

Northern Strategy Framework
Remarks by Premier Dennis Fentie
December 15, 2004
Whitehorse, YT and Gatineau, ON via videoconference

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Well, thank you very much, Larry. And to Prime Minister Martin, my fellow premiers, honourable ministers, ladies and gentlemen, this is indeed a significant day for us in the North.

But first let me apologize for not being present but I must say that technological advances have allowed me certainly to participate in such a momentous occasion.

It is very gratifying for us in the Yukon to recognize and to experience the federal government's vision and commitment to the North. It is obvious that that vision is about a whole Canada, a Canada from sea to sea to sea. And to you, Prime Minister Martin, and to the federal government on behalf of the Yukon Territory, we extend to you our deepest appreciation for that commitment and for the swift action that you have brought forward in addressing this vision through the development of a Northern Strategy.

It is important to recognize that beyond the issue of capacity and development for the North the strategy does include for the Yukon many other areas that are of great importance now and into the future.

It will allow us to strengthen our governance, our partnerships and our institutions. It will contribute to establishing a strong foundation for economic development here in the Yukon. It will ensure the protection of our environment. It will contribute to building healthy and safe communities in the North. It will also contribute to sovereignty, national security and indeed circumpolar cooperation which is something that is extremely important for us north of sixty. It will add to preserving, revitalizing, and promoting our culture and our identity. And it will certainly contribute to developing northern science and research.

The strategy itself is significant in other ways. It recognizes that we can, in partnership with the federal government, and in an entire northern approach, address common interests and concerns but it allows us the flexibility to work bilaterally to build on some of the unique developments that have already taken place in the North such as the Yukon's devolution transfer of management and control, of lands, waters and resources.

And we are very, very pleased to hear, Prime Minister, your commitment now to the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to carry out the same. This is certainly something that we in the Yukon support wholeheartedly because it lends itself in a manner that allows northern governments to be more responsible and it contributes to their self-determination.

We are looking forward with a lot of excitement and we are very encouraged by the progress to date and we know that from what we've experienced so far it is clear that the Northern Strategy is now solidly entrenched within the federal government. We in the Yukon will do our part to build on this strategy so that future generations in the North will benefit from the efforts that we have started today.

Thank you very much, Prime Minister Martin. To our hardworking MPs from the North, thank you, to Minister Andy Scott, of course to Ethel Blondin-Andrew who has certainly been a spark plug for the Northern Strategy. We thank you all.

We look forward to next deliverables and for now the Yukon will sit back briefly and reflect on what is a very, very important accomplishment not only for the federal government but for the three territorial governments.

What we have done today is not only good for Yukon, for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, it is good for Canada. All the best to each and every one of you. Merry Christmas and a happy new year.