



March 8, 2022

Dear panelists,

The Government of Yukon would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of you who served on the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change. Your insights, passion and dedication are essential to building a stronger and more resilient Yukon and represent an important step in developing inclusive climate change policies.

We thank you for sharing the Panel's 27 recommendations on climate action. We will consider these recommendations as part of our work to implement *Our Clean Future*. Some of the recommendations we are immediately able to reflect in existing programs and policies. Other recommendations, especially those that are more systemic and broad reaching, require additional work with our partners to determine the best course of action.

We have appended to this letter a summary of initiatives already underway which address most of your recommendations. We will continue this work and will provide updates on our progress through our annual reporting.

More broadly, the Government of Yukon appreciates your overarching recommendation—to prioritize reconnection and sustainable relationships with the land and people to ensure that social and economic systems are based on reciprocity and supported by ecological integrity.

We recognize that future generations will experience the most significant impacts of climate change. That is why we will continue to listen to young people on how we can better address the climate emergency we face. In the coming months, we will be supporting the next Youth Panel on Climate Change cohort, asking they maintain an open dialogue with Yukon youth and support youth in capacity building initiatives.

Once again, thank you for all of your hard work over this past year. We are inspired by your dedication, ambition and leadership on climate change and look forward to seeing your contributions and accomplishments in the years ahead.

Sincerely,


Sandy Silver
Premier

Cc Nils Clarke, Minister responsible for Environment

John Streicker, Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources

Appendix: Summary of current initiatives and opportunities for alignment.

Recommendation 1: Education

We recognize the importance of including Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being in the education curriculum. We have much to learn and welcome all opportunities to learn from, and with, all holders of Indigenous knowledge. We will continue to work towards ensuring that education systems incorporate land-based learning, environmental literacy and stewardship.

Our *Clean Future* supports land-based programs in the Yukon school curriculum that teach First Nations ways of knowing and doing. The Department of Environment has a dedicated program and staff member for creating and delivering environmental education programming for all Grade levels from K-12. This program has made land-based learning, in the communities whenever possible, a key priority for 2022-2023.

The Department of Education is also continuing to explore how to create high school programming which provides students with credits for engaging on climate change issues and voicing their perspectives on climate change policies and plans.

Some of the recommendations you have put forward are best actioned by Yukon First Nations, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and the Yukon University. We encourage you to continue engaging with them as well.

Recommendation 2: Capacity Building

Several commitments in *Our Clean Future* address capacity building including ensuring that Government of Yukon staff have training and expertise to incorporate a climate change lens into the decision-making process for major Government of Yukon policies, programs and projects and developing and offering climate change training for Government of Yukon employees. These actions are in progress, and we will keep the public informed of these actions through our annual reporting for *Our Clean Future*.

We are also hiring an additional person at the Climate Change Secretariat to focus on climate change adaptation and provide climate science support. In addition, new temporary positions are being piloted in 2022 and 2023 to work on key climate change issues which you highlighted in your recommendations, including transportation innovation and adaptation (flooding, permafrost thaw, and wildfire response).

Additionally, we are exploring new actions regarding invasive species, including working with the Conservation Data Centre to strengthen our capacity to manage invasive species. We are also improving our understanding and increasing monitoring efforts to increase our knowledge of how climate change affects ecosystems, wild species, and habitats.

Lastly, we recognize the work that Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous groups are doing, including the land guardians programs which document invasive species, migration patterns, and conditions related to weather, water and snowpack. We are working with Indigenous Guardians through our work on parks and protected areas and with the federal government to support community-based adaptation projects.

Recommendation 3: Land Use Planning

The Government of Yukon is in discussions with multiple Yukon First Nations to start regional land use planning under Chapter 11 of the Final Agreements. We will continue to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations through the Yukon Forum on four priority objectives to streamline the land use planning process in the territory. We also look forward to our ongoing work with the Yukon Land Use Planning Council to further this work and to learn about the outcomes from the upcoming Land Relationship Planning Gathering, which will explore how Yukon First Nation's knowledge, ways and experience can support land and relationship planning approaches.

Through Our Clean Future, the Government of Yukon continues to make recommendations to consider the impacts of climate change in regional land use and local area planning processes.

Recommendation 4: Indigenous Sovereignty

We will continue to work with Yukon and transboundary First Nations and Inuvialuit as we implement the strategy. We welcome feedback on how the Government of Yukon's actions in Our Clean Future can meaningfully address the priorities of Yukon and transboundary First Nations and Inuvialuit.

With respect to your recommendations on consultation, consent, and inherent rights, as well as your recommendation on veto, we are working hard to address these important issues through government-to-government dialogue, including the Yukon Forum. Through the Forum, the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations identified land claims and Self-Government Agreement implementation as joint priorities. We are working together through ongoing dialogue and joint policy development to advance these long-standing and complex issues. While those conversations are ongoing, we will work with Indigenous groups and governments as key partners in the implementation of Our Clean Future.

Your recommendation regarding the establishment of best practices for consultation aligns well with the work being done to establish an electronic consultation system. We are working with consultation practitioners within Indigenous groups and governments to help inform the system, which will streamline the consultation process and help Indigenous groups and governments prioritize consultation on matters that are most important to them.

