

Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan
Public Consultation 2012-2013
What We Heard Report

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Table of Contents

- Executive Summary..... 4
- Introduction 7
- What we heard 7
- Sources of public input 7
 - Open Houses 8
 - On-line..... 8
 - E-mail 8
 - Letter 8
 - Voice-mail 9
 - Fax 9
 - Feedback Forms 9
 - Form Letters..... 9
 - Petitions 9
 - Postcard Campaigns..... 10
- Limitations 10
- Disclaimer..... 11
 - Not a statistical analysis..... 11
 - Perspectives are not facts 11
- Themes: Selection and Organization 11
- Thematic Summary Layout 12
 - Key themes from all sources..... 12
 - Theme 1: Accept the Final Recommended Plan (FRP)..... 13
 - Theme 2: Reject the Final Recommended Plan (FRP)..... 13
 - Theme 3: The Peel Watershed is an irreplaceable wilderness ecosystem 14
 - Theme 4: The Final Recommended Plan (FRP) is a fair, balanced and a reasonable compromise 15
 - Theme 5: The Final Recommended Plan (FRP) is neither balanced nor fair..... 16
 - Theme 6: Respect the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA)..... 17
 - Theme 7: Process has been undemocratic and disrespectful 18
 - Theme 8: Exhibit courageous leadership..... 19
 - Theme 9: Future land use planning has been undermined 20
 - Theme 10 Roads and wilderness are incompatible 21

Theme 11: New Designations and concepts are not a land use plan	22
Theme 12: Unhappiness with the Open House consultation format	23
Theme 13: Preference for 100% protection of the Peel Watershed	24
Theme 14: Opposed to the Restricted Use Wilderness Area (RUWA) designations	24
Theme 15: Support for the Restricted Use Wilderness Area (RUWA) designations.....	25
Theme 16: Support for the Yukon government proposals	26
Other themes	26
Water quality	27
Importance of tourism	27
No need to extract resources now.....	27
Active management requires enforcement capacity	27
Conclusion.....	27

Executive Summary

Context

This document is a report of what was heard during the four-month-long public consultations on the Peel Watershed. In essence this document is a summary that describes, in a few dozen pages, what was said in the several thousand pages of public input. As with any summary much is lost in terms of detail, nuances and the emotionality and voice of the writer. But, hopefully, much is gained in terms of structure, relevance, objectivity and key information.

As part of the context, it is also important for the reader to know that the public consultations took place in an environment that included considerable media attention, public demonstrations, advocacy campaigns and lobbying. Public consultations undertaken in such a context are likely to elicit more polarized views than similar consultations undertaken in an otherwise neutral environment.

All the written comments provided to the consultation process were read by the writer and then categorized into themes. The most frequent and/or significant themes are detailed in the text that follows.

To ensure that the reader gets a good sense of the actual words of the various respondents numerous quotations have been used throughout the document. From the writer's perspective, these quotations are central to respecting the time and effort of the thousands of people who submitted their comments. Although a respondent may not find his or her words quoted, they will be able to read actual comments by real people that hopefully echo their own thoughts and perspectives.

This executive summary does not repeat every theme described in this document rather it focuses on four major perspectives, oft repeated by respondents, and brought to light, by the wealth of feedback received in response to the Yukon government consultation call. Together these four major perspectives encapsulate the most prevalent and/or significant perspectives of respondents. However, while these four perspectives present the "big picture" it is the themes listed in the full text of this report that illustrate and detail the broad range of perspectives contained in the public input.

Each reader must decide for himself or herself the veracity, accuracy and merit of what has been said. In that context, the reader is strongly encouraged to read the "Disclaimer" section of this document, before drawing any conclusions.

Major Perspectives of Respondents

Perspective 1: The Peel Watershed is an irreplaceable global asset

From this perspective, the Peel Watershed is more than an amalgam of various lands and rivers; it is a complete boreal ecosystem that, to this day, is still virtually intact. Any significant fragmentation of that ecosystem by virtue of the development of roads irrevocably degrades the ecosystem and no amount of reclamation or post development remediation can bring it back to its original wilderness status. Effectively, once the damage is done it is too late, the asset is lost forever.

Also, from this perspective the Yukon government has a moral obligation to consider not only the desires of Yukoners but those of all the people regardless of their place of residence. From this perspective, there are places in the world that are just too precious and unique to destroy and the Peel Watershed is such a place. The fact that several thousand people from across the world took the time to submit comments demonstrates how strongly global citizens feel about their right to have the Peel Watershed preserved for them and their descendants. From this perspective, governments, including the Yukon government, are stewards of the land not owners who may dispose of the land as they see fit.

Perspective 2: The Final Peel Recommended Plan (FRP) is fair and balanced

From this perspective, the FRP epitomizes what a fair and balanced land use plan should look like. It is seen as fair because it was arrived at through an extensive, open, transparent and non-partisan process of public consultation involving, affected First Nations and public governments, the general public and key stakeholders and was undertaken over an extended period of time allowing ample time for research and thoughtful input. It is also fair because it allows for revisions in the future should circumstances make it necessary or desirable to warrant amendments. It is balanced because although First Nations and a large number of Yukoners and Canadians were demanding 100% protection of the Peel Watershed, the final plan recommends 55% permanent protection, 25% interim protection and 20% open to development. From this perspective, any claim that the FRP should be modified because it lacks balance is seen as manipulative.

Perspective 3: The Yukon government is not following the rules

From this perspective, there are clear rules as to what is, and is not, allowable in terms of land use planning and the associated consultative processes. These rules are clearly laid out in the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) to which the Yukon government is a signatory. Chapter 11 of that agreement details the rules for the development of the plan, the opportunities for input and the consultative process. According to this perspective the Yukon government is failing to abide by the rules for a number of reasons. First among these is the view that the government had ample opportunity to submit its substantive reservations with the Recommended Plan as early as 2009. Second, the Yukon government should not have waited until February 2012 to outline its “principles” for the creation of the Final Recommended Plan. Third, by waiting until October 2012 to introduce its proposed new land use designations and concepts the government obfuscated the consultation process which legally should have been on the Final Recommended Plan only and not on its own proposals. Fourth, even if the Yukon government had the right to consult on its own proposals, these are so vague and unclear and the designations and concepts so devoid of any supporting evidence as to their validity or ability to be successfully implemented, that they fail to meet any reasonable test of legitimacy in terms of inclusion into any land use plan and even more so as amendments to the FRP. Finally, from this perspective, by failing to provide substantive input into the legitimate land use planning process when it had the opportunity, and moral obligation to do so, the Yukon government is in breach of the rules.

