

Sahtu Land Use Plan – Norman Yakeleya, MLA Sahtu **Speaking Notes**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 3rd Draft of the Sahtu Land Use Plan. I am sorry I was not able to attend the hearings today, and I would like to thank the Sahtu Land Use Plan for accepting this statement for me.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made on a land use plan for our region. It clearly designates areas for conservation, special management or multiple use so that everyone knows how the land should be used here. That helps protect and promote the well-being of residents in the Sahtu Settlement Area. It is very important that the Land Use Plan is approved as soon as possible.

I believe the first priority of the Land Use Plan should be the protection of our land, water and resources so that we can continue to practice our traditions and preserve our culture.

This land was home to our ancestors and will be home to our future generations, but only if we are willing to protect it.

I am glad that the land use plan specifically preserves cultural and historic sites. We must honour these sacred places and teach our young people about them. They will not understand their special meaning unless we tell their stories and they see us treat these places with special respect.

The development of the Sahtu Land Use Plan has been a long journey. Throughout the process, community organizations struggled with funding to hire staff, and carry out their mandates. The Sahtu Land Use Plan includes recommendations to help communities start to build a larger revenue base.

That means we have to recognize the role of economic development. The Sahtu is rich in both renewable and non-renewable resources. Recently Canada opened almost 900, 000 hectares of Sahtu land to oil and gas development bids. We have a lot to gain from this development, in terms of jobs and money, but also a lot to lose in terms of clean water, clean air and healthy people and animals.

I am glad that the Land Use plan recommends an economic development strategy, and I hope this gets underway soon.

Some real challenges remain in the implementation of this Plan. I'll list some of them:

- There is not enough funding for a good cumulative impacts monitoring program
- We need to grandfather existing land uses into the approved Plan
- How will the Plan affect the Mackenzie Gas Project?
- Transboundary issues are beyond the scope of the Plan, but they are an increasing concern to the people of the Sahtu and all of the Northwest Territories
- Community and social development – resource booms in the past show that more money leads to more addictions, more broken families.
- We need strategies for:
 - Public water supply and waste management; and
 - Energy development, including hydro
- What do we do when industry requests access to certain resources such as gravel sources and their request forces us to compromise our commitment to protect cultural sites or important habitat?
- Transportation development – How will the construction of roads and airstrips affect the land and animals?
- Tourism
- Forestry

The choices that the Sahtu people, other governments and agencies make in some of these areas will have an impact on land use.

The Land Use Plan provides a guideline, but does not make difficult decisions for people.

In closing, we need to teach our young people, our future leaders, to love this land, and carry on the traditions of their ancestors. The wisdom of the elders will help them make the best choices.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to speak to the proposed Sahtu Land Use Plan. I appreciate your commitment in designing this important map of the future of the Sahtu.