

NORTHERN STRATEGY YUKON CHAPTER

Approved by the Yukon Forum - April 27, 2005

OUR VISION

Yukon is a place where governance processes fully engage all citizens; where First Nation, federal and Yukon governments have concurrent jurisdiction and shared responsibilities. All parties recognize the need to develop better ways to work collaboratively to achieve shared goals for political, economic and social development; where youth and gender considerations inform policy; and where productive individuals living in vibrant, healthy and safe communities take advantage of emerging work and business opportunities.

Yukon is a respected, contributing member of the Canadian community, committed to the ongoing evolution of responsible government in the North and equal participation in the Canadian federation.

YUKON REALITIES

For greater clarity, the Yukon Chapter will enunciate our shared interests without derogating in any manner from Yukon First Nation Final and Self-Government agreements, or other agreements between Yukon First Nations and the Yukon or Federal governments, collectively or bi-laterally.

In many respects, Yukon has successfully taken its place within confederation. The Yukon government has achieved recognition as a partner at both federal-provincial-territorial and provincial-territorial tables. Recently, Yukon successfully negotiated the transfer of most province-like resources, including responsibility for management of natural resources and land. In addition, 10 of 14 First Nations have final and self-government agreements.

There are several obstacles to overcome before Yukon's promise can be fully realized.

While the transfer of new powers to the Yukon has contributed to effective program and service delivery, the actual cost of delivering and managing complex inter-dependent programs is greater than anticipated.

Successful implementation of Yukon First Nation final and self-government agreements requires full federal government commitment, including recognition of the responsibility to equitably fund the new governments. Transition from the previous Indian Act regime to fully functioning Yukon First Nation self-governments involves a fundamental transformation of the socio-political and socio-economic, institutional and individual fabric of Yukon society.

Further, because it is an isolated region with a small population base spread out over a large geographic area, Yukon faces a number of obstacles to sustained economic development. Relatively under developed infrastructure (road, port, rail, airport, and fibre optic network), size of market and substantially higher costs of doing business (e.g. energy costs) have limited the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in most sectors. Without sustainable enterprises, small communities are gradually emptying as young people move elsewhere to find employment. Yukon is presently a youth/intellectual exporter – most pronounced in rural Yukon. This must be changed if vibrant Yukon communities are to be maintained.

Yukon also needs to develop a workforce with highly transferable work skills so that Yukoners can take advantage of emerging business or job opportunities the work environment may provide.

Finally, while the north in general will be the first to have to cope with the effects of rapid climate change, Yukon specifically will be one area of the north where climate change is occurring most rapidly. For example, the Spruce Beetle, previously checked by lengthy periods of cold at critical points in its life cycle, is now rapidly destroying the boreal forest in south-west Yukon.

YUKON PRIORITIES

It is important that sustained actions be taken to create change that will foster economic and social development and result in tangible improvements in the lives of Yukoners.

Yukoners understand how interconnected the seven goals are to the territory's development and have consequently identified short and medium to long-term actions in each of the seven goals.

Cross-cutting themes link the various goals: youth, gender issues, capacity building, infrastructure development, data collection and information management, community development and promotion and building collaborative and cooperative intergovernmental relationships through the Intergovernmental Forum¹ and the Yukon Forum² and other arrangements such as bilateral agreements.

It is also important to design measures that will inform governments and Yukoners about how well the Northern Strategy is being implemented and how and when the Yukon chapter will be reviewed and renewed.

¹ Sometimes referred to as the Canada Forum, the Intergovernmental Forum brings together Yukon FN Chiefs, Yukon Premier and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

² For purposes of planning and implementation of the Northern Strategy, the Yukon Forum will include all Yukon First Nations.

1. Strengthening Governance, Partnerships and Institutions

Governments need to work together to develop strong, and productive relationships. Collaborative governance in Yukon will evolve as a result of political will, practical experience, and a united commitment to design a new approach to governance in Yukon to reflect the changes brought about through settlement of land claims and devolution. A new partnership among Yukon First Nations and Yukon governments that reflects our mutual interdependence will enable us to work together to build a better future for all Yukoners.

To assist in that process, over the short term, governments agree to:

- Entrench the Yukon Forum model of governance in legislation allowing, among other things, for First Nation governments and communities to cooperatively resolve a range of issues, for example, capital planning, a collaborative process with First Nations in respect of education, health, social and administration of justice programs that will result in integrated and cost-effective program delivery, to name a few.
- Building on the work of the Self-Government Secretariat, provide, technical, statistical and analytical support services to Yukon First Nations.
- Develop capacity building strategies for the First Nations and municipal governments to ensure they have the necessary skills and technical competence to provide services to their citizens, including activities such as job shadowing, and technical and program training opportunities.

2. Establishing Strong Foundations for Sustainable Economic Development

Economic development in the Yukon is dependent upon many things, one of which is the presence of a multi-modal transportation infrastructure.

Therefore, over the short term, Canada and Yukon agree to:

- Participate in a joint Canada-US working group, as a first step in examining rail transportation requirements for economic development in the Yukon.
- Provide funding for skills and training to Yukon First Nations and other Yukoners, including the Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition, so all Yukoners can prepare to fully participate in the economic benefits that may occur from a pipeline project.

Canada and Yukon agree over the medium to long-term to:

- Provide funding for diversification of the Yukon economy, including such things as support for mining, small businesses, traditional economy, tourism, cultural and ecologically based industries, and manufacturing.

