



News Release: People are our number one priority, say territorial Premiers in new vision for sustainable development

YELLOWKNIFE, NT /WHITEHORSE, YT/IQALUIT, NU (September 22, 2017) – Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod, Yukon Premier Sandy Silver and Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna today released the *Pan-Territorial Vision for Sustainable Development*. In it, they declare that residents of the territories deserve the opportunity to achieve the same aspirations for themselves and their families as other Canadians – including good health, high-quality education and sustainable middle class jobs.

The three Premiers stand together to foster long-term development of northern economies on a foundation of responsible resource development, job creation, and economic diversification – in addition to investments in transportation, energy and communications infrastructure, and innovation.

A key principle of the *Pan-Territorial Vision* is that northerners must have the tools and authority to manage their own affairs and make decisions on the future of the North, which offers an important opportunity to advance Indigenous reconciliation.

The Premiers will take a leadership role as they work with the federal government, territorial Indigenous governments and organizations, and affected stakeholders to bring about their vision of sustainable economic development for the residents of the three territories – and will participate in the development of Canada’s proposed Arctic Policy Framework.

Quotes

“Having a clear vision and priorities for supporting the social and economic development of Canada’s three territories is the only way to ensure that Northern Canadians will be able to enjoy the same benefits and opportunities that their fellow Canadians already share. Our shared vision has to be the foundation for any Arctic policy that genuinely reflects the needs and priorities of the people who live here.”

-Bob McLeod, Premier of the Northwest Territories

“Responsible development is crucial to the people in the North, and the three territories stand together to advance environmental stewardship in building sustainable economic growth. We know that Indigenous knowledge is essential to developing Northern wellness and economy, and we commit to a balanced approach to ensure our citizens attain the same quality of life as their fellow Canadians.”

-Peter Taptuna, Premier of Nunavut

“Northern communities face similar economic challenges – it is significantly more difficult in the territories to access equitable opportunities that would improve quality of life for residents and benefit our economies. I am proud to stand with the northern Premiers to advocate for the needs of the residents of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut – and believe our shared vision will serve as a foundation for a stronger North.”

-Sandy Silver, Premier of Yukon

Quick Facts

- In the Northwest Territories, the resource sector accounts for nearly 40% of our GDP. By comparison, tourism accounts for 3.5% and fishing .01%.
- Approximately half of all NWT residents are Indigenous, representing the majority of people living in 29 of the territory’s 33 communities.
- Yukon’s resource sector accounts for 10.1% of the territory’s GDP. Construction accounts for 8.5%, while tourism is estimated at 3.9% of GDP (in 2014).
- Yukon’s population is presently 38,300, it is estimated that Indigenous people account for 23% of the territory’s population. Whitehorse is the territory’s largest community, at 29,634. Destruction Bay is Yukon’s smallest community, with 54 residents.
- Nunavut’s population has a median age of 22, making it the youngest in Canada. It is also one of the fastest growing; the 2015 population was just over 36,700 compared to 26,000 in 2001. Inuit represent 85 per cent of the population and form the foundation of the territory’s culture. Nunavut is a territory that spans two million ² km of Canada, extending north and west of Hudson Bay, above the tree line to the North Pole.
- Nunavut’s 25 communities range in size from tiny Grise Fiord (population 163) to Iqaluit (population 7,542), the capital.
- The largest employer in Nunavut is government – federal, territorial and municipal. New jobs are rapidly emerging in the mining and resource development sectors. Important growth is also occurring in the tourism and fisheries sectors, and in the Inuit art sector. The realization of Nunavut’s full economic potential will, in part, be contingent upon the improvement of the territory’s infrastructure.

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PAN-TERRITORIAL VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The people of Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon are our number one priority and our most important resource. As Premiers, we are committed to taking a leadership role in working with the federal government, territorial Indigenous governments and organizations and stakeholders to provide our residents with every opportunity for economic success and a high quality of life. Every Northerner deserves the opportunity to experience wellness and the strength of community that characterizes Canadians. Economic development and diversification are foundational to this goal.

PRINCIPLES:

- The territories will stand together to create long term sustainable development of northern economies.
- Indigenous governments and organizations are integral to the economic future of the territories.
- Northerners must have the tools and the authorities to manage their own affairs and to make decisions on the future of the north.
- People of the territories have opportunities to build self-reliance, live in healthy, vibrant, prosperous communities, and build their capacities to reach their full potential.
- Social and environmental responsibilities are integrated into our territorial regulatory regimes and underpin all our economic development decisions.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Responsible, sustainable resource development and job creation is the cornerstone of the territorial economies. Indigenous ownership, investment and participation in the resource industry are key to the success of this sector. Resource projects provide education, training and employment opportunities in communities as well as direct indigenous participation in supply and services business development.

We are positioned to drive innovation in cold climate resource extraction. As we work to responsibly develop our resources we will continue to collaborate with Indigenous governments and organizations, the federal government, and industry partners to sustainably and responsibly develop our economies. Through this work we will also ensure that the benefits of development improve the quality of life for our citizens and continue to protect the environment for future generations. The territories are endowed in the natural resources essential to the technologies that support the expanding green economy.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification is an essential factor in the success of sustainable economies. Across various regions, the territories are home to emerging and established sectors such as tourism, traditional economies, agriculture, film, digital media, arts and crafts, forestry, manufacturing, information technology, and commercial fishing.

Partnership with Indigenous governments and organizations, industry and the federal government will strengthen territorial economic diversification, balance interests and ensure benefits are dispersed more broadly across and within the territories. The territories will seek to strengthen and establish infrastructure, increase educational resources, and develop innovative partnerships to deliver leading edge business and entrepreneurial mentorship services to drive new business and employment opportunities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Large scale investment in northern transportation infrastructure corridors including highways, harbours, ports, airports and rail will create investment and economic opportunities in the North. The development of clean, affordable energy alternatives and connecting to hydroelectric grids will reduce the costs of living and doing business in the north and increase investment in the territories.

Resource potential and expanding northern sovereignty challenges make northern development a matter of national interest. Federal investment in northern infrastructure will lever private sector investment and maximize opportunities for exploration and development.

Connecting communities through telecommunications infrastructure is key to supporting innovation and technology development, creating prosperity, and increasing the well-being of citizens living in remote areas.

INNOVATION

Research, innovation, and commercialization, particularly through entrepreneurship, will strengthen and diversify territorial economies. Many northern communities and industries rely on diesel as their main energy and heat source. New innovative technologies and modernized energy systems will provide alternative energy sources for communities and industries that have limited energy generation options.

The adoption of renewable and innovative technologies will decrease communities and industrial reliance on carbon intensive fuel sources and further our sustainable and, environmentally responsible development. Innovative energy and heating solutions as well as responsible industry practices will play an important role in the future of the North. Partnerships across all levels of government and with the private sector will create these innovative solutions and enable the north to prosper.