

A Northern Vision: A Stronger  
North and a Better Canada



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English

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French

Kĩspin ki nitawih̄tin ē nihiyawih̄k ōma  
ācimōwin, tipwāsīnān.

Cree

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Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun,  
uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

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# A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada



# A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada

The North is one of the pillars upon which Canada has been built. Our history, geography and identity have shaped the Canadian identity. We are a rich diversity of people and a land of rugged, natural beauty. We are Aboriginal people who have inhabited the Arctic and sub-arctic since time immemorial, and we are people who grew up here or who have adopted the North as our home. It is where we build our lives, where we raise our children, and where we are working to develop and enrich our communities for future generations.

As Northerners, we are experiencing massive social, political, environmental and economic change — influences that reach beyond our northern borders. We are increasingly making the decisions that will shape our three territories in years ahead, creating benefits that we share with all Canadians.

Years of cooperation and shared interests between the governments of our three territories have set the groundwork for this northern vision. This is a framework for how we, the governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, will continue to work together to build a “true North, strong and free” — one that benefits all Northerners, and contributes to the well-being of all Canadians. This is a vision that has been crafted and inspired by contributions through years of formal and informal consultations with Northerners.

We, the three northern Premiers, foresee a North where people work in partnership with governments, organizations and the private sector towards a common goal; where governments have the capacity to govern and respond effectively to those they serve.



We are committed to building a North where:

- Self-reliant individuals live in healthy, viable communities.
- Aboriginal rights have been successfully negotiated and implemented.
- Northerners are the primary beneficiaries of northern resource development.
- Northern traditions of respect for the land and the environment are cherished.
- Strong, responsive governments make decisions and take actions that are anchored in the principles of responsible, sustainable development.
- The cultural heritage of Aboriginal people is preserved, promoted and able to flourish, and where all citizens celebrate their diversity.
- Northern governments have the tools and authority they need to manage their own affairs.
- The territories are strong contributing partners in a dynamic and secure Canadian federation.

The vision we share is of a prosperous and sustainable North that will benefit Northerners, and all Canadians, today, tomorrow and for years to come.



# The North's Time is Now

Dramatic transformation is taking place in the North. Nunavut was formed as a new territory just a few years ago. Settled land claims and self-government agreements are spanning the North. The transfer of province-like powers has occurred in Yukon, and work is underway for transfers in the other two territories. The North's renewable and non-renewable resource industries are booming — whether it's world-class diamond mines, proposed multi-billion dollar gas pipelines, the development of offshore fisheries, or a vibrant tourism industry. Northerners are creating and participating in new opportunities and ventures that are making the northern economy take off.

Change over the past 50 years has been rapid. Modern transportation and communications, institutionalized education and participation in the wage economy have had a major impact on language and culture for many Northerners. Many of us have moved from living on the land to participating in the global economy. Others have become respected international spokespersons for the environment and the richness of our unique cultures. Old and new ways of life are continuously finding a modern rhythm — a testament to our resilience, innovative spirit and willingness to work in partnership.

This document is about how we, the three territorial governments, wish to work with other governments and Northerners to achieve our priorities. It is also about determining our own future, having Northerners define the issues that affect them, and about engaging in partnership with the federal government and others to help shape the North.

This document is both a renewal and a beginning. We are renewing past collaborations and consultations, and committing to new partnerships within and beyond our three territories. This vision is the means to maintain the momentum for change, ensure that northern development is sustainable and safeguard the integrity of northern ecosystems for future generations of Canadians.



# Where We Live





# Sovereignty Through Sustainability

The North is defined not by lines or dots on a map, but by our people. Canada's sovereignty over northern lands, internal waters and waters covered by ice is rooted in history, international law and the occupancy and use of Aboriginal people. Northerners are the embodiment — the human dimension — of Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

But in order for Northerners to continue to act as stewards of Canadian sovereignty, the North needs sustainable communities. Northerners must be supported in building communities where we can live healthy lives; where opportunities for employment, education and training exist; where we can raise our families in adequate, suitable and affordable homes; where health and social services exist that are comparable to the rest of Canada; and where we can build a future for ourselves and our children.

There is tremendous potential for development that can contribute to the improved sustainability of the North. The strength of the northern economy is based on rich endowments of renewable, non-renewable and human resources. The northern labour force is young and skilled; billions of dollars are being invested by the private sector in mineral and gem exploration and development; the oil and gas sector is the focus of intense activity and great potential; hydro development holds great promise for clean energy; and offshore fisheries are developing into a competitive sector.

