

FOR RELEASE
December 15, 2017

Canada, Yukon and Yukon First Nations Governments Meet at the Intergovernmental Forum and Reach Agreement on Implementation of Yukon Environmental Assessment Legislation

Joint news release

Today, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett, along with Premier Sandy Silver, Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) Grand Chief Peter Johnston and Yukon First Nations Chiefs proudly announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide governments in implementing the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* (YESAA).

Following the introduction of Bill C-17 to reverse contentious amendments to the YESAA, the federal, territorial and Yukon First Nations governments have been working to re-establish positive relationships. The new MOU sets a path forward for governments to work together and improve the Yukon environmental assessment process in the spirit of partnership, respect and cooperation. The structure provided by the MOU will also support the fulfillment of the Yukon First Nations Final Agreements.

At today's Intergovernmental Forum, governments also provided presentations on joint fiscal work taking place at the national level, the Yukon Forum Joint Priority Action Plan, and consultations on the Arctic Policy Framework. Following the Intergovernmental Forum, a separate meeting will be taking place between Minister Bennett, Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon to discuss the dissolution of the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the creation of two new departments of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and Indigenous Services.

Quotes

"This Memorandum of Understanding, sets a structure for how Canada, Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations, will work together to collaboratively implement and improve the YESAA process. With the MOU in place and Bill C-17 receiving Royal Assent, we are re-establishing trust with Yukon First Nations and removing a key impediment to increased investment, responsible development, and jobs in Yukon. I look forward to continued collaboration with Yukon First Nation Chiefs, Grand Chief Johnston and Premier Silver."

–Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett

"The Government of Yukon looks forward to working with Yukon First Nation governments and the Government of Canada to improve the YESAA process. The signing of the YESAA Reset Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates the commitment we share to resolving long-standing, challenging issues between our governments. Collaboration between our governments is fundamental to moving forward and creating healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities within the Yukon."

–Premier Sandy Silver

"We are encouraged by Canada and Yukon's commitment to move forward with Yukon First Nations on this MOU that affirms future amendments to YESAA will be done jointly and avoid the mistakes of the past. Canada's continued efforts, with Yukon's support, to pass Bill C-17 and the signing of this agreement reflect progress toward a relationship of respect and reconciliation."

–Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Steve Smith (Kaaxnox, Dän nätthe äda)

"It is imperative for governments to have strong partnerships. The signing of this MOU demonstrates the commitment of other levels of government towards our shared priorities. This is positive progress!"

–Tleslin Tlingit Council Chief Richard Sidney

Quick facts

- Bill C-17, which seeks to reverse contentious amendments to the YESAA, was introduced in the House of Commons on June 8, 2016 and received Royal Assent on December 14, 2017.
- This MOU, which is complementary to Bill C-17, includes the creation of a new oversight group for the environmental and socio-economic assessment process in Yukon which will be comprised of representatives of Yukon First Nations, and the governments of Canada and Yukon.
- The Intergovernmental Forum, established in 2002, provides an opportunity for the governments of Canada, Yukon and self-governing Yukon First Nations to address shared priorities and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation. The last meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum took place in Whitehorse on March 7, 2017.
- Eleven of fourteen Yukon First Nations have signed final land claim and self-government agreements with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon.

Learn more:

Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act

Arctic Policy Framework

Joint Ministerial Statement: Toward a New Arctic Policy Framework

New Ministers to support the renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples

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