

A NORTHERN VISION:

BUILDING A BETTER NORTH

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES | YUKON | NUNAVUT



The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in a dark, starry sky. The lights are a mix of green and blue, with a prominent vertical streak of green light. Below the sky, there is a dark, silhouetted horizon line, possibly representing a body of water or a distant shore.

A NORTHERN VISION: BUILDING A BETTER **NORTH**

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Introduction

As Premiers of the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut, we are committed to working together to develop the North as a region of vibrant, healthy communities with economies that offer sound investment and diverse employment opportunities, a flourishing private sector and protection of the environment for future generations.

A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada, originally published in 2007, described how the territories wished to work together to achieve our common goals and engage in partnerships to shape the future of Canada's North. **A Northern Vision: Building a Better North** renews that commitment.

We will continue to work with all levels of government within each territory and beyond our borders to achieve our mutual goals.

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Context

Since *A Northern Vision* was published in 2007, the document has been used to guide work on the shared priorities of the territories. Here are some of the territories' joint achievements.

Pan-territorial cooperation in support of healthy, sustainable communities resulted in the release of the *Northern Transportation Systems Assessment* report and the renewal of additional federal funding to offset the higher costs of delivering health care services in the three territories.

Together, the three territories worked to ensure positive changes to the federal Northern Housing Fund. Housing is an important factor in ensuring that communities are healthy and sustainable and housing construction provides work and training opportunities for private sector contractors as well as northern citizens.

Strengthening circumpolar relations has also been a priority, and we have reached out to our circumpolar neighbours on a variety of issues.

In 2011, the territories released the *Pan-Territorial Adaptation Strategy: Moving Forward on Climate Change in*

Canada's North. This report identifies six approaches to climate change adaptation, acknowledging that impacts vary widely across the three territories. In the same year, *Paths to a Renewable North: A Pan-Territorial Energy Inventory* was published, outlining current and future renewable energy resources, and recognizing the distinct opportunities and challenges faced by each territory.

The territories continue to work together on a number of fronts, including:

- monitoring our shared renewable resources, such as caribou and polar bears
- researching the cumulative effects of development projects on the environment and wildlife species
- researching the effects of climate change on permafrost
- collaborating on social issues



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- speaking with a common voice about the infrastructure needs of the North

National and international interest in the North has grown since *A Northern Vision* was published in 2007. Immediately following its release, the federal government published its own *Northern Strategy*, which echoed the direction the northern Premiers had taken, emphasizing healthy, sustainable communities, and the economic potential of all three territories.

Recent changes in the North include:

- The Northwest Territories has negotiated a devolution agreement with the federal government to take on responsibilities related to land and water, similar to that in Yukon. Negotiations continue in Nunavut.
- Canada's term as Arctic Council chair (2013 to 2015) has brought international partners and projects to the nation's northern regions, enhancing our relationships and profile across the circumpolar world, as well as with non-Arctic states.
- The federal government's *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy* delineates many issues in common with the territories, including promoting economic and social development, protecting the Arctic environment, and empowering the people of the North through devolution of political power.
- Climate change continues to cause significant costs and emerging challenges for the North. Shrinking northern sea ice, for instance, could open a shorter shipping route from Europe to Asia and result in future economic opportunities through increased access for resource development and tourism. On the other hand, it also presents increased potential for pollution and infrastructure damage. Many Arctic marine species depend on sea ice, and its loss creates a challenge for northern biodiversity.
- Modern treaties and self-government agreements have enabled Canada's Aboriginal peoples in the North to manage their own affairs, lands and resources. These agreements are constitutionally protected and continue to shape the future of all northerners.



TESSA MACINTOSH
GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT

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A Vision for the Future

Our shared vision for the three territories is a prosperous, healthy and sustainable North that will benefit northerners and all Canadians now and in the future.

To achieve this vision, we have established four pillars and a set of principles. The four pillars are:

- productive and engaged citizens
- energy
- infrastructure
- governance

Supporting each of these pillars is responsible environmental stewardship. The land and waters of the territories

are central to the lives of Aboriginal people and all northerners. Legislative and regulatory processes at the federal, territorial and community levels exist to ensure the protection of the northern ecosystem while permitting responsible resource development. We must also ensure that we respond and adapt effectively to environmental changes now and to those that occur in the future.



Responsible Environmental Stewardship

Respect for the land is a fundamental northern value. The land is a source of healthy food and clean water, and is central to our identity and our spiritual well-being.

The settlement of land claims, along with the transfer of management of resources and the devolution of decision-making authority from the federal to the territorial governments, means that northerners are able to guide sustainable development and protect significant areas of land.