But economic development does not happen in a vacuum nor without the necessary investments. Our governments are under intense pressure. We need roads, small craft harbours, rail lines and improved airports to link economic projects to our communities. There is a need for regulatory reform, a

continued commitment to education and training, and fair resource revenue sharing agreements so that economic activity is encouraged, and Northerners receive their rightful benefits.

Research infrastructure in the territories, as well as individual knowledge and know-how, needs to be strengthened. It is not sufficient to study the North from afar. Broadening our own understanding of the North, and drawing upon traditional knowledge as well as modern science, will improve our collective ability to operate in an environment that is fragile to begin with, and undergoing serious and rapid change.

We must work in partnership with the federal government and the private sector to address transportation, energy, telecommunications, community, social and other northern infrastructure requirements that are pre-requisites to economic opportunities and securing Canada's borders. Our territorial governments will work with potential partners to better understand the broader cultural, economic, social and human dimensions of Arctic sovereignty. Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic region can only be asserted by building prosperous and sustainable communities in the North.



## ***Building Sustainable Communities***

*In order to build healthy and sustainable communities, our territories need to:*

- *Build capacity and infrastructure in all communities as a foundation for prosperity.*
- *Diversify our economies by investing in all sectors.*
- *Invest in cleaner, cheaper energy.*
- *Provide better access to essential services such as adequate housing and clean water.*
- *Train and educate our people so they can participate to the fullest extent in our economies.*
- *Facilitate safer and more affordable travel.*
- *Build more knowledge about natural resources.*
- *Increase northern innovation.*
- *Lower the high cost of living.*





## Towards Securing Sovereignty

As marine traffic in the North increases, so too will the need to ensure that the regulatory regime that governs shipping in Arctic waters is modern, effective and capable of balancing the competing interests of facilitating commerce and protecting the fragile northern ecosystem. At the same time, our three governments are collaborating with the federal government to build search and rescue, and emergency preparedness capacity so that residents and visitors alike can be confident that they will receive protection and support in the event of an emergency.

Our territories call on the federal government to work in collaboration with us to enhance monitoring and enforcement capabilities in the Arctic. This can be achieved through modern Coast Guard icebreakers, a permanent Canadian Forces Arctic Base, an Arctic deep-water port and strong support for the Canadian Rangers.



# Adapting to Climate Change

Northern lands and waters continue to be affected first and worst by climate change. Over time, these impacts — on northern ways of life, on northern infrastructure, on economic activities and opportunities — will be even more pronounced. Northerners are dealing with the effects of climate change right now and are looking for immediate and long-term solutions.

We, like the rest of Canada, have begun that work. We are encouraging a change in consumption patterns and are looking at cleaner energy sources and alternatives to diesel power. As we continue our work to mitigate the production of greenhouse gas emissions, Northerners are also being forced to adapt to current changes in the surrounding environment. Our three governments need to develop adaptation strategies that will maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts of climate change. Each territory has different priority issues and concerns and is working with stakeholders to move forward to develop solutions.

Individuals, governments, industry and the private sector can take a wide range of actions to address climate change adaptation. Our governments will take a leadership role in preparing for the future, and in finding ways to cooperate effectively.

Building on knowledge and partnerships that each territory is creating, we need to:

- Continue and expand research, monitoring and data collection supporting both scientific and traditional knowledge.
- Encourage sharing of information amongst northern governments and stakeholders and collaborate with traditional and community-based knowledge holders.
- Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure in communities and find ways to assist them to be more adaptive.
- Study how to modify engineering practices, codes and standards to address climate change impacts.

Challenges exist, however, because adaptation is potentially expensive. It requires significant planning and funding due to relatively small and remote populations, short building seasons, extreme weather conditions and high transportation costs.

This creates a unique opportunity for other governments, institutions and the private sector to support and partner with our territorial governments as we are now developing and implementing our own plans.



We need to find innovative and effective adaptive strategies that will better identify and maximize the benefits, and reduce the risks, and costs, of climate change. In many cases this may mean breaking new ground in adaptation research and planning. The lessons learned can provide a way forward for other circumpolar nations.

This would include developing regional climate change scenarios, vulnerability and risk assessments, community-based adaptation planning, and pilot projects to assess tool effectiveness. Such tools should help foster and enhance community planning capacity and expertise through partnerships to achieve sustainability.

