



**Government of Yukon Submission
Senate Standing Committee on National
Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs'
Study on Issues Relating to Security and
Defence in the Arctic**



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Glossary

ANPF – Arctic and Northern Policy Framework	NORAD – North American Aerospace Defence Command
ASWG – Arctic Security Working Group	
CAF – Canadian Armed Forces	RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
CBSA – Canada Border Services Agency	SAR – Search and rescue
DND – Department of National Defence	YFN – Yukon First Nation
JTFN – Joint Task Force North	YESAA – Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization	YSAR – Yukon Search and Rescue (NGO)
NGO – Non-governmental organization	

Overview

Arctic sovereignty and security comes first and foremost from the people of the North. Working together to support healthy, vibrant, thriving and safe communities in Canada's North is essential to long-term, sustainable Arctic security.

- Premier Sandy Silver

to the Senate Standing Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs

December 5, 2022

Canada's North represents a huge portion of our country. It is a place with sparse but dedicated communities that care deeply about their people and about contributing to the wellbeing of our country.

The Yukon's vision for a secure North is based on giving our citizens and communities the tools and support to assert security and sovereignty in remote and northern regions. Healthy, resilient communities are secure communities in Canada's Arctic. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, territorial Premiers have been united in this message to our colleagues across Canada and in dialogue with our international Arctic allies.

Views on a secure, stable, prosperous and resilient Arctic are shared with our friends and allies, both domestically and internationally. Over the course of 2022, the territorial Premiers engaged colleagues through the Council of the Federation on this issue; all 13 Premiers agree on the importance of strengthening Arctic sovereignty and security. As a result, the Council has called for significant new financial resources to support sovereignty in Canada's North.

In summer 2022, the Yukon hosted the ambassadors to Canada from Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark. Leaders in the Yukon were able to share and discuss specifics about Yukon, not only in how we function and our goals for the future, but how we envision a safe and resilient Arctic. The Yukon's Premier visited Iceland to advance shared interests and support cooperation, and in Greenland the three territorial Premiers addressed the Arctic Circle Forum on security, sovereignty and healthy communities in the Canadian Arctic.

Those engagements showed resonance between our priorities and concerns and those of our partners. The Yukon's and Canada's allies share the vision of well-supported, healthy, and secure northern communities. We believe it is important for the Yukon and our Canadian colleagues to not only work with the territories, but to work closely with our allied partners to address the shared challenges we face as northern communities including Arctic security, climate change, and community resilience.

Governance in the Yukon

In the Yukon, our government is guided by reconciliation and commitments under modern treaties. There are 14 First Nations in the Yukon, 11 of which have Final and Self-Government Agreements, recognizing rights and decision-making authority in a wide range of areas including land and resource management and program and service delivery to their citizens. We have built strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations and we work closely to find collaborative paths forward on many issues, and wish to advance the strategic relationship with CAF/DND alongside Yukon First Nations.

Canada is also a party to the Yukon Final and Self-Government Agreements, and CAF/DND decision-making is expected to respect commitments with respect to consultation as well as ensuring access to economic opportunities that may come with new security programs or policies.

Notwithstanding these obligations, open and responsive engagement with communities will be required to assess areas of need, and match those with CAF/DND priorities. Taking advantage of overlaps in community and CAF/DND needs will identify dual-use infrastructure and lead to better outcomes for all parties.

Strategic geography

Conversations about the security of Canada's Arctic tend to focus on the Arctic Archipelago and our portions of the Arctic Ocean. While the Yukon has, at times, been overlooked as a contributor to Arctic sovereignty and security, it has been and remains a significant part of both Canada's Arctic sovereignty and the continental defence infrastructure that has kept North America safe and peaceful.

Today, North American geography does not provide the same deterrence to foreign threats as it once did. Modern physical threats can be faster and quieter, and cybersecurity threats have the ability to move at near light speed from anywhere in the world.