Canada's North is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change on fragile

ecosystems, permafrost and sea ice, and these impacts are already apparent. We must continue to work to reduce emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change. Further, we will continue to adapt to the realities of climate change.

A healthy environment is essential for healthy communities and healthy individuals. Development of non-renewable resources needs to take place in a way that respects the environment and protects the land.

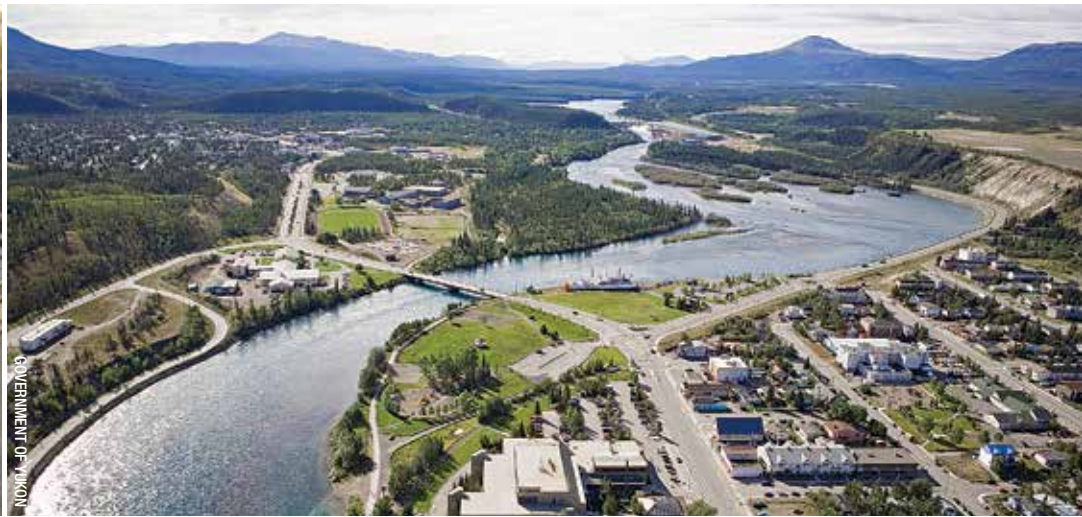


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Principles

We are committed to building a North that demonstrates the following principles.

- Self-reliant individuals live in healthy, vibrant communities with opportunities to build their capacity through education and skills training, enabling them to reach their full potential.
- The cultural heritage of Aboriginal people is preserved, promoted and able to flourish, and the history and diversity of all citizens is celebrated.
- The northern tradition of respect for the land and the environment is embraced.
- Aboriginal land claims and self-government agreements have been successfully negotiated and continue to be implemented by the parties.
- Northerners will be the primary beneficiaries of northern resource development.
- The economic potential of the territories is fully realized through a robust private sector, and by the construction of strategic infrastructure that encourages investment, enables job creation and improves standards of living, in partnership with Canada.
- Northerners have the tools and authority to manage their own affairs.
- Strong, responsive governments make decisions and take actions that are anchored in the principles of responsible, sustainable development.
- Northern communities have access to the research and information they need to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of environmental changes.
- The territories are full, participating members of the Canadian federation, contributing to the nation's prosperity.
- The territories engage with the international community on issues of importance to the circumpolar North.



GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT

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Pillar 1 – Productive and Engaged Citizens

Opportunity is essential for quality of life. Territorial governments are committed to enabling northerners to participate in the public policy decisions that affect their lives.

Territorial governments are working to ensure that northerners have access to training programs and other supports to develop the skills that will enable them to find employment and contribute to their communities. We see a North where territorial governments continue to promote self-reliance and where northerners have a sense of well-being and control over the economic and political decisions that affect their lives.

Children and youth make up a significant proportion of the North's population. Early childhood development is the foundation

for healthy, productive individuals. A strong education system is critical to ensuring that young people have the tools to participate in their communities and the economy. Investment in early learning, kindergarten, improved high school completion rates, and post-secondary education participation provides a solid foundation for success. Those who are currently employed, as well as those seeking jobs, need access to relevant, flexible and practical skills training that will enable them to benefit from development in their region.



GOVERNMENT OF YUKON



DAVE BROSHA

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When citizens are healthy, they are able to be productive and engaged. Territorial governments are working to ensure that northerners have access to effective, culturally grounded health promotion and prevention services, as well as quality health care that is patient-centred and sustainable. We are committed to ensuring that northern residents in all communities have access to primary and acute care services, including mental health, suicide prevention and addictions treatment programs.

Language and culture strengthen our citizens and communities and create identity. Cultural awareness is one of

the North's greatest assets. Territorial governments support preserving and promoting the cultural diversity of the North, especially its Aboriginal heritage. We will continue to ensure that government action respects northerners' cultural backgrounds.

