

Draft Yukon Water Strategy for Public Review Summary of Comments: Pelly Crossing Meeting, July 5, 2013

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 held in Pelly Crossing, Yukon on July 5, 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 fourteen people who attended this event.

YG staff shared information about YG water management programs and the draft Strategy itself, through a presentation and discussion. Our purpose was to collect comments on the six priorities and the proposed actions for each. The event was requested and promoted by the Selkirk Renewable Resource Council. Posters advertised the event, and it was also promoted through direct communication with key water stakeholders.

The public review period for the Draft Yukon Water Strategy for Public Review officially ended on June 30, 2013. This meeting was accommodated outside the engagement period. For more information on the draft water strategy, please visit www.env.gov.yk.ca/draftwaterstrategy, call 667-3171 or 1-800-661-0405 X3171 or email water.resources@gov.yk.ca.

Please note the comments below are organized according to the structure of the presentation (i.e. the document), rather than by voice. They are not verbatim. 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.

- *There is concern regarding fracking and what it will do to groundwater. If there is contamination, is YG ready and prepared to clean it up?*
- *You have to know what you have before you can see if it's changed or damaged.*

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

- *Residents don't like the smell of chlorine in the drinking water. Elders get water elsewhere because it doesn't make good tea for drinking and they believe that there are no minerals left in the water and that the chlorine is unhealthy for them.*
- *Discussion about what a small drinking water system is and who monitors it. Water tank operations and maintenance questions come up often (where regulatory oversight currently does not exist).*
- *People want information about their drinking water made available to them.*
- *Does the Pelly Crossing drinking water facility belong to SFN or YG? (SFN)*

Priority C: Promote the sustainable use of water.

- *No comments.*

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

- *The website is a collection of existing information sources, but does it give us access to lab reports such as those required for the Minto Mine? (waterline.ca shows water license requirements and reports).*
- *Discussion about water quality monitoring on unlicensed waters (trend monitoring).*

- *Placer mining appears not to be considered in this document.*
- *Exploration (Class 3)... Placer is not disturbing a mineral source, but is running water through rocks (almost like a natural process).*
- *Discussion about how the Water Strategy could improve the mining regime (groundwater, sustainable use of water and the governance priority – such as monitoring effectiveness of the Waters Act).*
- *Interest in having drinking water data available on line; questions as to why it is not currently on yukonwater.ca. Discussion about challenges of how to best communicate data (raw data vs. analysis).*
- *A great addition to the database facility would be to harmonize data management systems so all data is available at that one source.*

Priority E: Assess and improve government management programs.

- *The water forum is a good idea.*
- *Peel River is not the only trouble spot. The MacMillan River is also in need; a habitat protection area (HPA) was proposed over ten years ago but still not accepted. There needs to be clarification of how/where/when to make a protected area so that efforts are not wasted by RRCs. Further, government might be better off addressing some of these areas prior to the land use decisions because when industry is at stake, land management activities are not waiting for regional planning.*

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

- *Valuation of water – the notion of assigning a dollar value to water is offensive to some; for example, if Faro had had a valuation exercise (with a lot of crystal ball gazing), the project would not have proceeded.*
- *Traditional values cannot have \$ assigned to them.*
- *Discussion of the evolution of environmental law and changing rules around security and bonds for developers.*
- *Climate change is causing many issues such as permafrost melting and slumping. YG should promote that care be taken by organizations and individuals when working in these fragile zones. An example of the installation of a fibre optic cable was highlighted to demonstrate the lack of care taken and the unsightly effects as a result.*
- *It would be good to see YG utilize unbiased independent third party water monitoring; interested in having 1-2 people trained in monitoring/sampling.*

- *Long term trend monitoring should be done on each river system (there are currently only 7 trend monitoring stations in Yukon). Should have monitoring along the Yukon River.*

General Comments

- *Chapter 14 should be referenced here. Some FNs do own the beds of the water bodies.*
- *Casino trail now has a road running through it which ruins the place for our caribou which we value and use traditionally. Now it is wrecked forever. It is irreplaceable.*
- *Appears that the strategy focuses on hard rock mining and not placer mining.*

NEXT STEPS

The feedback received during the Pelly Crossing 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 Pelly Crossing Public Meeting held on July 5, 2013. Your feedback was extremely valuable and will help guide the continued development of a comprehensive, thoughtful and innovative water strategy for Yukon.

CONTACT

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