Perspective 4: The Yukon government must balance development with protection

From this perspective, the Yukon government cannot allow itself to be held hostage to the self-interests of lobby organizations that advance wilderness preservation at the exclusion of virtually all other considerations and especially jobs, prosperity and the economy. Also, from this perspective, it is the role of government to protect the public good which includes the right to pursue economic opportunities so long as those are consistent with legal and regulatory frameworks. From this perspective it is ridiculous for environmental and other organizations to suggest that a few well regulated non-renewable resource extraction enterprises scattered across some 67,500 square kilometres (i.e. an area the size of the province of New Brunswick) will destroy the watershed. In addition, from this perspective, the holders of commercial interests legally secured pursuant to Yukon legislation such as the Quartz Mining Act and other relevant statutes, must have their rights protected by government or be compensated for those rights, should the government decide to proceed with expropriation. Finally, from this perspective, eco-tourism based enterprises, which are touted by environmentalists as benign in terms of their impact on the environment and are considered renewable, sustainable and a cornerstone of the future economy, have at least as large a footprint on wilderness as do mining exploration activities. Furthermore, from this view, eco-tourism operations support only a few low paying seasonal jobs. Also, unlike industrial type activities, these so called “green” enterprises enjoy a virtual monopoly over the land without any reasonable or adequate compensation to the “treasury” as is the case with royalty regimes.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that Yukoners, Canadians and people from across the world are passionate about the future of the Peel Watershed. Overall 10,175 submissions were received over the course of the four months of public consultations and of those 2,781 originated in Yukon. And respondents were not limited to Canada or the United States, but represented virtually every corner of the globe, with submissions from individuals and organizations from North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The writer has made every effort to fairly and accurately reflect the perspectives of respondents. To do this, the writer has systematically synthesized all the comments related to a specific theme into a brief respondent perspective statement. The writer’s synthesis is intended to capture the essence of what multiple respondents had to say on a specific topic. Further, in order for the reader to be able to make an informed judgment about the fairness and accuracy of the writer’s words in relation to the perspectives of respondents, several actual respondent comments are quoted and included in support of each perspective for the specific purpose of validation and are thus integral to the report.

Also, as a result of this process of summarizing and synthesizing, it is inevitable that some perspectives have not been elaborated upon and that others, although contained in this document, may have been over simplified and/or inadequately characterized. The writer acknowledges and regrets this probability. But ultimately, choices had to be made and the result of those choices means that not all respondent perspectives could be detailed within this report. However, the complete text of every submission received during the consultation process is available on-line at: www.peelconsultation.ca

Introduction

On October 23, 2012 the Yukon government announced the start of the public consultations on the Final Recommended Plan (FRP).

Yukoners and residents from affected communities in the Northwest Territories (NWT) were invited to provide input on the Final Recommended Plan and on a suite of land use designation tools which could be applied in the Peel Watershed Region.

The public was invited to provide comments at Open Houses that were held in four Yukon and four NWT communities in the months of December 2012 as well as January and February 2013. Comments could also be submitted online, by conventional mail as well as by voicemail or fax. Public input was accepted until February 25, 2013.

What we heard

Throughout the consultation period the public was assured that all input would be carefully compiled, organized and posted electronically soon after the conclusion of the consultation period. This compilation can be found at: www.peelconsultation.ca. In addition the Yukon government contracted the writer to summarize into a brief but comprehensive document all the input received.

This document is intended to provide the reader with a summary of all input received organized into clearly structured themes. This structuring was accomplished through an iterative process of reading, re-reading and then coding all input into broad categories. Such a process makes it possible to quantify and describe responses in a number of meaningful ways as is the case in this report.

Sources of public input

The Yukon government encouraged the public to provide input by the following means:

- At Open Houses;
- On-line at (www.peelconsultation.ca);
- By e-mail to (peel.consultation@gov.yk.ca);
- By letter to: Peel Consultation, Government of Yukon;
- By voice-mail at (867) 667-3183 or 1-800-661-0404 extension 3183; and
- By fax to (867) 393-7421.

In addition to the means of input provided for by the Yukon government, members of the public also provided input by the following means:

- Petitions;
- Form letters; and
- Postcard campaigns.

The various sources of input, which together account for the entire compilation of submissions received over the course of the consultation period, are briefly described below.

Open Houses

These were held in eight communities (four in Yukon and four in the NWT) as follows:

Community	Date	Time	# of visits*
Whitehorse	November 26 to 30, 2012	11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.	385
Mayo	December 3, 2012	3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	37
Dawson	December 4, 2012	3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	99
Old Crow	January 14, 2013	1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	28
Aklavik	January 15, 2013	1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	6
Tsiigehtchic	January 22, 2013	1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	24
Inuvik	January 24, 2013	12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	29
Fort McPherson	February 12, 2013	1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	240
			Total = 848

*Please note that it was possible for one individual to attend more than one Open House or, in the case of Whitehorse, to visit more than once. The numbers therefore reflect visits to the open houses and not the number of unique visitors.

Each Open House venue included map displays as well as tables set up as information-stations where members of the public could ask questions and/or discuss their views with Yukon government staff. In addition, where a formal request was made, the Open Houses accommodated opportunities for visitors to make public statements in a Town Hall type format.

A number of individuals who attended the Open Houses chose to provide written input during their visit or visits. Some posted comments on flip charts for all visitors to see while others placed their comments in the "Comments Drop Box" that was available at every Open House venue. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

On-line

The Peel Consultation website (www.peelconsultation.ca) was structured to include an online feedback form with the same four questions as the hard copy detachable version mailed to every Yukon household. The online form also included a section that allowed individuals to provide additional comments. In total 635 individuals completed the on-line feedback form. The breakdown of those responses was 92% from Yukon, 2% from the Northwest Territories and the remaining 6% from either Canada or from international locations. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

E-mail

A total of 788 e-mails were received. Some of the e-mails included attachments such as photos and/or other documents deemed relevant by the respondents. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Letter

A total of 201 respondents sent their input by letter. There were two basic types of letters:

- Personal: Letters sent by individuals who wanted to submit their own comments in a non-electronic format; and
- Position: Letterhead type documents sent on behalf of various entities that included clubs, associations, societies, chambers, foundations, councils, incorporated businesses and First Nation governments.

This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Voice-mail

A total of 10 voice-mails were received and subsequently transcribed. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Fax

A total of 14 faxes were received. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Feedback Forms

As part of its consultation process the Yukon government sent a “We want to hear from you” brochure to every Yukon household. The back cover of this document consisted of a postage-prepaid detachable feedback form that gave prospective respondents the opportunity to provide detailed comments on four specific questions as well as allowed people to provide any additional comments they wanted to share. A total of 175 feedback forms were received. This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Form Letters

These consist of identical, or nearly identical, letters that were sent by individuals in support of a position taken by an entity. Most individuals simply submitted the text of the form letter under their own name without any changes. However, some individuals expanded the text of the form letter with additional comments.

The five different form letters are briefly described below:

Form Letter Name	# of forms submitted
CPAWS	585
THFN and CTFN	171
YCS	85
NNDFN Form Letter # 1	70
NNDFN Form Letter # 2 (First Nation elders)	24

This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Petitions

A total of four petitions comprising a total of 6, 812 signatures were submitted for consideration as part of the Yukon government consultations. All four petitions supported acceptance of the FRP.

