

## *Draft Yukon Water Strategy for Public Review* Summary of Comments: Mayo Open House, May 14, 2013

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This document is a summary of what the Government of Yukon (YG) team members heard regarding the Draft Yukon Water Strategy for Public Review during the open house/meeting held in Mayo, Yukon on May 14, 2013. It is intended to provide a record for both those who attended the event and those who did not and is consistent with the government's commitment to an open and transparent public review process. The comments below were gathered from the people who attended this event.

YG staff shared information about YG water management programs and the draft Strategy itself, through a presentation, panel displays and discussion. Our purpose was to collect comments on the vision, principles and goals proposed in the draft strategy as well as six priorities and the short- and long-term actions for achieving them. Attendees were also requested to "dot" the two most important items that they would like to see come out in the final strategy. The event was requested by the Mayo Renewable Resources Council and promoted through posters distributed in Mayo, direct communication with key water stakeholders, advertising on the Environment Yukon and Yukon Water websites, updates on the draft water strategy's Facebook page and through Twitter.

The public review period for the Draft Yukon Water Strategy for Public Review runs from March 20 through June 30, 2013 (recently extended). For more information or to comment on the draft water strategy, please visit [www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy](http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy), call 667-3171 or 1-800-661-0405 X3171 or email [water.resources@gov.yk.ca](mailto:water.resources@gov.yk.ca).

Please note the comments below are organized by the vision, goals, principles and priorities in the draft strategy rather than by the person commenting. They are not intended to be verbatim but rather to capture the main message/theme. These comments will be compiled with other comments received during the public review to form an overall engagement summary. If there are any inaccuracies in the document, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our contact information is provided at the end of this document.

Comments are presented in bulleted italic font under the topic area addressed. The results of the "dotmocracy" exercise are not presented in this document but will be considered as we develop the final strategy and subsequent action plan.

## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

### Vision

- *No comments.*

Yukoners have access to safe and sufficient water to meet their needs in ways that also preserve ecosystem health now and into the future.

### Principles

- *No comments.*

**Sustainability:** Undertake actions that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

**Forward-looking:** Anticipate future changes in water quality, quantity and needs due to factors such as cumulative effects, climate change and population growth.

**Adaptability:** Promote and develop adaptive management strategies to cope with uncertainty and change.

**Security:** Seek to maintain affordable, adequate, equitable and reliable water quality and quantity for all Yukoners.

**Stewardship:** Ensure Yukon's watersheds remain intact and healthy, based on both individual and shared responsibilities.

**Cooperation:** Develop and promote partnerships and collaboration as appropriate in light of shared responsibilities.

**Respect:** Demonstrate respect for the intrinsic value of water and the values and interests of all Yukoners.

### Goals

- *No comments.*

**Water for People:** Ensure accessible, safe and sufficient water for drinking and other purposes, including industrial, recreational, heritage, cultural and spiritual uses and values. Promote sustainable and valuable use of water for communities and economies for key business sectors.

**Water for Nature:** Preserve water quality and quantity for aquatic health and ecosystem services while respecting the intrinsic value of water.

Water Monitoring, Knowledge and Management: Strengthen understanding, knowledge and overall management of water.

## Priorities

Priority A: Better understand and manage Yukon's groundwater regime.

- *Rising ground water levels due to Yukon Energy activities are causing concern. Groundwater is getting close to surface contaminants / may be mixing with surface waters and possibly polluting our wells. Ditches are now full of water and new ponds are popping up. 'Source water protection plan' is needed.*
- *Discussion about the communication regime around bacterial (H. pylori) contamination. Some who contract it from drinking water are deemed ineligible for compensation (prescription drugs to treat infection are not paid for) even though the source was public drinking water.*

Priority B: Maintain/improve access to safe drinking water for all Yukoners.

