



Whitehorse star

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Watershed issue will continue well into next year

The Peel watershed planning process will continue well into the new year, according to a series of letters tabled Tuesday in the legislature.

By [Nadine Sander-Green](#) on December 7, 2011 at 6:23 pm

The Peel watershed planning process will continue well into the new year, according to a series of letters tabled Tuesday in the legislature.

The letters were correspondence between the Yukon government and the four affected First Nations.

The chiefs of the councils wrote to the government, asking that public consultation be pushed to February and early March of 2012, intergovernmental consultation take place in April and May and the final plan be approved in June.

The letter of understanding from January 2011 stated a final decision would be made by November 2011.

Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Brad Cathers said Monday this deadline hadn't been met because of October's election.

He was responding to a question from Jim Tredger, the NDP critic for Energy, Mines and Resources, who asked when the planning process would get back "on track".

Cathers also tabled two letters from the Yukon government to the First Nations Tuesday.

They said the government is "generally supportive" of the proposed schedule and the Senior Liaison Committee should meet to finalize details.

Cathers also promised that the moratorium on mineral staking in the watershed, which will end in February, will be extended for six months until September 2012.

There are currently about 8,300 claims in the watershed. The moratorium also voids the annual \$100 fee a company has to pay for every claim.

Cathers also asked, in a letter, if he and Environment Minister Currie Dixon can meet with the four chiefs in January 2012 to discuss the government's response to the plan.

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission's final plan recommends 80 per cent of the watershed be protected, with a portion of the protected area categorized as "wilderness area" — a region with interim protection that can be reviewed periodically.