The Yukon's strategic geography should be considered relative to the Pacific coast, at the western end of the Northwest Passage, and as a part of NATO's western flank. The Pacific is key to the Yukon's mineral exports, and the Bering Strait is the singular access point to the Arctic Ocean from the Pacific. The Yukon is therefore strategically important for response to northwestern and Arctic threats, and in Canada's partnership with U.S. forces and facilities in Alaska. The mobilization of U.S. military personnel and equipment is significantly aided by a well-maintained Alaska Highway, which provides the only all-season overland route to the interior of the state.

Continued support of the Alaska Highway and ensuring export infrastructure to the Pacific are key to achieving our common goals for a resilient and healthy Yukon, but they are also integral to continental security.

Cooperation with CAF/DND

Over the coming decades, the NORAD modernization programs have the opportunity to deliver considerable positive impact on Northern communities and build resiliency. However, while billions have been announced to support NORAD, much of that will not be spent in the North; the bulk of the spending is expected to go to southern firms for specialized equipment and services.

For the Yukon, maximizing the legacy benefits of NORAD investments made in the territory is a priority. As the modernization plan is assembled, Canada must look closely at the assets that can be left in communities for future use – not only infrastructure and equipment, but also experience, training and capacity-building.

A key area of focus for the Yukon is the Canadian Rangers. They are a critical facet of Arctic security with strong connections to communities, showing the intersection between security, safety, and capacity-building. The Canadian Rangers have local knowledge, can be mobilized to participate in coordinated responses with other agencies, and can facilitate engagement with communities. Additionally, the skills they

develop through DND programs and other opportunities support other community safety activities, such as search and rescue.

A good example of this concept in action is Operation NANOOK. When the operation is in the Yukon, Rangers, governments and NGOs have opportunities to build capacity and to help prepare the Yukon to manage disasters and emergencies, which have been increasing in frequency as the climate continues to change.

Infrastructure

Yukon infrastructure has an important role in making the defence presence in the North more agile and sustainable, while also giving us more opportunities to increase our economic activity and digital literacy. Diverse, robust and secure infrastructure will increase the Yukon's – and by extension, Canada's – resiliency to threats.

When considering infrastructure improvements, the Yukon government is especially interested in dual-use infrastructure that provides long-term benefits both for security and to local communities.

The Yukon government operates five airports and twenty aerodromes, including our international airport in Whitehorse and remote airstrips in the furthest reaches of the territory. Improving these runways and highways will give better access to the vastness of the Yukon, and provide more robust and secure supply chains for any deployment.

Our highway network connects all but one community in the Yukon, providing reliable access throughout our territory. The Alaska Highway provides a critical link from Alaska and the Yukon to the rest of North America.

Some of the biggest risks to Yukon infrastructure are driven by climate change. In summer 2022, for example, a portion of the Alaska Highway was washed out. While this was on a section of highway where traffic could re-route through British Columbia, there are other areas where the Alaska Highway is the only link into the Yukon, and by extension into Alaska.

We are investing in telecommunications redundancy that will improve resiliency in dozens of communities in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, but these projects require considerable time and resources, and are often overdue. The opportunities provided by new satellite internet connections in the North will bring more people

online, but come with the same digital security risks, and additional risks where services and hardware are provided by foreign-owned companies.

While this comes with significant benefit to communities, it also exposes us to external cyber threats and disinformation, highlighting the importance of digital literacy and ensuring that people are equipped to distinguish good from bad information.

Critical minerals

The security of North America and the Yukon's future prosperity are linked to a reliable supply of critical minerals. The federal government's Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan recognizes our country's potential to produce secure, environmentally sustainable minerals for domestic use and export, and the Canada-U.S. Joint Action Plan on Critical Minerals describes how to advance the mutual interests of both nations.

Our neighbours in Alaska are marketing themselves as the 'critical minerals arsenal for North America.' The Yukon has similar ambition to provide responsible resources to fuel the transition to a low-carbon economy with the territory's supply of critical minerals.