We are committed to building a North where citizens are safe and have full opportunity to be productive and engaged in their community, territory, country and the world.



GOVERNMENT OF YUKON
GOVERNMENT OF YUKON

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Pillar 2 – Energy

Reliable and affordable energy systems, and related infrastructure, are the backbone of a sustainable economy.

Energy generation and use in all three territories is at capacity. In the North, electricity is supplied through a mixture of hydro-electric and diesel generation.

Hydro requires expensive backup systems. Diesel generation is expensive because of the high cost to purchase and transport fuel. Construction of major energy infrastructure is also very expensive for small northern markets, as is connecting to southern grids. The overall result is a significant financial burden for industry, communities and households.

High energy prices affect the cost of everything from home heating fuel to groceries and other necessary goods, resulting in a very high cost of living which has a significant impact on the health and well-being of northerners.

Reliable and affordable energy is also essential for economic development. Small- and medium-sized businesses provide jobs and important services in their communities. Rising energy prices drive up overhead costs for these companies, making it difficult for them to compete. The high cost of energy in the territories and the lack of strategic energy infrastructure discourage investment and inhibit economic growth.

Realizing the full potential of the North means unlocking our resource wealth, and a dependable source of energy is vital for the operation of the resource sector. High energy costs are a barrier for new resource development projects, the pathway to future economic prosperity.



The territories are looking for creative ways to finance capital investments in energy, such as partnerships between governments and industry, where appropriate. Experience in other jurisdictions shows that hydro-electric power is a key driver in attracting industrial-scale projects. Strategic investment in northern hydro-electric development and the expansion of electrical transmission networks would provide a secure, economical and environmentally-friendly source of electricity for industry, communities and families.

Given the current projections which suggest that climate change will have substantial impacts in the North, the territories seek to develop alternative sources of energy with minimal impact on the environment suitable for small, often isolated communities. Alternative energy sources such as biomass, wind, and solar power offer worthwhile prospects for niche applications and can also be competitive in remote locations. Liquefied natural gas is promising as a less carbon-intensive energy option in the North, and is likely to play a key role in electricity generation, heating, and ultimately, in transportation.



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Pillar 3 – Infrastructure

Robust, reliable infrastructure is the foundation of strong communities and resilient economies in the North. Having the right infrastructure in place enables investments that produce economic benefits for northerners and all Canadians. Infrastructure stimulates trade and makes Canada more competitive and productive globally.

Roads and airports are essential for ensuring a supply of affordable, nutritious food and other goods. Water treatment facilities provide clean drinking water. Hospitals, health centres and schools deliver essential services for the health and development of our residents, enabling them to live, work and contribute to their community.

Good quality, affordable housing is a precondition for the health and well-being of people and their ability to participate in society. Many northern communities are very small and lack a private housing market, so construction of new housing depends largely on government investment. These communities have a disproportionately lower availability of housing units, resulting in a much higher

incidence of overcrowding and poor dwelling conditions than in southern Canada. Construction of new housing is complicated by significantly higher costs resulting from the transportation of materials to remote communities, lack of locally available skilled labour and the challenge of building in extreme temperatures.

A well-maintained transportation system helps improve the flow of people and goods, reduces the cost of living and improves quality of life. All-weather roads, paved runways, rail links and access to ports are all part of modern society. While the rest of Canada may take these for granted, there is still much work to be done to build these components of the North's infrastructure. Development



of Arctic ports and coastal access will provide a direct shipping point for resource development in northern regions, support future oil and gas development, attract new industry, and expand international trade opportunities.

Modern, durable communications technology enables northerners to live their lives as global citizens, connecting them to their neighbours across the circumpolar North, and all around the world. Access to the electronic world through fast, reliable broadband and modern cellular communications enables northerners to participate in the rapidly evolving electronic marketplace, expand their educational qualifications through distance learning and online post-secondary courses, and brings the country together.

Our service and tourism industries offer unique northern experiences to visitors to

the territories. Improving infrastructure and sharing strategies to increase and improve the tourism experience will help diversify our economies and showcase our unique ecosystems and cultures.

Ultimately, a strong infrastructure network gives people choices about accessing employment, services, business, investment and cultural opportunities and is key to creating new and lasting jobs for northerners and vibrant and strong communities.

There are many challenges that must be addressed to ensure the North can grow to meet the needs of future generations. It is important for us, as northerners, to develop a strong, ambitious, forward-looking plan for our essential infrastructure. This is a long-term plan and will require strong partnerships between the private sector and all levels of government.



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Pillar 4 – Governance

As northerners, we have a long history of developing our own solutions for our distinct set of circumstances. We are taking control of our environmental, economic, social and political destinies. It is essential that we are able to pursue our own priorities, and create the kind of future we want to see for ourselves, our children and future generations.