We need to support development of adaptation tools that will help us plan for local and regional climate change impacts.

### ***Learning From the Past***

*A key element of research and science in the North includes traditional knowledge and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit — the uniting of traditional thought and action. Northerners, because we live here and have lived here for centuries, have deep reservoirs of traditional and local knowledge about the land and the environment and can make major contributions in this regard.*



*Our governments believe that building our understanding about the North in a way that integrates traditional and local knowledge with modern science and research is a foundation for achieving our priorities.*

### ***Leaving Northern Legacies***

*Our three governments, in partnership with other governments, must continue the momentum created by the International Polar Year, and invest in a northern Cold Climate Technology Centre and a Climate Change Research Centre of Excellence that will create benefits for all Northerners.*

### ***What is Adaptation?***

*Adaptation means taking actions that can prevent or reduce the negative impacts of climate change, and build on the positive impacts. It means managing risks in a way that make economic and social activities, as well as the natural environment, more resilient to change. Adaptation provides a way to ensure more sustainable and self-sufficient development.*

*Climate change adaptation is essential to safeguard the North's ability to build healthy, safe and sustainable communities.*

# Speaking with a Northern Voice

Canada is an Arctic nation, one of only eight countries whose borders stretch into the far North. While our territories account for fully one-third of this country's landmass, many of the pressing issues that the North faces reach beyond our jurisdiction, and can only be addressed through broad international collaboration.

Circumpolar forums are rapidly becoming more important in the global discussions around economic development, environmental protection and transportation. The voices of Aboriginal northerners have often been the first to speak in these forums. Northern issues must be addressed by Northern voices. We need to build on existing cultural, societal and trade ties with our circumpolar neighbours.

Partnerships and cooperation between Canada and other countries need to begin with partnerships and cooperation within Canada to reduce barriers to trade, provide support for export development and establish viable air links for cargo and passengers across the circumpolar region.

Our three territories will make other governments more aware of northern issues that can help drive the international agenda. We need to meet more frequently with the Canadian Aboriginal representatives on the Arctic Council to better understand common issues and priorities and to foster a unified northern position that will better inform the federal government in its dealings with our international neighbours.

The territories will continue to support increased efforts by Canada to strengthen bilateral relations with our Arctic neighbours to help ensure that our circumpolar interests remain a priority area for multilateral cooperation.

## ***Northerners Representing Ourselves***

*Northerners' ability to speak with a northern voice is imperative to sustaining Canada's northern advantage. Northern environmental, social and economic development must be advanced with our participation in forums such as the Arctic Council.*

*Further, our territorial governments must be consulted on the selection of a Circumpolar Ambassador. This must be an individual who is a Northerner, who understands the North and northern issues, and can speak with a northern voice.*