The Yukon has 25 of the 31 critical minerals that Canada has highlighted in its national strategy. Of those 25, we have significant proven deposits of eight, including world-class zinc, tungsten and copper discoveries. Our continued access to Pacific tidewater allows for a relatively direct supply to international markets.

The Yukon also has a robust and effective assessment and regulatory regime that continues to uphold responsible resource development in the territory. Our work to build strong relationships with Yukon First Nations and modernize legislative and regulatory processes has increased investor confidence and ensured that local communities are involved in and benefit from development projects.

Now is the time to look at developing these critical minerals – and for governments to establish favourable conditions to enable that development.

Yukon's security strengths and challenges

The Yukon's strengths are our governance, our people, our geography and our infrastructure.

As a product of the Yukon's modern treaties and the Government of Yukon's commitment to reconciliation, the territory's governance is supported by collaboration with Yukon First Nations in decision-making and in delivering services to Yukoners. There is formal and structural First Nations' involvement in education, government procurement, and resource planning, among other areas.

If people feel a purpose in the place in which they live and have a positive connection to its land, culture and history, they will be engaged and have a personal investment in making sure it is secure and protected. A community that has good access to services, education, and rewarding jobs is the basis for a secure and prosperous North.

Our strategic geography lies in the access to the western Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and in supporting reliable access to and from Alaska. Our connection to Alaska is important economically, but also militarily. Alaska is home to the American defence assets that are most prominent in monitoring and securing the air space above the Bering Sea, the Chukchi Sea, and the western Beaufort Sea. Our proximity to Alaska should not be taken for granted in how Canada sees the Yukon in the national and continental security calculation; we also need Canadian security elements in the territory that protect and enhance our communities, and affirm our sovereignty.

Auditor General's report on Arctic Ocean monitoring

While November 2022 report is highly focused on the Arctic Ocean, there are conclusions that are relevant to the Yukon. For example, any new remote sensing, satellites and space based communications will be able to benefit the whole North.

The Canadian Armed Forces' maritime presence in Canada's western Arctic is limited. Canadian Navy ships are mainly based out of the Atlantic ports, so their scope of operations is in the eastern Arctic and the far North. Some attention should be shifted to the western Arctic and the connecting waterways to the Pacific and NATO's western flank.

While we have Alaska between Yukon and the Bering Strait, our shores on the Beaufort Sea are the closest geographically to Russia and China.

The prospect of a deep water port at King Point on the Yukon's North Slope remains a possibility. In the future, that location could provide continuity and connectivity to the western part of the Northwest Passage.

The existing access to communities is an advantage if responses are required in remote locations. However, that infrastructure can always be improved and made more resilient.

Developing and maintaining diverse, robust and secure energy, transportation, and telecommunications infrastructure will increase the CAF and DND ability to respond, react to changing demands, and defend against various types of security threats while minimizing impacts on local communities. The Yukon is especially interested in projects that persist through time, and provide dual-purpose infrastructure that is available for both security and local community use.

Security in the twenty-first century is not only about geopolitical threats, but also threats emerging through environmental factors and emerging threats in cyber-space. Impacts that compromise infrastructure – for example, from climate change – also limit the ability to monitor and respond to security situations.

There are areas of the Alaska Highway that form the only connection between the Northwest and the rest of the continent. The Yukon government does extensive work every year to repair, maintain, and upgrade our highways. The fibre optic link runs parallel to the Alaska Highway along most of its route, so construction activity in the highway corridor can impact our internet connectivity.

In addition to ongoing work to improve the reliability of telecommunications, such as the Dempster Fibre Project, satellite services such as Starlink are available to Yukoners. While more options for connectivity are welcome, measures should also be taken to protect Yukon customers from a loss of service and ensure that they can rely on their service as long as they need it.

Yukon-CAF/DND relationships

The Yukon has had steady relationships and engagement with the ASWG and JTFN. In these fora, there is recognition that Northern strategies related to security and sovereignty are influenced by and can be viewed through the lens of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, which addresses security in a changing Arctic and maintaining the safety of Northerners. Most importantly, the ANPF recognizes that

federal decision-making about the future of the North must reflect the insights, perspectives, and ambitions of those who call it home. The Yukon government continues to work with Canada on the implementation of the framework, and looks forward to seeing it deliver policies and investments that can achieve the priorities set by Northerners.