The North faces challenges that are unique in Canada. In this regard, we have much in common with other governments around the circumpolar North. Reaching out to our circumpolar neighbours through bodies such as the Arctic Council to share best practices and collaborate on important issues is essential. Through these relationships we can ensure that we have access to the best and current northern thinking as we seek to shape the future of the territories.

Partnerships with Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal governments are essential for building a healthy and respectful northern society. Finalizing, securing and implementing Aboriginal land, resources and self-government agreements within

the territories will enable all governments to move forward on their mutual priorities in cooperation and with confidence. These partnerships have been, and will continue to be, essential to the success of the resource development projects that benefit northern communities, territorial economies, and all Canadians. We will continue to be informed by the rich depth of Aboriginal traditional knowledge. Building our understanding about the North in a way that integrates traditional and local knowledge with modern science and research will serve us well as we work toward our priorities.

The territories have the potential to fuel nation-building projects for the benefit of all Canadians. It is through partnerships

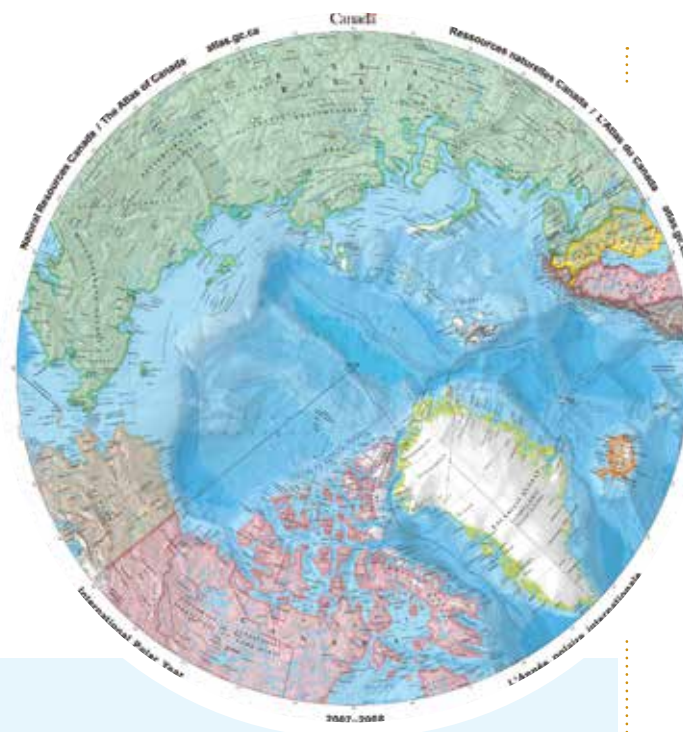


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with federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments, as well as the private sector, that we can turn this potential into a reality.

Devolution of province-like powers from the federal government has enabled residents of Yukon and the Northwest Territories to pursue their own priorities. Concluding devolution negotiations in Nunavut will assist in achieving its self-determination.

*Source: Natural Resources Canada, Atlas of Canada.
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Partners in Development

The North is a land of great opportunity, rich with resources that fuel the nation's economy. While devolution means that greater benefits from these resources flow directly to northerners, the territories will only be able to realize our full potential through a strong, continuing partnership

with Canada. Investments in strategic transportation, energy and communication infrastructure are essential to the development of the territorial economies, which in turn supports northerners and contributes to Canada's prosperity.



GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT

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A Northern Vision for the Future

The North is a region of tremendous beauty and potential. We are rich in the natural resources that drive today's economy and the economy of tomorrow. More importantly, we are rich in innovative, hard-working people who know the land and have the talent and determination to shape the North so that it meets the needs of northerners now and in the future.

Awareness of this potential is growing across Canada and around the world. The territories have been building strong relationships with each other, with all levels of government, and with the private sector. We are ready to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves. We are ready for the future.

This document is part of an ongoing process of cooperation and partnership among the three territorial governments. We have accomplished much over the past few years, and will continue to maintain the momentum for change. Ensuring that we are well-positioned to develop our economies in a sustainable manner will continue to be a priority.

We strongly believe that northerners are best positioned to manage our own affairs. Northern governments are developing the necessary tools to ensure that our

residents are the primary beneficiaries of development, that we have a say in the decisions that affect us, and that development is undertaken in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

We will continue to be flexible in our approaches, recognizing the different realities of life in a remote region. We will continue to engage with our partners at the provincial and federal level to ensure that national programs and policy decisions can be adapted to meet specific northern needs.

A Northern Vision: Building a Better North is a living document that will guide our work on pan-territorial priorities, as we collaborate to meet the changing circumstances and evolving challenges of life in the North, for the benefit of all northerners.





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