The four different petitions are briefly described below:

Petition Name	# of petition signatories
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CPAWS	5,058
YCS and Big Wild	1,729
Ross River	21
NNDFN	4

This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Postcard Campaigns

Similar to form letters, these consisted of pre-printed postcards. A total of two postcard campaigns comprising a total of 301 signatures were submitted. Both campaigns were opposed to the FRP.

The two different postcard campaigns are briefly described below:

Postcard Campaign Name	# of postcards
Yukon Chamber of Mines	299
Unknown source	2

This input forms part of the compilation of submissions received.

Limitations

This document is a report of what was heard during the four-month-long public consultations on the Peel Watershed. In essence this document is a **summary** that describes, in a few dozen pages, what was said in the several thousand pages of public input. As with any summary much is lost in terms of detail, nuances and the emotionality and voice of the writer. But, hopefully, much is gained in terms of structure, relevance, objectivity and key information.

The writer has made every effort to fairly and accurately reflect the perspectives of respondents. To do this, the writer has systematically synthesized all the comments related to a specific theme into a brief respondent perspective statement. The writer's synthesis is intended to capture the essence of what multiple respondents had to say on a specific topic. Further, in order for the reader to be able to make an informed judgment about the fairness and accuracy of the writer's words in relation to the perspectives of respondents, several actual respondent comments are quoted and included in support of each perspective for the specific purpose of validation and are thus integral to the report.

Also, as a result of this process of summarizing and synthesizing, it is inevitable that some perspectives have not been elaborated upon and that others, although contained in this document, may have been over simplified and/or inadequately characterized. The writer acknowledges and regrets this probability. But ultimately, choices had to be made and the result of those choices means that not all respondent perspectives could be detailed within this report. However, the complete text of every submission received during the consultation process is available on-line at: www.peelconsultation.ca

Disclaimer

Not a statistical analysis

As previously stated, this document is a **summary** of all the written input that was provided by the public as part of the consultation process. **It is not a statistical analysis** and the numbers associated with the various thematic summaries found throughout this document serve only descriptive purposes. The various consultation materials circulated to the public and the public responses do not constitute a survey from which statistically significant inferences can be made.

Statistical analysis is based upon a number of very strict rules and procedures that include randomized sampling and a host of other methodological mechanisms intended to ensure both reliability of data and validity of inferences. This document is simply a summary because, given the necessary preconditions for a statistical analysis, it cannot be anything more.

A summary is a useful document that informs the reader but it must be used cautiously when viewed in the context of decision making.

For example, it should be remembered that the number of responses **is not the same as** the number of respondents. Because the consultation process allowed input from multiple sources many individuals provided input more than once. For example, it was possible for a single individual to provide comments by e-mail, participate in an Open House event, and complete the online feedback form. All responses, regardless of their source were reviewed and coded. Thus a response **does not equal** a respondent.

Finally, it is very important to remember that the consultation process was not structured as a survey or referendum **and therefore the number of responses, regardless of their relative strength, cannot be inferred to mean that a majority of Yukoners or Canadians or some other group felt a certain way.**

Perspectives are not facts

What has been heard throughout the consultations, by virtue of all written submissions, is summarized within this document. The writer has made every effort to fairly and accurately reflect the views of the thousands of respondents by categorizing their comments into themes. Each theme represents a number of perspectives which the writer outlines for the reader. **However, the reader should not interpret these perspectives as representations of factual information.** They are only broad characterizations of people's written views, thoughts and comments. The writer wants the reader to understand that, when reducing hundreds of comments into just a few sentences, over simplification or incomplete characterization is probable.

Themes: Selection and Organization

As stated earlier the writer had to make some decisions on what to include and exclude from this document. To assist in this selection process the writer followed certain self-imposed guidelines. Specifically:

- To be selected, themes had to either represent the views of a significant number of respondents or had to be critical to the reader gaining a good understanding of the nature and scope of the input provided during the consultation period;
- Where possible themes would be sequenced so as to contrast perspectives; and
- Quotations would be included in order to provide evidentiary support of the fairness and accuracy of the writer’s words when describing themes, as well as to provide an illustration of some of the nuances, emotionality and voice of the respondents who provided input over the course of the consultation process.

Thematic Summary Layout

For the sake of consistency each thematic summary is organized as follows:

- Theme name
- Brief description of the theme
- Illustrative quotations related to the theme.

Please note that, as is customary when making direct quotations, the quoted text is reproduced exactly as it was written, any typographical or other errors in the original text have not been corrected.

Also, any participation figures in this document are based on the information provided by the Yukon government in its public release dated March 20, 2013. The web address to access this information is as follows: www.gov.yk.ca/news/2011/files/13-063.pdf

Key themes from all sources

Key themes are those themes which, in the opinion of the writer, are critical to the reader’s understanding of the full scope and range of perspectives shared among the many people who took the time to provide input during the four-month-long consultations process. As stated earlier in the executive summary in relation to the four major perspectives, that briefly presented the “big picture”, it is the themes listed below that illustrate and detail the broad range of perspectives contained in the public input.

A total of 2,127 submissions were received by electronic or conventional mail services. In addition various petitions, form letters and postcard campaigns included 8,048 signatories. All the comments from these sources were reviewed by the author. Some submissions contained just a few words others numbered dozens of pages.

Some respondents included narratives and pictures of lived experiences in the Peel Watershed, other cited research studies to support their perspectives while others still provided commentary not only on the content of the FRP and the Yukon government suite of land use designation tools, but on the consultation process as well.

Also, it should be noted that every input source provided respondents with the opportunity to express their thoughts about any aspect of the consultations.

Theme 1: Accept the Final Recommended Plan (FRP)

Brief description of Theme 1

This theme is self-evident in as much as it is essentially a clear and simple request that the Yukon Government accept the Final Recommended Plan produced by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission without any modifications. Some respondents stated their desire for acceptance of the Final Recommended Plan in unequivocal terms, while others were more subtle in expressing their support for the Final Recommended Plan. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 1.

A Whitehorse resident stated: “I can only hope that the Yukon government will eventually accept the Final Report Recommendations, which took almost 7 years of hard work, consultations, and public funds to develop. I do not support any of the other options that YG has proposed.”

A Dawson resident stated: “Please respect the good faith in which TH and other First Nations governments participated in the land use planning process by upholding the plan that was painstakingly reached after seven years at the table... Please consider accepting the Planning Commission's final plan for the Peel.”

A British Columbia resident stated: “I am disappointed that we are still having this ‘consultation’. The Peel Watershed has been consulted to death and a reasonable compromise plan was approved by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission. This plan has also been approved in the court of public opinion and should be adopted immediately.”

