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It's time for the government to protect the Peel

By [freelancer](#) on July 26, 2011 at 3:14 pm

Now is the time for the territorial government to take concrete steps to protect the Peel watershed and ensure any future development is sustainable and responsible.

The Final Recommended Plan of the Peel Watershed Planning Commission released this week reflects the best available scientific analysis and the wishes of a majority of Yukoners and the area's four First Nations.

The commission has listened to the people of the Yukon and produced a plan that provides a blueprint for the protection of this unique and important ecosystem.

The plan also recommends a precautionary approach to future development that would ensure maximum socio-economic benefit and minimize potential environmental harm. It is a principled and practical way forward.

The Yukon Party government has demonstrated its contempt for the work of the commission since the beginning, first by refusing to place a moratorium on mineral staking in the watershed at the start of the process and second by compelling Environment Yukon to weaken its submission.

Yukoners are rightly suspect of the current government's commitment to environmental conservation and responsible resource exploitation.

The government says it wants to protect the environment for present and future generations, but its actions suggest otherwise.

A sustainable future for Yukoners, including those who work in resource industries, requires a balanced and objective approach to land use planning.

The New Democrats have consistently supported the work of the Peel Watershed Planning Commission and applaud its efforts.

To get serious about the environment and stop paying lip service to the land use planning process.

It's time to implement the commission's recommendations and protect the Peel.

The writer is the leader of the Yukon New Democratic Party.

By Liz Hanson