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### **Northern Yukon First Nations and Yukon Government Coordinate Economic Development**

DAWSON – The Government of Yukon and three northern First Nations have signed an agreement for the development of a Dempster Corridor Strategic Economic Development Plan.

A signing ceremony was held in Dawson City today.

The Vuntut Gwitch'in, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Na Cho Nyak Dun First Nations and the Yukon government, who signed the Northern Yukon Economic Development Partnership Agreement back in July of 2004, furthered the partnership by jointly agreeing to the development of a plan for the Dempster Corridor that will promote economic development in a sustainable and culturally sensitive manner in the traditional territories of the three First Nations.

The parties agreed to work together to identify and facilitate regional and local economic development opportunities in a cooperative and collaborative manner in the Northern Yukon, to their mutual benefit.

“This is one of many initiatives the government is undertaking to support First Nation economic development in North Yukon,” Economic Development Minister Jim Kenyon announced. “It is unique, however, in that it brings all three First Nations together with the Yukon government to coordinate, plan and undertake economic development activities.”

“We are extremely pleased to be part of the signing of this important agreement and look forward to the next steps,” said Vuntut Gwitch'in Chief Joe Linklater.

“Northern Yukon's future is bright and by working together we will be able to ensure there are opportunities for our people,” said Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Darren Taylor.

“It's good to see some of the provisions of Chapter 22 of our Final Agreement being implemented and we look forward to working together on carefully planned sustainable development initiatives that would be beneficial ultimately to our communities and collectively to Yukoners,” said Na Cho Nyak Dun Chief Simon Mervyn Sr.

A senior officials working group has developed a priority list of opportunities. With the formal approval of the signatories, the group will turn its attention to projects that can be implemented in the short term, while developing a longer term, strategic economic development plan.

In 2005 the federal government designated the Dempster a part of its National Highway system. It is Canada's only all-weather land access to the Arctic, and has had increased profile with recent attention being paid to Canadian sovereignty in Arctic coastal waters. The potential for new oil and gas and mineral exploration and development in the area is also significant.

In addition to transportation and resource-based opportunities, members of the working group have identified ventures associated with tourism, especially those that link with Tombstone Park and the planned development of an interpretive centre, constructed and operated by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. The working group has also expressed interest in spin-off business possibilities covering a wide array of sectors.

This Agreement will apply to projects jointly involving the three northern First Nations.

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