



June 23, 2009

For immediate release

TIA Yukon Launches Public Campaign to Protect Peel Watershed

Whitehorse, YT – TIA Yukon wants Yukoners to speak out and demand that the Peel Watershed Planning Commission be allowed to do its job properly. TIA Yukon's board of directors is implementing an intensive communications operation to encourage Yukoners to express their support for the protection of the three rivers area of the Peel.

"The tourism industry is calling on Yukoners to act," says Rod Taylor, chair of TIA Yukon. "The Department of Environment's submission, which was originally a 22-page technical document, was dramatically edited under the influence of the Premier until it was relegated to a watered-down, four-page version. Now we must go back to the Commission and insist that they request the original unedited version of the Department's submission and redraft the plan so that it reflects this critical information."

TIA Yukon is running radio and newspaper advertisements asking people to contact the Peel Planning Commission. TIA's message is that the three rivers wilderness area (approximately 6% of the Yukon land mass and 40% of the Peel River Watershed) must be protected to preserve the essence of the Yukon. The Peel Watershed is one of the last, intact boreal forests of its size in the world and the wilderness it represents is the basis of Yukon's brand around the globe.

"The board is spending some of its reserve savings on this campaign," says Taylor. "This issue is too important to sit back and not have our voice be heard. That process has been corrupted by political interference and now we have to send the Commission a message of support. The Commission's mandate is to ensure that the use of lands and resources is consistent with social, cultural, economic and environmental values. We have to make sure that the draft plan represents this mandate."

"TIA Yukon is a not-for-profit lobby and advocacy organization," says Sandy Hachey, the executive director of TIA. "The board's decision to spend the organization's savings was considered long and hard. This campaign reflects how important this issue is to our industry."

Once the commission submits its draft plan to government, TIA Yukon intends to continue its face-to-face advocacy work with the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Elaine Taylor, who is also the Minister of the Environment.

"We hope people will also write letters to the editors of the Yukon News and Whitehorse Star," says Taylor. "While it is important to tell the Commission to protect our wilderness, we also want people to make their views public. This area and this planning process are too important to remain silent. The deadline for input to the commission is June 30th, so we have to act now."

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