- *Discussion about the expense to deliver safe drinking water and suggestion to consider incentives to promote water conservation, such as bleeder replacements, low-flow shower heads, etc. (Energy Solutions Centre has done some of this in the past).*
- *Discussion about whether or not government is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the safety of drinking water in private dwellings and in businesses serving the public (like restaurants and daycares). Public comments indicate an assumption that these drinking water systems are closely regulated by Government.*
- *Discussion about the bacterial and chemical parameters for testing drinking water. There were questions as to why YG doesn't test (for Cadmium, Arsenic, and hydrocarbons) the chemical parameters as a matter of course (risk based schedule determination.)*

Priority C: Promote the sustainable use of water.

- *Best management practices need to be law, so that people who don't do the right thing, have to pay.*

- *Discussion about homeowners being consigned to old systems and aging infrastructure, therefore making poor choices around water conservation in order to save money. People let their taps run, rather than retrofitting their houses, or buying heat tape systems for pipes, etc.*
- *We need to consider the costs and have manageable systems for people in small communities. Regulations can impose costly solutions.*
- *Discussion about how water delivery trucks are regulated or monitored for safety standards. (Annual inspection (including technical) of vehicles is the process.)*
- *Discussion about who and how water tanks within (rental) homes, restaurants or other private places are monitored. The first of these should be picked up in the landlord/tenant act/agreement. Restaurants are considered public drinking water systems and should be closely regulated.*

Priority D: Improve the generation and use of water information.

- *We need a system to communicate with home owners about the importance of cleaning water holding tanks. Community based communication can include a householder, school-based information, local radio, or piggy back on something that is already coming into homes (e.g. the electric bill). Ask people, ‘what are you drinking, where is it coming from?’*

Priority E: Assess and improve government management programs.

- *Discussion about recent changes to section(s) of the Fisheries Act (pertaining to the deposition of deleterious substances into water).*
- *YG is now the lead on spills to Yukon waters (previous lead was federal).*
- *There is concern regarding the challenges in identifying the source for some spills and subsequent recourse when the source of contamination is unknown. For example, when hydrocarbons were identified in the Yukon River at Whitehorse.*

Priority F: Plan for water needs now and in the future.

- *The McQuesten River monitoring station is located upstream from Dublin Gulch but downstream from Keno. The value of that monitoring station is seen now that there is activity in Keno again. There have been impacts to McQuesten River, and Crystal, Flat, Cache Creeks. There are lots of metals (e.g. zinc).*
- *The monitoring is done by a local contractor and is part of the Canada-Yukon Water Quality Monitoring Program. The data is available on line through a link on the Yukon Water website.*
- *More water sampling will be done this summer in the Peel River Watershed. Partnerships will be used for this sampling and hopefully for any future sampling in the region.*
- *The lagoon sewage system works well for Mayo.*
- *Discussion about the difficulty of monitoring cumulative effects with different standards and regulators for adjacent operations (placer and quartz).*

### **General Comments**

- *Questions/discussion about how the local First Nation and Renewable Resource Council will be accommodated in the Water Strategy process; specifically, participants would like to see their contributions reflected in the strategy. There was also discussion about implementation, budgets and timelines.*
- *It is better to meet with us all together, rather than meeting with the village or RRC separately from the First Nation.*
- *There have been some local permafrost projects done by researchers. These have benefitted us a lot.*
- *Mayo is on the old river channel. There are general concerns about the changes that Yukon Energy has made to flow regimes in the area (could be totally submerged).*
- *There are still funds available for projects through the Yukon River Restoration and Enhancement Fund (R&E).*

## **NEXT STEPS**

The feedback received during the Mayo engagement session will help inform the Yukon government in the development of the final Yukon water strategy. Once this is completed, further work will be needed to prepare an action plan to describe how the short- and long-term actions will be addressed. This includes identifying departmental leads and partners as well as options, costs and timing for implementation activities.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Yukon government would like to thank the participants in the public review of the *Draft Yukon Water Strategy* at the Mayo Open House held on May 14, 2013. Your feedback was extremely valuable and will help guide the continued development of a comprehensive, thoughtful and innovative water strategy for Yukon.

## **CONTACT**

This document was prepared by Environment Yukon on behalf of the Strategic Water Initiatives Group on June 11, 2013.

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