

Dawson Land Use Plan

Hello Jeff;

I am writing this letter to protest the recent designation of land reserve to 95% of the Peel Watershed, and more urgently, the potential for the same status to be applied to the Dawson land Use Plan. I feel that this is a very reactionary and short-sighted decision that does a great dis-service to prospecting /mining in particular and the Yukon as a whole. Prospecting and mining have been the backbone of the Yukon for well over 100 years and, to me, for the government to turn their backs on the industry now is inexcusable.

There are hundreds of books that document the exciting and dynamic search for precious metals, primarily gold, in the Yukon. Many present day business ventures use a Gold Rush theme in their company names and promotional material. A great deal of stores and; as in the case of Dawson City; entire towns have been built following the Gold Rush theme. Now we are to believe that mining is not important or needed any longer.

The Territorial and Federal governments have made great use of the prospecting and mining history of the Yukon to promote the tourism industry. Tourists flock to the Yukon to be surrounded in the magic and excitement of life during the Yukon Gold Rush. Government buildings feature prospecting and mining statues and murals. Much of the government documentation and the entire vehicle license plates feature the world renowned prospector panning for gold. Suddenly prospecting and mining are bad for the Yukon and must be stopped for the good of the environment. I do not believe that prospecting and mining have to be sacrificed in order preserve and maintain a healthy natural environment.

Generations of people from around the world have been drawn to the North in the pursuit of precious metals and have made the Yukon their home settled; raised their families and contributed to the economy in a variety of ways. They may have worked in the Klondike gold fields; Keno-Mayo silver mines; Cassiar/Clinton Creek; Faro, Cantung or Whitehorse Copper but they came and made their roots in the Yukon.

You would be hard-pressed to find any native Yukoners that don't have a connection to mining or prospecting somewhere along their family tree. Many of these Yukoners are now business owners, government workers or are employed in diverse fields but the reason they are now contributing to the economy is because earlier generations came to prospect and mine in the North.

There is a thriving market for metals at this time and people from all walks of life and every part of the world are again being drawn to the Yukon to seek their fortune and try to make a better life for themselves and their families. This influx of people, initiative and resources is a positive force in a territory that has been in stagnant for a number of years; to have it curtailed by a de-facto moratorium on mining will be a great detriment to the Yukon economy and a tragedy for it's legacy.

Prospecting and mining have proven to be a great equalizer in bringing together all of the different cultures and ethnicities that arrive in the Yukon Territory. Transplanted and Native Canadians work and do business side-by-side with citizens from virtually every corner of the world; all connected by their love of the outdoors; the natural environment as well as the freedom of living and working in the Far North. Some of the biggest gold strikes in the original Klondike Gold Rush were discovered by native Canadians and prospectors from other countries.

The spirit of entrepreneurship knows no boundaries and it is what has built Canada into the strong and diversified country that it is today. Someone has to have the inner-strength and spirit to be willing to take a chance and have faith in their abilities to create something from nothing.

Due to the ability of prospecting and mining to be able to attract these types of individuals to the Yukon the territory has a strong population of self-starters and individualists. When these people succeed everyone wins as their endeavors lead to job creation and a stronger economy.

The striving for profit from one's hard labour is not evil and mining is not a dirty word. Prospecting and gold placer mining have long been known as viable and realistic ways for the common person to earn a living and potentially strike it rich. Mining is one of the few ways left, especially in the Yukon; where new dollars are created to be added to the economy. The miner is taking a natural resource and turning it into dollar bills which eventually end up being circulated throughout the nation.

People who have devoted their lives to living in the wilderness to prospect and mine for precious metals are often the world's best environmentalists. They spend their lives surrounded by natural beauty and earn a great respect for the environment. They do not want to pollute or contaminate the area in which they have chosen to live and also realize the serious financial and industrial ramifications of non-compliance. No one who chooses to live and work in the Yukon wilderness can want to knowingly destroy any aspect of it. Prospectors and miners would be the first ones to say that any of their fellow workers that willingly and purposely cause serious environmental damage should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. That being said; the inexcusable actions of a few individuals do not warrant the shutting down of an entire industry.

The protection of the environment is unquestionably of paramount importance and no one should ever have the right to cause it permanent harm in any way. Any adverse actions that affect the environment as the result of prospecting or mining must be remediated before the responsible party can be freed from their obligations. The environmental regulations have been becoming stricter every year and still the prospecting and mining industry has managed to survive and, most recently, thrive. This serves as proof that environmental protection and prospecting /mining are not mutually exclusive. There is absolutely no need to effectively shut down an historically significant and economically crucial Yukon industry in an effort to preserve the natural beauty and splendor of the Yukon,

Regards;

John Loveless CRSP P.GSC

Safety Lead

Ledcor Projects Inc., Industrial Construction

201, 1253 - 91 Street SW, Edmonton, AB T6X 1E9

p 780-666-1372 | **f** 780-588-8389 | **c** 780-838-8451

www.ledcor.com

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