The Government of Yukon has also committed to collaboratively updating the Yukon's land planning regime with First Nations governments, through a new Lands Act. A new Lands Act will improve land management by updating the land application process, supporting new development initiatives with Yukon First Nations and communities, providing effective enforcement tools for remote public lands and better integrating management between the Government of Yukon and First Nations governments.

Recommendation 5: Local Transportation and Food Production

Local Transportation

Our *Clean Future* has several actions in this area, including supporting municipalities and First Nations to make investments in public and active transportation infrastructure, and continuing to incorporate active transportation in the design of highways and other Government of Yukon transportation infrastructure near communities. The Government of Yukon is also continuing to explore options to elevate use of public and active transportation options throughout the territory.

We appreciate your recommendation regarding reductions targets for single occupancy vehicles. You recommended using current levels to inform the reduction targets, however, we do not currently have a system in place that enables us to collect data on what fuel is used for single occupancy trips. That being said, we collaborate with the City of Whitehorse to undertake annual surveys on single occupancy trips, and we will continue to work towards our target outlined in *Our Clean Future*. In addition, we are undertaking several actions to lower emissions from the on-road transportation sector and exploring options to increase the use of public and active transportation.

Local Food Production

Your recommendation to support local food production initiatives in Yukon First Nations communities aligns well with actions in *Our Clean Future* and the *Cultivating Our Future* strategy. We are providing funding for community gardens and greenhouses, especially in rural communities and technical advice to assist First Nations and municipal governments with their agricultural and animal husbandry projects.

Regarding your recommendation to develop a winter food market to support local agriculture business, the Government of Yukon, in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, provides funding toward developing market opportunities, including farmers' markets. Your recommendation also aligns well with commitments identified in *Cultivating Our Future* to support agriculture infrastructure development, including cold storages that will extend availability of local food products, and the promotion and marketing of Yukon-grown food and products.

Finally, regarding your recommendation on food waste biofuel production, the Government of Yukon has worked with our partners at the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon Energy Corporation to explore this technology. To date, our research shows the relatively low volumes of organic waste in the territory, combined with high capital and operating costs, would make it difficult for biofuel production to be technically and economically feasible at this time. However, we know that technology is improving and our population is growing. We will continue to explore this, and other opportunities, as technology evolves. We continue to be committed to promoting renewable energy development in all its forms.

Recommendation 6: Knowledge Acquisition and Policy Creation

The Government of Yukon supports the principles of this recommendation. One of the core values of Our Clean Future is to make informed decisions which respectfully bring together traditional, scientific and local knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the value of existing advisory bodies, including the Youth Panel on Climate Change and the Yukon Climate Leadership Council. The Government of Yukon will not be exploring the creation of an additional advisory body at this time.

At the same time, the Government of Yukon has been working with First Nations governments and advisors towards an approach to working with Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. The guiding principles and prioritized implementation steps planned under this initiative will help build on work that is already underway within and outside of the Government of Yukon, to increase understanding and reflection of Indigenous ways in our actions and decisions.

Lastly, many environmental projects are currently being informed by multiple perspectives and diverse ways of knowing. For example, the annual State of the Environment report brings together scientific research with Indigenous knowledge to report on environmental trends which may influence government decision-making. The Department of Environment works with First Nations and Indigenous governments, Renewable Resources Councils and local communities to ensure local perspectives contribute to our wildlife management programs. This means working directly with community residents and Elders to expand our efforts in addressing important fish, wildlife and habitat matters. In developing the next version of Our Clean Future, the Government of Yukon will continue to look for opportunities to meaningfully bring together sound science, and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Recommendation 7: Mining and Extractive Industry

Our Clean Future acknowledges that mining plays a central role in transitioning to a green economy. Minerals and metals are vital to low carbon technologies – from batteries to wind turbines, solar panels and electric vehicles.

Respecting your recommendation on prohibiting corporate donations to political parties, the Yukon Legislative Assembly's Special Committee on Electoral Reform is examining electoral reform options, which may include contribution limits for individuals and organizations/corporations.

In addition, in 2020, the Government of Yukon established the Yukon Lobbyist Registry to make interactions between lobbyists and elected or public officials more open and transparent. Lobbyists (persons who attempt to influence a government decision) are required to register and note their lobbying activities in the Registry. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner is the registrar of the Yukon Lobbyist Registry.

Regarding your recommendations to separate the roles of policy legislation and enforcement within Energy, Mines and Resources, the Government of Yukon is working on new mining legislation. We have signed a Terms of Reference for the Successor Resource Legislation Working Group with Yukon First Nations and have begun work on this new legislation.

We are also working on developing a mining-intensity emissions target for Yukon's mines and expect the target to come into effect in 2022. We have engaged consultants to help us develop options and are analyzing how Canada's output-based carbon pricing system might affect the Yukon's planned intensity-based target. We will continue to work with industry to ensure the target that is established is robust and transparent. As part of this work, we will also launch new greenhouse gas emissions planning and reporting requirements for quartz mines.