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July 9, 2025

Government of Yukon's Misguided Amendments to Placer and Quartz Regulations Undermine Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Treaty Rights and Fails the Public, Industry and First Nations

Dawson, Yukon – Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) is disappointed to learn that the Government of Yukon (YG) hid its plans to amend the *Placer Mining Land Use Regulation*, the *Quartz Mining Land Use Regulation*, and the *Waters Regulation* from us last month. The new amendments, which are now in effect, allow for the extension of certain mining approvals without proper environmental and regulatory assessments, putting Yukon and its environment at serious risk and undermining TH's treaty rights.

The regulatory amendments were discussed at the annual Council of Yukon First Nations General Assembly (CYFN GA) that took place June 24-26 at Brooks Brook on the Traditional Territory of the Teslin Tlingit Council. Together as one voice, the leaders at the CYFN GA denounced YG's failure to consult with Yukon First Nations prior to making these amendments and as such called upon YG to repeal the amendments as a matter of urgency. TH commends leadership for their collective action to protect our constitutional rights and further wishes to make the following public remarks.

TH acknowledges that placer mining is an important part of the Dawson City economy and that many of our Citizens work in the industry. However, TH seeks to ensure that mineral activities within our traditional territory do not come at the expense of TH treaty rights and interests. And unfortunately, this is exactly what YG has done with these unilateral regulatory amendments made on May 29, 2025.

YG amended these regulations without any notice to TH and without apparent regard for the health and safety of TH and all Yukoners. TH only learned of the amendments after they were developed and brought into effect. With this action YG chose to ignore or completely disregard that the Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly ruled that the Crown has a duty to consult when contemplating action that may adversely affect our constitutionally protected rights. This is inconsistent with the honour of the Crown and unbecoming of our treaty partner. Furthermore, the regulatory amendments will not address the actual issue at hand.

As a regulator, YG should be familiar with the cyclical nature of mining permits and their corresponding expiries. This surge in permit renewals is entirely foreseeable and could have been addressed by YG with adequate resourcing and capacity. Instead, YG chose a blunt regulatory band-aid that puts the risk on the environment and our treaty rights and interests. The new amendments are not the solution because they do nothing to ensure that YG doesn't

allow for a new “backlog” to accumulate in the coming years that will have to be addressed all over again.

“The backroom way that YG proceeded in amending these laws is a betrayal of YG’s commitment to work with TH to replace the outdated placer and quartz legislation, and it seriously undermines the years of work and resources that our government has committed to help develop new, better and safer mining laws,” says Hähkè Darren Taylor of TH. *“We support mining that is done in a responsible and sustainable way, but these amendments blindly extend the life of activities beyond what anyone has assessed or planned for and in some cases, oversteps our constitutionally backed jurisdiction as a decision body for activities on our Settlement Lands. This is not responsible. YG is rolling the dice and hoping there won’t be another Eagle Gold mine incident. TH and all Yukoners deserve better.”*

TH therefore opposes the substance of YG’s new amendments and the manner in which they were made. YG should have proceeded in a manner that addressed industry’s interests and protected TH treaty rights and the environment, by working with all First Nations and industry to identify a proper solution. Instead, YG chose to make surprise amendments and announce that the amendments support industry. This pits industry against First Nations, because First Nations are forced to either support YG’s actions at the expense of treaty rights and interests or take action to protect our treaty rights and be labelled as not supportive of the industry. Everyone loses.

YG’s latest actions are inconsistent with the TH Final Agreement and fails the public, industry, and Yukon First Nations. TH is echoing the calls of Yukon First Nation leaders as expressed via resolution at Brooks Brook on June 25 for YG to repeal the new amendments and to work directly with TH and other First Nations on better solutions to address the current permitting backlog YG is experiencing.

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