We have seen federal governments hopefully transition from a 'use-it-or-lose-it mentality' to 'no decision about us, without us.'

- Premier Sandy Silver

The Yukon maintains a position in civil support areas as part of the defence spectrum. We are active in community safety and security as well as environmental protection and climate change adaptation. We recognize defence activities exist on a spectrum and those activities can have cooperative overlap, such as in natural disaster response.

Our most fruitful and visible security cooperation comes with the Operation NANOOK-TATIGIIT exercises that rotate into Whitehorse every few years. The opportunities for training and other positive legacy impacts from Operation NANOOK-TATIGIIT provide practical experience and raise the knowledge and domain awareness of the Yukon.

The exercises look different every time. Previous operations include simulated responses to natural disasters, and in 2023 the focus will be a wintertime mass power outage. Considering how to maximize the long-term benefits of each Operation NANOOK-TATIGIIT scenario should be a component of planning from the outset.

Other agencies and security

The Yukon is accessed by four international border crossings from the U.S. and one at Whitehorse international airport. The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is key to maintain that entrance security along our highways.

Day to day, the RCMP's presence in the Yukon ensures domestic security, and they have access to resources to respond to larger threats that are of national interest. There is also cooperation with the RCMP with respect to search and rescue.

The Canadian Rangers also have operational capability, but the Rangers require orders to mobilize which can take time. In some communities, there is crossover in the people who are involved in Rangers and



other governance or security roles, so people with those skills can fill the roster to accomplish a particular objective or advise on security issues.

CAF/DND capacity-building in communities

The Yukon is not the same place it was ten years ago. It is a modern, advancing society. The federal government will only be benefited by listening to the needs of the communities that we have right now.

- Premier Sandy Silver

Yukon communities expect to be meaningfully engaged about CAF/DND activities and investments. They have valuable expertise and can share the areas of need that may overlap with DND's priorities. Engagement should also consider impacts of historic CAF/DND operations that may continue to reverberate through communities, such as legacy contamination, and proactively work to address these concerns.

We note that CAF has demonstrated awareness of the Yukon's governance landscape, for instance through the annual notifications provided by the JTFN Commander regarding military activities to each Yukon First Nation Chief which provide an overview of anticipated CAF operations in their traditional territory.

A key element of the interaction with communities will be in economic benefits from security investments, including adherence to negotiated economic opportunity provisions in Yukon First Nation Final Agreements. These benefits may include local procurement, employment, and training. Importantly, ensuring that benefits flow to the communities in which CAF/DND is operating may require project delivery approaches and timelines to be adapted in order for work to be right-sized to the capacity of Yukon and Yukon First Nations-owned businesses.

An awful lot of times smaller jurisdictions, like the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, are lost in the shuffle. Things don't work for us. If a municipality in the Yukon is doing a project, we're doing the project. We'll be doing the procurement and tendering. It's a capacity issue. I believe the federal government over the last six years listened, gave us flexibility where we needed it.

- Premier Sandy Silver

Understanding NORAD investment in Yukon

The federal government's reinvestment in NORAD is massive, but it is expected that much of the spending will be in the south, procuring specialized equipment, technology and expertise. The Yukon government encourages the project to maintain focus on the North and actively work to identify opportunities for local benefits. This could be in the form of supportive infrastructure such as airstrip improvements, roadways and even housing, but should also account for employment, local contracting, and capacity and skill development in Yukon communities.

With this ambitious and necessary update, the Yukon hopes to see residual benefits to new and existing infrastructure that meets the same capabilities and standards seen in southern Canada.

Canadian Rangers and Junior Canadian Ranger program

On the land, experiential learning in science is so important. I've seen it. You get a student who does not thrive at all in a Western culture education system and is bored because of that. Out on the land with the Rangers, and they're there on grandpa's trapline, talking about traditional knowledge, leading their peers, self-worth is so important in that pursuit.