# The Circumpolar North

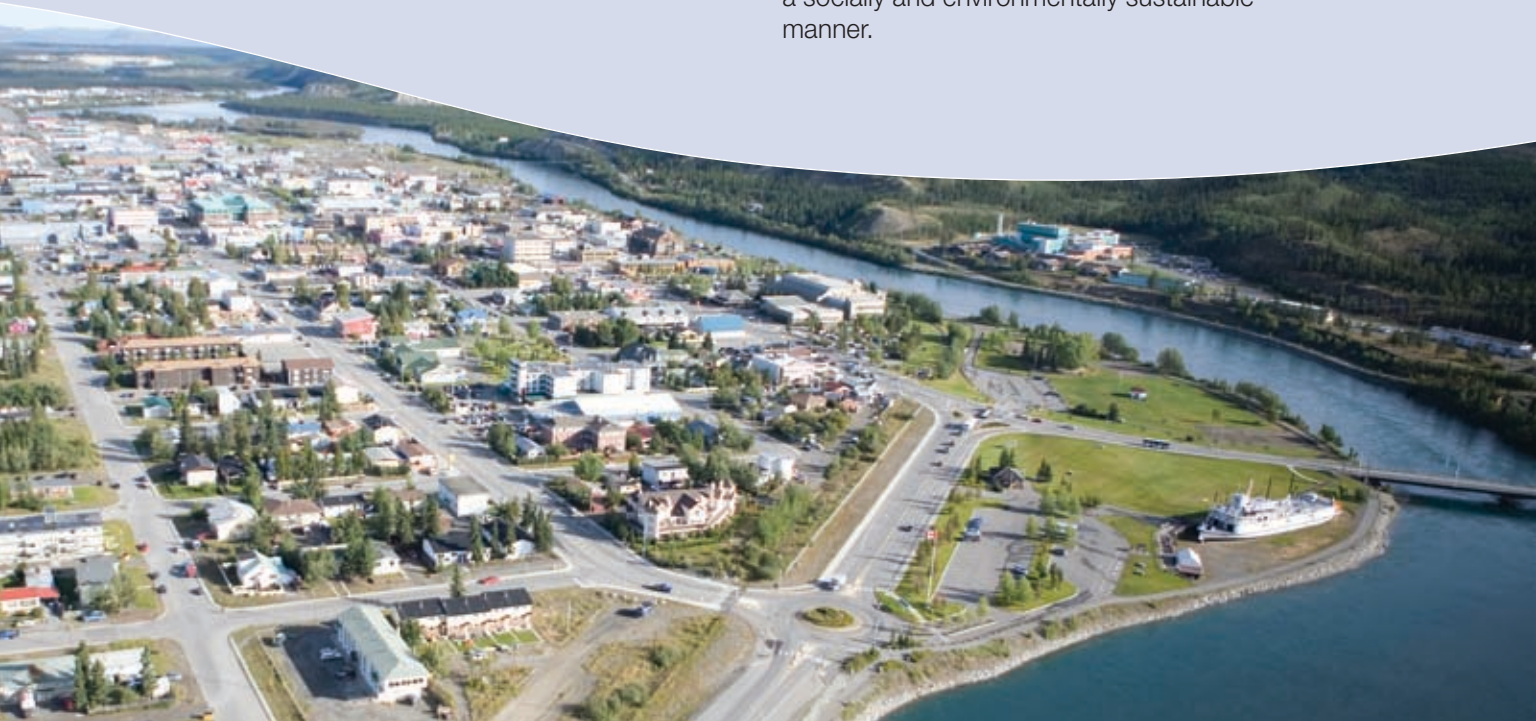


# Moving Forward in Partnership

This document is an initial step in a longer-term process of sustained cooperation and partnership to advance our governments' northern vision. Achieving our vision will require ongoing attention, coordination and evaluation of progress. This northern vision will be the means for marshalling our activities and resources within our governments, with the federal and provincial governments, with northern Aboriginal governments and organizations, with non-governmental organizations and with the private sector. We need to maintain the momentum for change, ensure that northern development is sustainable and safeguard the integrity of northern ecosystems for future generations.

But there are still many challenges to overcome. Not all province-like responsibilities have been devolved. There are outstanding land claims and self-government agreements to be concluded and, for settled land claims, unresolved implementation obligations to be clarified and fulfilled. To provide Northerners with effective, efficient governance, more work is necessary to build, strengthen and finance public and Aboriginal institutions. It will be critical to ensure that the territorial governments and the existing and emerging Aboriginal governments work together to support economic progress and to foster social cohesion.

Our governments believe strongly that Northerners are best positioned to decide our own priorities and to manage our own affairs. Northern governments must have the necessary tools to ensure that our residents are the primary beneficiaries of development; that we have a say in the decisions affecting us; and that development is undertaken in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner.







## ***Working Together***

*The 2007 Canada Winter Games showcased the cooperation of our three territories with Whitehorse hosting the first ever Canada Games in the far North. Our three governments furthered our commitment to creating legacies that benefit all Northerners through the LookUpNorth.ca joint marketing program.*



# A Living Document

This is a living document that will build on the full range of strategies, policies and programs of governments, and respond to changing circumstances to remain consistent with the evolving priorities of Northerners.

There are many positive signs to show that we are moving in the right direction. There are also many competing priorities. Success in dealing with them will depend on seizing the strategic advantage of working together for a common cause.

Our thinking needs to be innovative and resourceful. We need to be flexible in our approaches, recognizing the different realities of life in the North. As a result of our small population, located far from the majority of Canadians, national programs designed for other regions often are inappropriate in the North. Policy proposals and program decisions must be conscious of the political, demographic and geographic realities of the North.

We are well aware that, for the most part, sovereignty and security, and international issues remain within the decision-making purview of the federal government. Our three territorial governments propose, however, that in building a new relationship with the North, that we be partners at the table in identifying the challenges, finding better solutions, and helping to create sound public policy that is appropriate to the North.