A European resident stated: “I am aware that not living in your country might also mean that I cannot fully grasp what is going on there. However I am living on the same planet and that gives me the right to share my own opinion about it. I truly hope that the Yukon government will make up their mind and take the right decision. A decision that will protect the Peel Watershed for the people that live there now and for future generations. It seems to me that those who care to protect the Peel Watershed have a solid plan build up.”

Theme 2: Reject the Final Recommended Plan (FRP)

Brief description of Theme 2

This theme is also self-evident in as much as it is essentially a clear and simple request that the Yukon government reject the Peel Commission’s Final Plan. Some respondents stated their desire for rejection of the Final Recommended Plan in unequivocal terms, while others chose to provide a rationale for their position. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 2.

A Yukon resident stated: “Pls be advised that I do NOT support the Final Recommended Plan and do not support 80% blanket protection. We need to consider all interests in the Peel Region, protect the key environmental areas and river corridors, but also allowed strictly regulated industrial activities.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: “I prefer all four of the Yukon government's sample land use plans to the Final Recommended Plan proposed by the advisory commission, although I still think they are too restrictive to development.”

A Dawson resident stated: “I urge you to dispose of the failed Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan forthwith. This planning exercise has failed the Yukon and has failed Yukon people. [...] The land will wait for us. Let's take the time to do the job right. Garbage the current planning exercise--accept that we have failed--return to the process ten years hence. Hopefully, by then, a spirit of common sense and compromise will finally prevail as we embark on a new process.”

A Yukon resident stated: “As a First Nations person born in the North I appreciate the beauty of the Peel area. I reject the Peel Planning Commission’s plan as it is too restrictive. I want mining to be allowed in this area. This activity provides good paying jobs and contributes greatly to our economy. My children will benefit from this.”

Theme 3: The Peel Watershed is an irreplaceable wilderness ecosystem

Brief description of Theme 3

This theme is related to the perspective that it is desirable to keep the Peel Watershed as wild and undeveloped as possible because this makes sense from both an ecological and economic perspective. In effect this theme is associated with the view that the Peel Watershed in its entirety represents a virtually intact ecosystem that can and must be protected from any development that would irreversibly alter its wilderness character. The building of roads and the infrastructure related to mining and oil and gas development are seen as irreconcilable with wilderness protection. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 3.

A Whitehorse resident stated: “When it comes to ecology and ecosystems, the Yukon Governments’ new recommended plans are far from their supposed goals of balance. Although in the lifestyles of humans, we are able to fragment and allocate valued resources such as time, money, and attention, it is not so simple from the position of a complex and intertwined ecosystem – particularly when it comes to an area like the Peel Watershed, one of the last of its kind, quality, and size on the planet. Development in such a landscape would have very dire consequences for the life that sustains itself there, whether it be wildlife, vegetation, or even people who are dependent on the health of the ecosystem for their livelihoods. The impact that we have through development of natural resources is not confined – the components of an ecosystem are interdependent on each other in ways that we do not even fully understand.”

A Fort McPherson resident stated: “In closing, the Peel River watershed is what defines me as Teetl'it Gwich'in and will forever be a part of who we are as Gwich'in people. If in any way the Peel Watershed is affected, then as a Teetl'it Gwich'in people, WE will all be affected, too. We all have a responsibility to take care of the land, and of all that it sustains life for, to ensure that it is there for generations to come; for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike.”

A New Zealand resident stated: “I think mining can be done in environmental friendly ways or at least have the impact minimized to a sustainable level. [...] However, I think there is huge importance in leaving areas pristine. We don't have to mine everywhere, and once you begin development it will never be untouched again. Furthermore I think there is great benefits in having large, connected and productive untouched ecosystems. These are important on many levels; biologically for maintaining healthy viable populations, scientifically for studying the population dynamics such as climate change

without a human impact variable and culturally for retaining an example of these systems for the next generation, to name just a few. I read a case study during my university degree on a team of scientists in New Zealand trying to return a coastal freshwater lake to its natural pre-human condition. The scientists were unable to find an example of an undisturbed lake to replicate. Every single lake within NZ had a human impact variable. I was shocked that as a conservation leader, New Zealand had reached a point of no return. We could never go back.”

An Ontario resident stated: “The boom-bust cycle of the development proposed in the Peel will bring some years of development to the Yukon, but not economic prosperity to the Territory in the mid to long-term. History and facts reveal that industry leaves minimal profit, is a burden on the Yukon’s energy sources and infrastructure, and leaves a hazardous mess in its wake. Ultimately, the costs of compromising the integrity of one of the last pieces of wilderness left on this planet outweigh the short-term economic gains.”

Theme 4: The Final Recommended Plan (FRP) is a fair, balanced and a reasonable compromise

Brief description of Theme 4

This theme is related to the perspective that despite a majority wanting 100% protection from non-renewable resource extraction in the Peel Watershed the actual Final Recommended Plan compromised by permanently protecting only 55%. This theme is also associated with the view that all members of the public, including representatives of the non-renewable resource sector had a fair opportunity to have their views considered during the extensive six-year-long consultation process. Finally, from this perspective the plan is seen as balanced, because it is open to cyclical review and because it allows development including mineral and oil and gas extraction. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 4.

An e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: “The Peel Planning Commission's Final Recommended Plan is the only legitimate plan for the Peel Watershed because it is:

- Fair, balanced and the product of over 6 years of input from First Nation the public, all governments and key stakeholders.
- The product of a non-partisan process that considered the needs and desire of all Yukoners and Canadians.
- Keeps options open by allowing for revisions in the future.
- A compromise. Affected First Nations and majority of Yukoners and Canadians called for 100% protection of the Watershed. The Commission's Plan recommends 55% permanent and 25% interim protection.”

A Yukon resident stated: “The Peel Planning Commission's Final Recommended Plan is the result of an extensive process, involving hundreds of Yukoners, and years of debate and negotiation, a wise document that balances our desire to have a successful and growing economy, yet affords true protection of an irreplaceable treasure, the Peel Watershed, for future generations.”

A Dawson respondent stated:

- “[...] The Commission has appropriately weighed the issues and evidence and its recommendations must be respected and adopted.
- In purely economic terms the long-term value of the region will likely far outweigh any short-term financial benefits gained from mineral development.
- The vast majority of the Yukon is open to mineral extraction. Protecting this globally important wilderness will have little impact on those industries.”

Theme 5: The Final Recommended Plan (FRP) is neither balanced nor fair.

Brief description of Theme 5

This theme is related to the perspective that for a plan to be fair and balanced it must consider both the economy and the environment. According to this perspective the FRP is biased against development because it fails to sufficiently take into account the economic value of non-renewable resources present in the Peel Watershed. Furthermore, this theme is related to the view that too little is known about the mineral and oil and gas potential of the region to make reasonable and informed decisions about which areas should be preserved from development at any cost. Also associated with this theme is the view that the FRP is truly not a land use plan but rather a land preservation plan. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 5.

