

March 2, 2014

Dawson Regional Planning Commission  
1075 2nd Ave.  
Dawson, YT  
*Via email: [dwasonplan@planyukon.ca](mailto:dwasonplan@planyukon.ca)*

**RE: Comments on Plan Alternative Package**

Dear Members of the Commission,

Please let me introduce myself in order to highlight several themes that I will build upon later in this presentation. I was born in Yukon in 1963 and graduated from F.H. Collins High School in 1981. I returned to Yukon in 1986 after completing my B.Sc. in Geology at U.B.C. in Vancouver. Unfortunately I was forced to leave Yukon in 1988 due a sharp downturn in the local exploration business. My career however has taken me all over Canada with various projects in Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and also overseas to Australia. I have had some tremendous experiences and have gained many insights in to what works and what does not. Although I have lived in Quebec since 1989 I still consider myself at heart to be a Yukoner. In 2003 I was happily able to once again work on Yukon mineral exploration projects and since then I have raised in excess \$20 million for Yukon exploration ventures operated by the various corporations that I am or have been involved with. I owe much of my personality, both in terms of individual values and corporate sensibility, to my parents: true Yukon pioneers in every sense.

My father came to Yukon in 1952 to work as a welder on the Haines pipeline project. After the pipeline he took up a rather typical Yukon lifestyle working at whatever job there was in order to make ends meet. He was variously involved in road construction, mineral exploration, placer mining, logging and many welding projects large and small. Dad was outspoken on many things over the years but all his opinions were consistent with a basic philosophy. His main belief was that the interest of all Yukoners was best decided by themselves and not by and without the outside interference of others. Moreover he strongly held that a strong local economy (i.e. self-sufficiency) was the key to developing political autonomy and social independence for Yukon.

My mother came to Yukon in 1960 as a school teacher. After several years of teaching in Destruction Bay she moved to Whitehorse and found herself drawn to adult education. Her career in that field started at the Yukon Vocational School and later evolved into Dean at Yukon College. Her specialty was academic upgrading and over the years she developed much experience with building personal capacity in others and enabling individuals to achieve their goals. Every year I am amazed by stories of former students that tell me how Mom's instruction, guidance, coaching or just plain butt-kicking literally changed their lives.

Let me start out by stating that the whole concept of the Dawson Regional Planning Commission (DRCP) is flawed. It is based on a Chicken Little argument that the sky is falling and something must be done. I

say with this no disrespect to the members and staff of the planning commission. Indeed I greatly appreciate the time and effort that they have put into the process. Also I agree with the principles laid out in the vision statement in that I, and in fact I believe all people involved in mineral exploration, support well balanced growth, shared and respectful use of resources, and careful development of economic projects. There is a perception being promoted that anyone involved in industrial development is only interested in profit and does not care anything for social or environmental issues. This is just not true. The mineral industry in Yukon in case after case has proven its commitment to respectful exploration and development practices. And I know people in the industry have a deep attachment for and respect for the environment in which they live and work.

Secondly there is more than enough regulation, consultation, permitting and monitoring in place in Yukon rendering the DRCP redundant. Compared to other jurisdictions in Canada, Yukon is way ahead with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board ("YESAB"). There is no other place in Canada where a transparent, open process is available to all stakeholders and interested citizens to comment on, contribute to, and consult upon a proposed economic development project. YESAB's mission as stated on its website is "...to protect the environmental and social integrity of Yukon, while fostering responsible development in the territory that reflects the contributions of First Nations." The YESAB process is comprehensive and takes a minimum of six months to complete depending on the level or category of development. Moreover it is project specific and deals with concrete proposals and locally defined consequences. It does not rely upon vague "Evaluation Criteria" that are intrinsically restricted and flawed by lack of data which are then fed into a dubious "Decision Framework" modelling computer program. And YESAB is just the first step. Project proponents also have to deal with a host of other agencies, regulators and inspectors through out the life of a project. With all this regulation, consultation, permitting and monitoring already in place it is clear that the DCRP's goals of active management, equitable balance and stewardship are already being met. More interference by yet another entity will only hinder the SRCP's other stated goal of economic prosperity.

My third and most important point is to clarify the perception of the prospector and placer miner. I am using the term "prospector" in a modern sense to embrace all those people involved in the quartz mineral exploration including geologists, technicians, drillers, equipment operators, camp cooks and the many other various occupations in the industry. The term "placer miner" also includes not only the guys and gals loading this sluice box but all the other workers and suppliers that depend on the placer industry in Yukon. What makes me angry and I find unfair is that when land use planning is discussed in Yukon it is implied that there is something less equal about prospectors and placer miners and that they are inherently socially irresponsible and environmentally destructive.

As an iconic archetype the prospector and placer miner are just as valid and should be held equal to any other historical original occupant of Yukon. Indeed Yukon was established as a political jurisdiction because of the prospector and the placer miner. To many Yukon families prospecting and placer mining are not strictly an economic activity but a traditional way of life. Prospectors and placer miners are not money grubbing individuals bent upon destroying the environment as many anti-development lobbyists would like all of us to believe. Rather they are generally responsible citizens that, because they spend much of their time working in the bush, in fact have much traditional knowledge to contribute to the

land use discussion. Prospecting and placer mining are as much cultural and social activities as they are economic endeavours. They should be considered in this context rather than in the conventional “jobs versus the environment” confrontation. If the DCRP does its job correctly it must work as hard to protect the livelihoods and guarantee future opportunities to the prospector and placer miner as any other traditional group in the Dawson area.

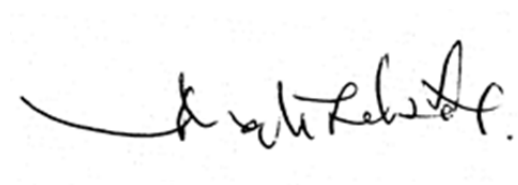
Finally I would like suggest an alternative to those presented in the Plan Alternative Package. My alternative is expressed by the map on page 8 of the package. This alternative would leave the entire Dawson Planning Region open to mineral exploration and placer mining except for Tombstone Park which I think everyone agrees is worth protecting. This map should show the areas already designated as First Nation lands. These areas were selected and designated years ago specifically to protect areas that have social and cultural significance to First Nations. They should be shown on the maps so everyone knows where access to development is already restricted due to First Nation traditional activity.

After a thorough review of the Plan Alternative Package it is pretty clear that the only group that is being asked to give up access to land is the prospecting and placer mining industry. Throw away the 30 Landscape Management Units and all the vague performance measures used to evaluate them. Instead keep it simple and maintain the mining industry’s right to access the entire planning area. Keep it black and white instead of offering five versions painted in ambiguous shades of grey. The whole process reminds me of that TV ad against drinking and driving where one beer glass gets placed in front of another until everything is fuzzy. There is already a very robust consultation and review infrastructure in Yukon to evaluate projects as they advance. Let us use this infrastructure to evaluate projects instead of cutting them off before they even get started by denying access!

My parents taught me to go out in the world to get educated, support myself, get informed on the issues that may affect me and speak up when I thought something was not fair. They were both very proud that their hard work and lifetime commitment had made a contribution to the development of Yukon and that along the way that they had helped other Yukoners achieve their goals. I do not believe for an instant that they would approve of a land planning process that will ultimately deny a specific but legitimate group of people the right to access and responsibly use land. Moreover they would reject a process that would deny anyone the prospect of opportunity.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Fekete". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Mark Fekete