

<http://yukonmids.com/participate/>

To the Yukon Mineral Strategy Development Panel:

These thoughts about mining in the Yukon are offered from the perspective that climate change is the number one crisis that confronts us, and that we may still have a chance to avoid catastrophe.

Our current economic model, based on growth in GDP and ever increasing, advertising-driven consumption, is the main driver of greenhouse gas emissions. It is exhausting and destroying the land and its resources; it is causing irremediable loss of the biodiversity human life depends on; but it is not meeting the basic needs of a large proportion of people.

Our survival requires a steady state economy with progress measured according to human and ecosystem wellbeing. “A steady state economy is a truly green economy. It aims for stable population and stable consumption of energy and materials at sustainable levels.”*

Viewing mining within this context, Yukon government policies are needed which promote and require that:

- Only essential minerals (not gold, for example) that are not already in adequate supply are mined for: those needed for renewable energy production and storage, and for medical, affordable housing and similar social needs.
- Mining that does take place:
 - Follows circular economy practices such as minimum use of raw materials and maximum repurposing of waste products, shifting from production-disposal mentality to on-going use and re-use. Use and toss simply is simply not part of that vocabulary. Waste and pollution are designed out.The circular economy is an important step towards the steady state economy.

- Waits until land use planning for the area is completed. Staking also waits, to avoid the situation of the Peel Watershed, where several thousand claims were staked before land use planning was complete.
- Does not build where the local First Nation does not want it to. Does not coerce the First Nation. Fully carries out any mitigation that the first Nation requires.
- Operates with renewable energy, completely paid for by the company doing the mining.
- Keeps any roads built private and restores the land to the maximum extent possible. Does not allow the roads to be used for other purposes, such as hunting. Pays for these roads to be built
- Does not build roads or mines where the road will harm wetlands, which are an essential source of species diversity. Does not build in the habitat of species at risk.
- Puts up a deposit in advance which fully covers the potential cost of reclaiming and restoring the land when operations cease or if accidents happen during operation. Follows all best practices regarding tailings ponds, such as: no upstream ponds and use state of the art pad liners and dams. Require independent and frequent inspections for safety of local communities, the land and mine personnel.
- Pays taxes and royalties to Yukon Government and First Nation governments at least equivalent to the average for the industry in Canada. For all companies, the calculations, income and the amounts paid are to be publically available.
- Carries out the recommendations of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report regarding man camps.
- Offers jobs and training for local people before outsiders, and makes extensive efforts to offer jobs for which the training will benefit the community after the mine closes.
- Inspectors completely independent of mining interests and backed by appropriate laws and regulations ensure all mines follow all of the above!

To obtain social license for the above approach to the economy and mining and for a move away from people seeing the consumer lifestyle as desirable or possible to continue, positive public education by government is required. A useful point is that steady state and circular economies will provide ample jobs at all skill levels.

The World Circular Economy Forum will be held in Toronto next year. It is “a global event that brings together leaders, businesses, policymakers, and experts to present solutions for a circular economy”. It would be very good if policy level Yukon Government employees attend it.

Many of the conditions for a steady state economy can only be instituted at the national and corporate levels, but some are possible at this level, and they include mining. Yukon must do what it can!

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Notes:

The circular economy as defined by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation: “Looking beyond the current take-make-waste extractive industrial model, a circular economy aims to redefine growth, focusing on positive society-wide benefits. It entails gradually decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources, and designing waste out of the system. Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital.”

A paper on the steady state economy:<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2018-11-13/an-economy-that-does-not-grow/>

Information on policies that reduce metal extraction demand:
<https://institute.smartprosperity.ca/sites/default/files/spi-miningwastereport.pdf>