A Yukon resident stated: “First and foremost the mineral resources, oil and gas potential in the Peel Watershed need to be identified and protected (in reserve) for the Crown, Yukon Government and all Canadian citizens future economic development. Once Identified then a process can be negotiated for protection of the remaining watershed system. These resources belong to the future generations for their economical need. It would be economic suicide for Canadian and Yukon citizens, to not have this vast resources available for future generations economic needs.”

An e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: “I support the concept that development and conservation can proceed hand in hand. The continued withdrawing of potentially vast volumes of resources from access by future generations is a crime against my grandchildren. [...] The current proposal by YG is far too limiting and should be opened up to allow more areas to be accessible for future development.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: “The final recommended plan does not take into consideration our economy, our future or what is fair to the interests of the territory. We should not let foreign environmental groups who contribute little to the health and well-being of the Yukon determine our future. Outfitting concessions and eco-tourist groups leave a large footprint on the land, just as much as any exploration program in the area. Maybe wilderness tourism companies and outfitters should be charged public resource as well as reclamation fees, as is standard in the mining industry?”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “I support a more balanced land use plan, one that shares the values of everyone. The final recommended plan does not take into consideration jobs, employment and the Yukon being able to pay its bills in the long term.”

Theme 6: Respect the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA)

Brief description of Theme 6

This theme is related to the perspective that the introduction by the Yukon government of new land use designations and concepts, as part of its final consultations on the FRP, is in effect a violation of section 11.6.3 of the 1993 Umbrella Final Agreement. From this perspective the Yukon government was limited to public consultations on the FRP and that the introduction of its own proposals prepared in-house and independently from the PWPC are in contradiction with the Yukon government's land use planning obligations. Finally, this perspective is also related to the view that the Yukon government had ample opportunity to introduce its proposed designations and concepts in support of a more balanced land use planning approach back in 2009 and since it failed to do so at that time has effectively abrogated any rights to do so at this time. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 6

A Whitehorse resident stated: "The Peel Commission's work and plan are the result of a process laid out under the Final Agreements. These processes were created to ensure that communities make decisions about their resources at a local level. Final approval by the Minister is there to ensure accountability of the process, not as a means to implement a different agenda. If there was a significant problem with the Peel planning process itself, then that should be examined. But if the process was sound (and I believe that it was) and produced a result not to the taste of the government of the day, then that plan should still be respected."

A Yukon resident stated: "After years of discussion and research, within the parameters of a transparent process led by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission, the people of the Yukon finalized a plan to protect the Peel watershed in 2011. The details of these deliberations can be found in the Umbrella Final Agreement, a contract between the Yukon government and First Nations. The plan being presented by YG, although elected to represent the people of the Yukon, is not the existing plan outlined in that agreement. Our current government has developed its own revised plan from behind closed doors. [...] So in summary, our current government wants to implement a revised plan that requires that Yukoners:

- put aside all the previous public consultation and study that has gone into an informed land use/protection plan
- agree to less protected land and more land designated to mining and gas/oil exploration
- ignore the fact that we have a legal contract with First Nations which outlines how we said we would deal with Peel area
- embrace the fantasy that we can develop a wilderness and it will still be wild."

A British Columbia resident stated: "In the final analysis YG's actions in rejecting the plan appear to be a prima facie violation of the Yukon Land Claim Agreement and failure to up to the spirit of the UFA. In fact one might argue that if the Commission had proposed protecting only 20% of the region there would be strong pressure to accept it from some quarters on the grounds that it had been arrived at through due process."

Theme 7: Process has been undemocratic and disrespectful

Brief description of Theme 7

This theme is related to the perspective that the actions of the Yukon government both in terms of its treatment of First Nations in relation to their land use planning rights under the UFA and the general public have been undemocratic. Specifically, from this perspective it is a tenet of democracy that government must abide by the both the letter and intent of the law and that it must govern in such a manner as to give force to the will of the people. Furthermore, from this perspective, when there is a clear majority view, that view should guide the actions of the Government in a manner that is consistent with that majority view. Finally, from this perspective, democratic institutions and processes exist to serve the public good, not to benefit the vested interests of the few.

This theme is also related to the perspective that the introduction by the Yukon government of new land use designations and concepts is inherently disrespectful of the public consultation process and that the late introduction of the Yukon government's proposed new designations and concepts fails to meet any reasonable test of adequacy or legitimacy in terms of the public consultation process. Finally, from this perspective it is believed that the Yukon government, by virtue of its introduction of new designation and concepts, has effectively already decided not to accept the FRP and thereby has violated the trust people had that the majority wishes for protection from industrial type development of the Peel Watershed would be respected (i.e. accepted). See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 7

A British Columbia resident stated: "Finally, consider democracy. The majority of Yukoners have stated clearly and repeatedly that they support protection for the Peel River Watershed. Elected representatives should heed the large constituency, rather than mining advocates."

An e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: "I agree that the Minister has 'veto' power, and if he uses that power to accommodate the wishes of the majority of Yukon people, I would support such a decision since we live in a democratic society. But that is not the case here, as the Minister attempts to use his power in support of the demands of a minority group."

A Whitehorse resident stated: "Democracy is a system where the power lies with the people. Government is here to represent the people and to develop, maintain, and enforce the legal framework that facilitates a meaningful life together within its jurisdiction. Unilateral action, as demonstrated by the proposed New Land Use Designations, to accommodate and suit special interests in an autocratic action that violates every principle of democracy."

A Carcross resident stated: "I am writing to express my profound disappointment and concern that the Government of Yukon has disregarded the clear will of Yukoners and First Nations on the Peel Watershed. As a taxpayer, I am dismayed that more government money is being spent on consultation even after producing the Peel Planning Commission Final Recommended Plan. The Final Recommended Plan is the only legitimate plan and there is no coherent reason for continued consultation and expense. The original process received overwhelming support for 80% of the watershed to be protected. At the same time, it found a balance between development and conservation, allowing for significant economic opportunities in the region."

A Yukon resident stated: “I want to register my disgust with the handling of the Peel Planning process. I will not argue the details of types of protection for the various areas as that quickly gets bogged down with the vagaries of interpretation. What I will comment on is the complete lack of respect shown the Peel Planning Commission and all the citizens that in good faith, participated in the process from all sides of the issue. It was bad enough that the commission was sent back to the drawing board and forced to make major concessions in a revised plan but to then reject even that effort suggests to me that the government never intended to take the Planning Commission's document seriously. [...] These public planning efforts are not just to appease a public who rightly feel that they want a say in major land use decisions. Decisions which can lead to irrevocable change to the public's land. These processes are legally mandated and there must be some expectation that the outcomes will be taken seriously and for the most part implemented.”

A Fort McPherson resident stated: “So I am 13 years old. I live in Fort McPherson, NWT. I am in Gr.8. I am writing this letter to tell you what I think about the Peel River. [...] If you pollute the Peel, we can get cancer from breathing in all the chemicals from the people who are mining. It isn't fair that the government agreed to how much land you guys could develop and the government changed it. The people agreed to a certain level of development of the land but the government changed the level and they are going to mine more than they were supposed to. So that made the people in our town very mad.”

