

Finding Common Ground

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has a mandate commitment to have land use plans in all regions of the Northwest Territories. Furthermore, the government's vision of land management, articulated in the Land Use and Sustainability Framework, states we will promote and support land use planning in all regions of the Northwest Territories.

Regional land use planning in the Northwest Territories has been a key component of our evolving land and resource management regime since 1983, when the *Basis of Agreement on Northern Land Use Planning* was signed by the federal and territorial governments, the Dene Nation, the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories, and the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut. The concept of land use planning has been incorporated into each land claim agreement that has been signed since that time.

To foster the conversations and relationships to support these objectives, the Department of Lands created the NWT Land Use Planning Forum in 2015 to bring Indigenous, regulatory, territorial and federal planning partners together. Each year the partners gather to exchange ideas and build a shared understanding of how to advance land use planning in the Northwest Territories. In other words, by "Finding Common Ground", Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories can facilitate and coordinate the important and necessary work to complete land use plans in every region of the Northwest Territories. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to land use planning as a central feature of our land and resource management regime across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, a land use plan is both a process and a document. Land use plans are developed collaboratively to reflect the values of Indigenous people, residents and communities in a planning area. The plans create the rules for use of the land that will promote their social, cultural and economic well-being. The process of land use planning itself builds confidence for communities, and the completed plan provides certainty for land users on how and where development can proceed. Completed land use plans will improve investor confidence, which in turn will support growth in important economic sectors such as tourism, agriculture and resource exploration and development.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to land use planning as a central feature of our land and resource management regime in all areas of the territory and continues to create tools to help us advance this commitment in partnership with other land managers in the Northwest Territories. Later today, I will table “Finding Common Ground”, our commitment to strengthen partnerships and support land use planning.

“Finding Common Ground” describes the approach to advance land use planning, and the accountability framework for that approach. It was developed in partnership over four years beginning with the first NWT Land Use Planning Forum in 2015.

The “Finding Common Ground” approach aims to strengthen existing government-to-government relationships among the Government of the Northwest Territories, Indigenous partners and Canada to:

- advance land use planning in a way that supports the completion of outstanding land, resources and self-government agreements with the Akaitcho Dene, Dehcho, and Acho Dene Koe First Nations, and the Northwest Territory Métis Nation;
- establish a new land use planning process for Wek’èezhì; and,
- renew the land use plans for the Sahtu and Gwich’in.

Mr. Speaker, who gets to use the land and resources in the Northwest Territories, and how it is managed, matters to all of us. “Finding Common Ground” is one way the Government of the Northwest Territories and federal and Indigenous government partners are working together to provide clarity and certainty around how land and resources are managed and used, and this renewed commitment to land use planning will help make wise land use decisions for this territory and its people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.