In my classroom you invite the Rangers in, and they're like superheroes, they really are, to the whole community. It's important to have that continuation as these elders start to retire.

- Premier Sandy Silver

The Canadian Rangers are deeply embedded members of each Yukon community, and serve as the “eyes and ears” of the North. They are valued by our communities as an important group that will answer the call of duty, lend a hand, and be a part of coordinated responses.

Rangers have a structure that can be accessed for communications and mobilization. Rangers may be interested in potential training programs, and developing their own programs for their own use. This could be achieved through partnerships when DND is operating or training in the Yukon – “train the trainer” – giving Rangers the tools to pass on skills. Additionally, if DND is interested in setting up more physical infrastructure and needs to integrate this in communities, the Rangers may be a way to access the community and help with the operation and maintenance of some infrastructure.

The Junior Canadian Rangers program is a way to develop youth, and strengthen the security of communities through youth programming. This can similarly be leveraged alongside the Ranger programs to achieve common security and defence goals.

In the context of CAF's current work on the 2025-26 Ranger Enhancement program, the Yukon government strongly encourages the federal government to ensure that Rangers across the North are equipped with the resources they need, including the requisite supporting policy, training, recruitment tools, and equipment.

Search and rescue

Some overlap between DND systems and resources can be seen in search and rescue operations in Yukon. The RCMP has responsibility for inland search and rescue, and works with tasking some operational components to the Yukon Search and Rescue Association (YSAR), which is a volunteer-run organization.

Only once the RCMP exhausts its resources will they make a request for assistance from the Canadian Rangers. That request has to be routed through CAF, with the Commander of JTFN making the final call whether to mobilize Ranger resources. While mobilization decisions clearly require careful consideration, this process can be inefficient, especially in a critical situation.

In smaller communities, there is likely to be overlap in the people who are undertaking search and rescue or emergency activities – that is to say, a YSAR volunteer may also be a Ranger with helpful local landscape or community knowledge. This speaks to the benefits that Ranger training and experience can have for our broader public safety interests.

Additionally, investments to communications, transportation and equipment may have benefits to search and rescue efforts in communities.

How Yukon can support CAF/DND objectives

The Yukon agrees that improving the agility and sustainability of CAF/DND operations in Canada's northern regions is positive for the territory and the continent. Enhancing the CAF/DND presence in the North is an essential component of a holistic approach to protecting the safety and security of our borders and people in the region, and allow for social and economic development in a safer environment. Modernizing military systems



and capabilities now will help the Yukon and Canada meet emerging threats and enable an enhanced ability to respond domestically and with our allies.

Infrastructure investments in the Yukon are key to giving CAF/DND a high level of operational capability in the northwest. This will give the best chance for quick mobilization to mitigate domestic, foreign, digital and environmental threats while maximizing local resilience and enhancing capacities in areas of shared interest.

Lessons from Operation LENTUS, Summer 2021

In July 2021, the Government of Yukon made a Request for Federal Assistance to Public Safety Canada to limit impacts of flooding in southern Yukon, resulting from a winter snowpack level that was nearly double what the region has historically seen. Our relationships with the JTFN, local CAF staff in Yukon, and Public Safety Canada led to well-coordinated and timely briefings, meetings, and interventions that saved critical infrastructure and private property from significant damage.

The existing infrastructure in Yukon proved a substantial boon to the operation. Whitehorse International Airport was able to efficiently receive air traffic and accommodate storage of aircraft and materiel. The Boyle Barracks and the Whitehorse Cadet Training Centre were easy for CAF to move into and operate from. This arrangement promoted safe operations and the ability to focus on the task at hand.

However, it is only because the flood-impacted areas were close to these infrastructure resources (40 kilometres by all-season paved highway from Whitehorse International) that the work was made straightforward, comfortable and well supplied. If an emergency event of similar scale were to occur in a more remote Yukon community, those conveniences would not be available.