Theme 8: Exhibit courageous leadership

Brief description of Theme 8

This theme is related to the perspective that governments, when it is in the best interest of the collective, must resist the demands of lobbyists and other powerful vested interests. From this perspective governments must resist being manipulated and must act courageously in the public interest when faced with complex or intractable situations. From this perspective, given the dynamics of the Peel Watershed issue, pro-conservation minded individuals believe the Yukon government has a golden opportunity for a win-win scenario by accepting the FRP.

Interestingly, from this perspective and generally for the same basic reasons, pro-development minded individuals believe the Yukon government has a golden opportunity for a win-win scenario by rejecting the FRP. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 8.

A Whitehorse resident stated: “I am a born and raised Yukoner. [...] I want my Government to be far-sighted leaders. There is much evidence about what has happened all over our globe to humankind where the interests of those wishing to pursue wealth have come first over what is best for humanity in the future. [...] I urge you to stand tall and be bold! Adopt the Peel Planning Commission's Final Recommended Plan.”

An Ontario resident stated: “Dear Yukon government, You are about to make a decision about the Peel River Watershed that will define, not only your government's values, morals and ethics, but who you each are as individuals. Your decision will speak volumes as to where you each stand towards supporting a more sustainable world that protects not only vanishing wildlife and critical natural areas but the health of the planet and human's well-being. This is not just about the Peel – it is recognizing the

mistakes that we as a species have made in the last few generations and having the courage and long-term wisdom to stand up and take action to preserve one of the world's finest treasures. I implore you to be progressive, to be visionary and to support the Commission's Final Recommended Plan for the Peel."

An Alberta resident stated: "The Peel Watershed deserves to be protected for Yukoners, Canadians, and the World! We cannot afford to lose this area to development for a short term game. With visionary leaders, the Peel Watershed can be our legacy to future generations. This wilderness supports thriving tourism and guide outfitting industries. Wilderness cannot be preserved in the midst of roads, mines and oil and gas development."

A Yukon resident stated: "As a long time Yukoner, committed to the territory, I feel we already have a plan that we can be proud of and will establish the Yukon as a far sighted and progressive territory for the long term balancing environmental and business interests."

A United States resident stated: "Please exercise progressive leadership, respect the rights and interests of First Nations, and make one of the most significant conservation-oriented land use decisions of this new Century, by implementing the Peel Watershed Planning Commission's Final Recommended Plan."

A Dawson mineral exploration company stated: "I am writing you this letter to express my opposition to the Peel Land Use Plan as recommended by the Planning Commission. [...] I do not believe we are giving ourselves enough intellectual credit or doing our children any favours by accepting polarized positions on land use and resource exploration and development."

A Whitehorse resident stated: "Without going into detail it is the responsibility to the government to listen and hear the opposition not to take direction from them, that being said I trust that the government we elected understands the economy, the tourist industry is a shoulder industry providing temporary summer jobs. Developing our natural resources will provide jobs with wages that will allow people employed in that sector to live in and purchase homes in Yukon. The tourist industry provides low paying summer jobs and is a very minor contributor to our economy. Notwithstanding the petitions and any other opposition I trust the government will provide for development of the Peel in a manner that will create a sustainable economy with due respect for the environment."

A Marsh Lake resident stated: "You're asking for my "Opinion". "We" elected you to make the decisions, some of them may be hard and not particularly popular. So be it! Make the decision. We don't need any more "Wilderness Areas" or Parks."

Theme 9: Future land use planning has been undermined

Brief description of Theme 9

This theme is related to the perspective that the introduction by the Yukon government of new land use designations and concepts, as part of its final consultations on the FRP, has in effect negated six years of work by the Peel Watershed Land Use Planning Commission and harmed future land use planning. Associated with this theme is the perspective that the Yukon government is attempting to circumvent the legal and/or moral framework under which it is expected to conduct land use planning consultations. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 9.

A Whitehorse resident stated: “Planning is not the same as voting, and planning is not a popularity contest. Planning is slow and collective and transparent. It involves a lot of compromise, and most of us don’t get quite what we want. By taking the ball and re-writing the rules, Yukon government is sending an alarming message: When a planning outcome doesn’t suit your political objectives, you’ll make the game go your way anyway. The future of planning in the Yukon looks grim indeed.”

A Yukon resident stated: “I believe the Yukon Government’s refusal to adopt the Peel Land Use plan as originally conceived completely undermines the land use planning process in the Yukon. Who will want to participate in such future processes when the government just ignores the recommendations and puts forward its own plan?”

An e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: “YTG likes to claim that all of these unilateral measures meet its legal obligations, but there is no pride in setting the bar so low. Public participation in this process was unprecedented; the public has demonstrated a great interest in regional land use planning and recognizes its important role. Yet after an exhaustive and expensive process, YTG chose to change the rules in the final minute of the game. It is no wonder that the public has lost faith in the public consultation process now. This is so detrimental to all future public consultations, and it has resulted in greater distrust and disdain for government – regardless of one’s vision for the Peel Watershed. Democracy goes beyond the ballot box; the public needs to know that, when government asks their opinion, they truly want to know the opinion and will seriously consider it. YTG has done a remarkable job of undermining that public trust. [...] Rejecting the Final Recommended Plan and adopting any of these proposals would do a terrible disservice to Yukoners and Canadians, and would set a horrible legacy for regional land use planning in the Yukon.”

Theme 10 Roads and wilderness are incompatible

Brief description of Theme 10

This theme is related to the perspective that wilderness is, by definition, the absence of road or road-like infrastructure. From this perspective it is disingenuous for the Yukon government to suggest that it can protect wilderness values by “actively managing” the landscape. Furthermore, from this perspective, adequately regulated non-industrial activities that make use of existing waterways and traditional hunting and gathering activities are seen as benign and no threat to the wilderness nature of the landscape. Finally, from this perspective, road infrastructure and the damage it causes to the wilderness value of the landscape cannot ever be undone. Thus, allowing roads whether it is under strict regulatory conditions and with robust monitoring and enforcement or under restricted schedules such as winter-only access is pointless as it has the same cumulative effect on wilderness as more intensive road uses. Finally, from this perspective, wilderness management is essentially an oxymoron. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 10.

A Yukon resident stated: “The proposed land use designations put forward by the Yukon Government show an alarming failure of understanding of the destructive capacity of resource extraction in this unspoiled part of our country. The building of an access road into virgin wilderness is to doom that wilderness.”