- The importance to economic development of a multi-purpose transportation corridor (rail road, airports, fiber optic cable and potentially, pending decisions on routing, a natural gas pipeline) to connect the Yukon to Alaska and Southern Canada.
- Access to a Pacific tide water port is essential to ensuring Yukon is part of Canada's western gateway to the Pacific Rim. As an immediate first step, Yukon will set up a bilateral Yukon-Alaska working group to develop an action plan.
- Develop knowledge infrastructure in relation to Yukon lands and resources, including fish and wildlife habitats.
- Improve and expand access to the Arctic by investing in North Klondike and Dempster Highways, and other transportation infrastructure.

3. Protecting the Environment

A clean environment is critical to the health and well being of Yukoners. Other priorities of importance to Yukon's environment include, coordinated land stewardship, the protection of Yukon's biodiversity and the preservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitats.

In addition, climate change in the North will have a major impact on the way we live and, more specifically, bring profound changes to traditional ways of life. Analyzing the effects on climate change on human and natural systems will provide essential information not only to Canada but to the world.

To that end, Canada and Yukon agree in the short term:

- To continue to support the Northern Climate Exchange program;
- To provide funding to clean up the Marwell tar pit and McIntyre Creek dump.

Over the medium to long-term, Canada and Yukon agree to:

- More effectively coordinate management of natural resources with Yukon First Nations in advance of implementing regional land-use planning as a basis for developing effective ongoing inter-governmental working arrangements.
- Use traditional knowledge in all natural resource management and development policy and decision-making processes.
- Work in conjunction with Yukon College to create a Centre to Excellence to address sustainability in a rapidly changing climate through innovation and adaptation.

- Finding ways to mitigate the damage to the boreal forest, such as the spruce bark beetle and wildland fires, and to create related opportunities for the local forest industry.

4. Building Healthy and Safe Communities

Building safe and healthy communities requires governments to work together. Therefore, over the short term, Canada and Yukon agree to:

- Proceed with the Mobile Communications Solution (MoCS) project to
 - Upgrade the public safety mobile radio system to cover all communities and highways and to meet modern standards.
 - Investigate and evaluate the expansion of cell phone service to all communities
- Establish a problem-solving mechanisms to promote and strengthen the use of alternatives to incarceration.

Over the medium to long-term, Canada and Yukon agree work together to:

- Provide access to a level, quality and continuum of health care and social services that is reasonably comparable to that found elsewhere in Canada.
- Reduce alcohol and drug abuse and their negative effects on our communities.
- Work with youth and others to foster healthy living (in particular, smoking prevention, active living, healthy eating, accident and injury prevention, and chronic disease prevention and management).
- Ensure that communities have water, waste water, sewage systems and recreational facilities reasonably comparable to communities in the South.
- Develop a justice system that better reflects the needs of Yukoners, including areas such as crime prevention, policing, corrections and community justice initiatives.
- Invest in appropriate education resources at the community level, which are responsive to community needs.
- Produce a strategy that will build on federal initiatives designed to address healthy, adequate, affordable, and culturally relevant housing, and related infrastructure in our communities by 2008. The strategy will include new initiatives and assess housing needs such as transitional housing for youth, the homeless, etc.
- Work together to provide climate change adaptation funding to Yukon communities.

5. Reinforcing Sovereignty, National Security and Circumpolar Cooperation

Building northern capacity, protecting the northern environment, and focusing on strong and vital northern communities are essential in order to enhance Canada's ability to assert its sovereignty in the North.

Canada and Yukon, in the short term, agree:

- To complete basic geological mapping in the North.

Canada and Yukon agree, over the medium to long term to:

- Build Yukon infrastructure to enhance Canada's ability to assert sovereignty in the Arctic, e.g. upgrading the Dempster Highway.
- Establish Canadian Rangers representation in all Yukon communities.
- Protect Yukon's northern environment by providing increased capacity to prevent, detect and respond to emergencies and natural disasters.
- Complete offshore oil and gas management regime and revenue sharing negotiations for the Beaufort Sea.

6. Preserving, Revitalizing and Promoting Culture and Identity

Canada and Yukon agree that promotion and enhancement of culture is important to the health and well being of Yukoners. To that end they agree, in the short term to:

- Invest in the preservation and promotion of aboriginal languages, comparable to the level of support provided to French language services.
- Develop and implement an Aboriginal language strategy which would include preservation, revitalization, language curricula, promotion and funding required to reverse the decline in Aboriginal languages in Yukon.
- Work with Yukon's francophone community to ensure the federal government funds, and Yukon government implements, the Yukon plan to increase health services in French for those health services transferred in 1993 and 1997.

Both Yukon and Canada also agree, over the medium and long-term to:

- Use traditional knowledge and practices to inform Northern decision making.
- Develop a protocol with Yukon First Nations for the collection, ownership and use of traditional knowledge.
- Invest in the arts, including contemporary and traditional cultures and northern heritage.

7. Developing Northern Science and Research

It is critically important to develop research capacity in the north by northerners. To that end, Yukon and Canada agree, in the short term to:

- Conduct a study on the feasibility of a Northern University linked to a Yukon campus with an emphasis on Excellence in Northern Research. In order to build the capacity to attract and retain researchers who could help to develop local expertise; recognizing that the North is the only region in Canada without a university.
- Develop a set of sustainable development indicators for Canada's North.
- Conduct geoscience mapping and related studies that support exploration and development of mineral and hydrocarbon resources and attract exploration investment.
- Pursue cooperative initiatives in circumpolar science that support resource assessments and environmental research into the effects of contaminants and development on northern ecosystems.

Over the medium and long-term both Yukon and Canada agree to:

- Establish a Northern Innovation Cluster as a center for research on cold weather technologies and extreme climate applications.
- Use traditional knowledge in the development and application of northern science and research.
- Reduce dependence on diesel electric power generation by developing alternative energy sources (e.g. solar, wind, run of river).