

It is a great day for Canada's north when we can be the host for so many parliamentarians from our neighboring countries as well as representatives from across Canada.

I want to recognize the hard work that our executive members and organizers have put into making this conference a success. I would also like to acknowledge the work that Yukon's Member of Parliament Ryan Leef's Office has done to bring this conference to Yukon.

This conference brings us together to discuss issues which directly affect the daily lives of the people who live in our northern regions whether it is: education; economic development; climate change; or the question of our national or individual regional sovereignty.

Our people share the same challenges as we strive to create economic opportunities for them as they raise their families in comfort and enjoy peace and security.

If you don't mind I'm going to take a moment to give a brief outline of Canada's northern political landscape. Canada's North consists of 3

jurisdictions; Yukon, Northwest Territory, and Nunavut which are designated as territories. These territories differ from Canada's 10 provinces in that we do not have the ownership of our resources, which requires our federal government to be more involved in the social and economic futures of our regions. Our territories are in various stages of political evolution with Yukon having fully endorsed and accepted the parliamentary political party system as opposed to Northwest Territory and Nunavut that have incorporated a "Consensus" type of government without party politics. Each of our Territories is represented federally by an elected Member of Parliament and an appointed Senator.

Our local political evolutions have brought great changes to Canada's North. Most of this change has been for the better, with our local governments taking on the day to day responsibility for our communities, for education, for our health care, for highways and all other provincial like responsibilities such as environmental assessments and of course the responsibility for taxation.

Fortunately, as the north we have captured the attention and imagination of Canadians and have become a major national priority for Canada. The Government of Canada has invested significant financial and political capital in the north in concert with our territorial and First Nations governments recognizing that Canada's economic future is in the North.

The Federal Government has concluded in significant Land Claim Agreements with our First Nations and Inuit peoples. These agreements provide a foundation for our regions and its people to leverage the many economic opportunities that are coming our way.

Moving forward we face challenges of not only climate change and high costs of development, we are facing an ever changing geopolitical landscape which threatens our peace and security.

Conferences such as these can help bridge our differences by bringing to the forefront what we have in common rather than what divides us.

I look forward to the next couple of days as we discuss issues that northern people face on a daily basis

Welcome to Canada's Yukon!