A Fort McPherson resident stated: “I was born and raised in Fort McPherson. I was mostly brought up on the land. Today I thank my family for that especially my Grandparents. My Grandparents travelled many many times up the Peel and over the Mountains to Dawson City. All of our elders did that, and I believe in those days it was hard. Today, as a leader of the Community of Tetlit Zeh I really would love to see the PEEL RIVER PROTECTED!!. [...] Even though we can't get 100% I know we can settle with 80%. WE ALSO DO NOT WANT ANY CESS ROADS INTO THE WATERSHED.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: ““The Yukon Party says they can build roads and regulate their use and effectively decommission these roads after industrial activities have accessed the area. They say that such roads will have minimal impacts on the natural environment, on wildlife qualities and on wilderness’. Set the record straight: None of the thousands of kilometers of tote roads have been effectively decommissioned. ATVs and snowmobiles successfully circumvent obstacles and the continued use of tote roads prevail. Once the roads are built, there is no going back. Road access has dramatic impacts upon the landscape, wilderness and wildlife. These are not compatible uses. Access, by its very nature creates long term detrimental impacts.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “Wilderness and industrial development are NOT compatible. The only uses allowed in wilderness area can be subsistence activities and non-consumptive visits as are typical for National Parks. To prevent fragmentation of wilderness no roads of any kind can be allowed in the area.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “Wilderness cannot be preserved by 'actively managing' roads, mines and oil and gas development. Wilderness needs real protection. The notion that damage to the environment caused by mining and mineral exploration activities in alpine areas can be fully remediated within a foreseeable time period is ludicrous and clearly unsupported by the facts. If this area is allowed to be developed by one-time mineral extractors, it will be destroyed for all other purposes for generations to come. Yukon needs to diversify its economy, not intensify its reliance on mining. This government should put more effort into developing agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and knowledge-based enterprises in the territory. The notion that we cannot afford to put a small piece of the territory aside for purposes other than mining is short-sighted and wrong. We can - and we should, if not for ourselves, for future generations.”

Theme 11: New Designations and concepts are not a land use plan

Brief description of Theme 11

This theme is related to the perspective that in order for a proposal or document to be considered a land use plan certain basic conditions have to be met. From this perspective the Yukon government proposed new designations and concepts have not met the minimum standard necessary to be considered a plan. Specifically they have been created outside of the land use planning process outlined in the UFA, they lack detail and clarity, they are not supported by any research evidence and they make claims that are either far-fetched and/or disingenuous. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 11

A Whitehorse resident stated: “Finally, I am dismayed that Yukon Government is presenting several “Land Use Concepts” for comparison with the Final Recommended Plan. The Final Recommended Plan is clearly based on extensive research, investigation and consultation combined with significant effort to achieve the overall goals laid out for the Commission. The Final Recommended Plan incorporates input received from many sources including Yukon Government, based on earlier versions of the plan. Yukon Government’s concepts lack any of the detail needed to support a fair comparison.[...] Yukon Government’s current consultation effort, focused on misleading “Land Use Concepts,” is consistent with the requirements described in the Final Agreements or their intent.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “I strongly recommend that the original Peel Planning Commissions concept is utilized and none of the new concepts are regarded for this area. This is based on the vague verbiage that the Yukon Party has presented in labelling its’ new land use designations. At no point is there reference to the procedures that would allow for environmental and cultural protection. Stating that an area will be managed to protect against environmental damage is insufficient for adequate review.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: “Dear Yukon government, I am appalled at the obfuscation you have resorted to to try to make your new plan (developed outside of the process designated within the UFA) appear to “build on” the plan that emerged out of that process. As far as I am concerned, the RUWA designation is not a tool for land use management so much as it is a tool for political spin doctoring.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “The options that have been belatedly brought to the table by the Yukon government are not appropriate for a number of reasons. They were concocted internally within specific Departments in government without any public or First Nations input. They have nothing to do with the multi-year consultation process that resulted in the Final Recommended Plan. By foisting these alien concepts on the process after the publication of the Final Recommended Plan, the government has betrayed the public trust and disrespected the many Yukoners of all perspectives and opinions who put their time and energy into the official planning process.”

Theme 12: Unhappiness with the Open House consultation format

Brief description of Theme 12

This theme is related to the perspective that the use of Open Houses as the consultation medium for the consultations on the FRP and on the Yukon government suite of land use designation tools which could be applied in the Peel Watershed Region, was inappropriate. From this perspective, the Open House format made it impractical for individuals to share their views and experiences with other members of the public. Therefore, from this perspective, the Open House format, did not qualify as true consultation because it did not allow participants to have their comments put “on the record” so to speak. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 12.

A Dawson resident stated: “I think this consultation is a SHAM! ACCEPT the FINAL Recommended Plan.”

Another Dawson resident stated: “The Yukon government is not acting in good faith in regards to the process they agreed to be part of for the Planning for the Peel Watershed. This secondary “consultation” should not even be necessary – the public has already contributed to the Peel planning

commission's intake of information. YG must accept the recommended Peel plan as agreed/contributed to by members/representatives of the Commission."

A Whitehorse resident stated: "This whole charade is completely misleading. This is NOT consultation."

Another Whitehorse resident stated: "The consultation process by the Yukon Party Government to meet with the public and stakeholders was an insult as well. Government Employees sitting for a week in a room in a hotel conference room in Whitehorse supplied with coffee, tea and goodies does not represent a complete, fair process. It was a joke as well as an insult to all people of the Yukon."

Theme 13: Preference for 100% protection of the Peel Watershed

Brief description of Theme 13

This theme is related to the perspective that the Peel Watershed deserves 100 % protection from any form of development because it is an invaluable and irreplaceable asset. From this perspective the 80% "compromise" that is acceptable to a majority of respondents simply does not offer sufficient protection. Therefore, from this perspective, any activity in the watershed that could or would negatively impact the flora or fauna is unacceptable.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 13.

An e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: "Why do we need to develop the Peel now? What's the hurry? Our economy is already growing at a pace we can't sustain. Our housing market and social services are failing to serve the needs of our current residents due to the territories ambitious growth, and strain on our community services. In 20 years the economic potential of the Peel will be fully comprehended, but not through a 5 year resource boom, but as the last great oasis of nature. The Yukon's competitive advantage is our wilderness and we need protect, preserve and secure this investment for future generations to enjoy in an benefit from its infinite, sustainable economic potential. We have a rare gift that we need to protect. I want 100% protection, nothing less."

Another e-mail respondent (location unknown) stated: "I do not consent to the Peel Watershed Plan. I am for 100% protection and preservation for the entire Peel Watershed. The government of Yukon, Canada, or First Nation have no right over my decisions. I have children and a grandson who I take out on the land on a regular basis, I expect it to be there for many years to come and then some. My people (Han) once not too long ago used to have free range and access to the land and we stepped upon her softly and were careful not to overuse any area of it. It do not agree or consent to the development of the Peel Watershed, in any way, shape or form."

A Marsh Lake resident stated: "PLEASE open your minds and see further than your own agendas, egos and dollars. Our land needs protection, 100% protection!"

