft requires more than 400 kilogrammes”(Kullik, 2019). Kullik goes on to state that “Currently, NATO is almost 100 percent dependent on rare earths imports from China”, and that “the EU seems to be “sleepwalking” into its next resource crisis”(Kullik). Taken together, these two statements show the crisis that NATO finds itself in.

On the one hand, modern weaponry requires more REEs than ever, but on the other hand, China, a NATO adversary, has almost monopolistic control over the mining and export of REEs. Thus, the crisis for NATO is clear. Without the creation of new REE mines in Canada, NATO would be



a lame duck in a global conflict, for when China inevitably cuts off REE export, NATO would be forced to halt production on its most advanced weaponry needed to maintain its advantage in a global conflict. These new mines, however, will be difficult to construct for numerous reasons, the primary being the economic interests of the large mining companies whose backing is needed. With



US Navy-USS Virginia

China having such a tight grip on REE supply, it can easily flood the market if it senses its monopoly is under threat, causing prices to plummet and the billions of dollars of investment in REE mines lost. Kullik writes that “With its six state-owned conglomerates, Beijing could flood the market with excess capacities to increase supply, which would ruin any investment. Accordingly, China has several forms of leverage at the first production stage: about 40 percent of global reserves and 80 percent of production, which allows Beijing to influence supply and price trends”(Kullik). Convincing companies to invest in mines despite this risk would be a gargantuan effort, made worse by the fact that any solution to the problems faced by Indigenous Peoples would likely be expensive and time consuming, further reducing the already slim and troubled profit margins of any Canadian REE mining enterprise.

Thus, the problem is clear. On one side sit the Indigenous Peoples, who have experienced generations of abuse and neglect at the hands of the Canadian Government, who are wary of any claims that this time will be different, and who demand expensive solutions to ensure their lands



and health remain unaffected by the mining. On the other side are NATO and climate advocates, who say that REE mines are desperately needed, to limit China's influence on the defense supply chain, and to provide additional resources for the creation of green energy.

VIII Critical Questions

- How will you work to assure the Indigenous Peoples that their painful history will not be repeated again?
- How will you rapidly create mines to meet the demands of NATO, while also ensuring that the sensitive lands and health of the Indigenous populations are not harmed?
- How will you manage the concerns of mining executives who worry China will flood the market and ruin their billions of dollars in investments?
- How will you manage the ownership claims of the Indigenous Peoples with the already slim profit margins of mining corporations?
- How will you ensure that the pollution caused by mining REEs does not cause more environmental damage than the wind or solar power it creates?



IX. Positions:

- **Justin Trudeau**- Prime Minister of Canada
- **Pierre Poilievre**- Leader of the Opposition
- **Lori Idlout**- Indigenous MP for Nunavut, Member of Indigenous Affairs Committee
- **Blake Desjarlais**- Indigenous MP for Edmonton, Member of International Trade Committee
- **Yvonne Jones**- Indigenous MP for Labrador, Member of Natural Resources Committee
- **Leah Gazan**- Indigenous MP for Winnipeg, Member of the Status of Women Committee
- **Michael McLeod**- Indigenous MP for Northern Territories, Member of the NATO Association
- **Lisa Riley**- CEO of Vital Metals
- **Jonathan Wilkinson**- MP for N. Vancouver, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
- **Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak**- National First Nations Assembly Chief
- **Mike Crabtree**- CEO of Saskatchewan Research Council
- **Mark Bristow**- CEO of Barrick Gold
- **Jonathan Price**- President of Teck Resources
- **Doug Ford**- Governor of Ontario
- **Shannon Stubbs**- MP, Shadow Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
- **The Hon. Patty Hajdu**- MP, Minister of Indigenous Services
- **John McKay**- MP, Chair of National Defense Committee
- **The Hon. Steven Guilbeault**- MP, Minister of the Environment



- **The Hon. Dominic LeBlanc**-MP, Minister for Public Safety
- **Rick Perkins**-MP, Shadow Minister for Innovation, Science, and Industry
- **Bob Zimmer**- MP for Prince George, Member of the Indigenous Affairs Committee
- **Dan Mazier**- MP for Dauphin, Vice Chair of Environmental Committee
- **Dan Albas**- MP for Nicola, Joint-Chair of the Committee for Scrutiny of Regulations
- **George Chahal**- MP for Calgary Skyview, Chair of Natural Resources Committee
- **Mike Morrice**- MP for Kitchener Center
- **Shelby Kramp**- Neuman-MP for Hastings, Chair of the Status of Women Committee
- **Valerie Bradford**- MP for Kitchener South, Chair of the Science Committee
- **Francis Scarpellegia**- MP for Lac Saint Louis, Chair of the Environmental Committee
- **Ken Hardie**- MP for Fleetwood, Chair of Canada-China Relationship Committee
- **The Hon. Judy Sgro**- MP for Humber River, Chair of International Trade Committee
- **Patrick Weiler**- MP for West Vancouver, Chair of the Indigenous Relations Committee
- **Natan Obed**- President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- **Cassidy Caron**- President of the Metis National Council
- **Pierre Gratton**- President and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada, Lobbying Group
- **Raymond Goldie**- President of the Prospectors and Developers Association, Lobbying Group
- **Her Excellency Mary Simon**- Governor General of Canada, Indigenous
- **Gary Anandasangaree**- MP for Scarborough, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations



- **The Hon. François-Phillipe Champagne-** MP for St. Maurice, Minister of Science and Industry
- **The Hon. Dan Vandal-** MP, Minister for Canadian Northern Economic Development
- **The Hon. Chrystia Freeland-** MP for Toronto Centre, Minister of Finance, Deputy PM
- **Amnar Al-Joundi-** President and CEO of Agnico Eagle Mining



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