Theme 14: Opposed to the Restricted Use Wilderness Area (RUWA) designations

Brief description of Theme 14

This theme is related to the perspective that the new RUWA and RUWA-Wilderness River Corridor designations proposed by the Yukon government are misnomers in that they do not protect wilderness, but rather allow for road and industrial type development. This perspective views the Yukon government as being disingenuous by using the word wilderness in its designation, when the actual

effect of the use of the new designation would be to irreversibly destroy wilderness. Also, from this perspective, even if there were no hidden political motive or agenda behind the new designations it would remain that the RUWA designations simply could not meet their stated goals. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 14

A Whitehorse resident stated: “RUWA is simply a pastiche of meaningless green on a map. It’s a ridiculous concept.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “I disagree with the concept of an RUWA designation. It presupposes that mineral exploration and production can occur while important “wilderness, ecological and cultural values” are protected. I do not think this is possible because you cannot break up ecosystems into “intensive management sub-zones”, damage the rest and expect the managed areas to remain healthy.”

A Mayo resident stated: “It’s a misnomer. The RUWA just means business as usual – No protection. Open up the area for business – This designation is not about protecting the values in an area but about development. Please call it what it is.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: “The RUWA designation is going to be a total disaster. It basically allows the same old type of exploitation we’ve seen elsewhere in the Yukon, albeit with some more paperwork. Abandon this approach and stick with the Final Recommended Plan. That will ensure the land is protected. The 4 new concepts won’t.”

A Canadian resident stated: “This is a sham. The legal obligation of YTG, as designated under the agreements for the planning process, is for YTG to consult ONLY on the plan that was put forward by the land use planning commission. Why did so many people participate for so many years in good faith only to have the government concoct something completely new, and deliberately confusing. The RUWA designations are a misnomer—they are industrial use designations, not 'wilderness' designations.”

A Whitehorse resident stated: “To protect means to defend from invasion and/or loss (amongst other things). Since RUWAs leave room for new land use and surface access, this means that these areas are not protected at all. Therefore I do NOT believe that RUWA designation can achieve its goal of protecting the values in an area. My suggestion is to increase the square miles of Protected Area designation in the Peel Watershed, instead of using the RUWA designation.”

Theme 15: Support for the Restricted Use Wilderness Area (RUWA) designations

Brief description of Theme 15

This theme is related to the perspective that the new RUWA and RUWA-Wilderness River Corridor designations proposed by the Yukon government are useful additions to the repertoire of land use tools. From this perspective, the Yukon government is improving on the designations contained in the FRP. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 15

A Whitehorse resident stated: “I think this is an excellent new land use designation category. An important element of approving uses/access in this area would be to ensure minimal disturbance and adequate security for reclamation.”

A Canadian resident stated: “I feel that the new categories of 'RUWA' and 'RUWA - Wilderness River Corridor, are beneficial. I see it as a reasonable way of protecting sensitive and unique wilderness areas, while addressing the issues of mineral development. Priority in these sensitive areas should be protecting the integrity of the environment for present and future generations.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “RUWA is a great idea to achieve the goal between responsible development and environmental protection. This type of land use designation was missing from the Peel Planning Commission's Final Recommendations.”

Theme 16: Support for the Yukon government proposals

Brief description of Theme 16

This theme is related to the perspective that the proposed land use designations and the illustrative concepts advanced by the Yukon Government are more balanced than those contained in the FRP. Also, from this perspective the Yukon government’s proposals are fair and reasonable and consistent with the UFA. Finally, from this perspective, it is believed that the Yukon government proposal is capable of protecting critical wilderness areas while at the same time allowing for responsible development. See below for illustrative comments.

Illustrative quotations related to Theme 16

A Whitehorse resident stated: “Thank you for the revised approach and please do not give up on developing and implementing a balanced approach, such as the one proposed, that effectively addresses a number of values. This area is too large, and contains too many non-renewable resource assets, to turn into a park.”

A Dawson resident stated: “As a Yukoner, born in Dawson City I am reluctant to lock-up a big area of our territory against ALL potential development. If it weren't for mining the Yukon wouldn't even exist as we know it today. I am IN FAVOUR of the current management approach presented by YTG. I won't pick a specific concept as it's too confusing, but generally I like the flexibility the overall plan provides. If future generations of Yukoners want something different, well they can decide then. This is a fair and balanced plan in my opinion.”

Another Whitehorse resident stated: “I support the government's balanced position of protecting pristine wilderness AND respecting all sectors of the economy. The Umbrella Final Agreement states the final recommended plan can be: 1) accepted; 2) rejected; 3) modified.”

Other themes

As stated earlier, in a relatively brief summary such as the one presented in this document it is not possible to elaborate every identifiable theme. Obviously, many additional themes could have been selected. To illustrate this point the writer is briefly outlining examples of four such themes.

Water quality

This theme is related to the view that clean water is the paramount thing to preserve within the Peel Watershed. From this perspective, pure unpolluted water is essential to the health of the flora and fauna of the watershed and consequently to the people who rely on them. This theme is particularly relevant to the people who live in Fort McPherson and other downstream communities, but it is also echoed by others including those who worry about the detrimental effects industrial type developments can have on water quality. A related aspect of this theme is opposition to fracking.

Importance of tourism

This theme is related to the view that Yukon's appeal and allure is inextricably linked to its numerous and vast wild places and the wildlife and beauty they represent. From this perspective there is a worry that even the perception that Yukon is compromising the Peel Watershed, one of the last great intact wilderness watersheds, will significantly and negatively affect the tourism industry.

No need to extract resources now

This theme is related to the view that choosing to protect the Peel Watershed from mineral and oil and gas extraction at this time does not preclude the possibility of allowing such extraction in the future. From this perspective, should the need arise or should the technology be developed to extract such resources without reliance on wilderness-destroying road infrastructure then that would always be possible in the future. From this view it is also suggested that leaving the resources in the ground for now not only preserves, but likely increases, the value of those resources.

Active management requires enforcement capacity

This theme is related to the view that establishing an active management regime in the Peel Watershed must by definition, if it is to be effective, be supported by robust enforcement capacity both in terms of the regulatory frameworks and in terms of the manpower to enforce those regulatory frameworks. From this perspective, it is doubtful that the Yukon government would be able to afford such enforcement capacity. Related to the theme is the view that the resource extraction sector's record on self-monitoring and self-reporting is so dismal as to warrant a complete lack of confidence in any form of enforcement other than enforcement by paid civil servants.

Conclusion

The writer believes that this document provides a fair summary of what was heard during the public consultations on the Peel Watershed undertaken by the Yukon government.

The writer has made every effort to maintain objectivity and to honestly reflect the views and perspectives of the thousands of individuals who took the time to participate in the consultations.

As the writer of this document, for whom it was a privilege to attempt the daunting task of creating this summary, I would like to thank everyone involved in these consultations.

It was an honour and a pleasure to read your many stories and anecdotes and to learn from your comments, thoughts and perspectives.

I hope I have, in some small measure, done justice to what you had to say.