The Yukon has ambitions to be a Northern hub for tech innovation. We are developing a territorial innovation plan, which is designed to help diversify the Yukon's economy, reduce barriers in the tech sector and reduce challenges to doing this type of business in the Yukon.

The Yukon has promoted the research and development opportunities that already exist here: from applied physical testing and research, to cold-climate engineering, to the software and technology sector.

The Yukon University Research Centre has many research streams and projects focused on the environment and life in the North. There may be opportunities for



cooperation with CAF/DND as they are undertaking procurement, for instance to test equipment for resiliency in extreme climates, or to develop new methods and products to work well in the North.

Our government has put significant investment into our innovation space. Northlight Innovation provides space for start-ups and new tech to begin their development journey. Individuals and companies operating from that space have seen success with both hardware and software development specializing in northern applications.

CAF/DND's collaboration with our research and innovation sector is welcome. We want to foster robust research and development, develop new technologies for market or proprietary use, and support ongoing innovation in the North.

Highways and ground transportation

If we have to catch up, then investing in the types of infrastructure that can be used by the communities is of the utmost importance. Investing in the technology, education of our most rural communities is extremely important.

- Premier Sandy Silver

Highways are necessary infrastructure that connect nearly all Yukon communities. In order to operate in the Yukon and deploy people and materiel with efficiency, our roadways need to be maintained and enhanced through time.

The most important piece of strategic defence infrastructure in Yukon is the Alaska Highway, which was built for defence purposes in 1942. The Alaska Highway is an essential route for moving people and material in and out of Alaska, and is required to support our American partners in their efforts for national security and continental defence. The Alaska Highway also provides access for community use and is a significant feature in road tourism to Alaska that brings benefits to both Alaska and Yukon. The Yukon government manages the construction and maintenance of the Alaska Highway for most of its run through the territory.

The Shakwak Highway – the roadway linking Haines, Alaska to Haines Junction, the Yukon and then the final stretch of the Alaska Highway into Alaska – is jointly administered through the 1977 Shakwak Agreement which directs the maintenance

and construction responsibilities between the U.S. and Canada. In recent years, the Yukon has had to advocate for the implementation of that agreement, namely funding and cooperation from U.S. and Alaskan authorities to undertake construction on of the road. Without the Shakwak Agreement, the Yukon could not justify the expense on its own and the road would degrade over time. Steady funding has not been available since 2015.

This section of highway is identified in the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* as a project the U.S. Secretary of Transportation may provide funding to under competitive grant programs, just like any other highway in America. Securing adequate funding for these responsibilities is a priority for our government, and we continue to work with our counterparts in Alaska who recognize the critical importance of this land route.

DND could assist the Yukon in working with American counterparts to emphasize the need for ongoing support for Shakwak, and guarantee that its construction and maintenance is assured for the benefit of U.S. national security and North American continental defence.

The Dempster Highway serves northern Yukon and allows for access to Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, NWT. The Inuvik Mike Zubko Airport hosts civilian aircraft and acts as a Forward Operating Location for the Royal Canadian Air Force. As part of its role as a Forward Operating Location, the airport is used for Air Force operations to support Canadian sovereignty in the North and NORAD obligations. In September 2019, the Government of Canada announced funding up to \$150 million to the Government of the Northwest Territories for the extension and modernization of the Inuvik Airport runway. Support for improving the Dempster Highway could lend to better access to Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk for military and civilian purposes, including tourism activity.

Other highways in the Yukon link all of our communities except for Old Crow. Responsible expansion of the road network outside of the paved highways and into more remote locations will open economic opportunities for Yukoners, lower barriers for responding to physical security threats in rural and remote areas, and can improve responses to natural disasters. The Yukon continues to pursue the federally-funded

Yukon Resource Gateway road program which will improve existing roads, and establish new ones into areas with significant resource potential.

Airports and aerodromes

The Yukon's airports and aerodromes are critical transportation infrastructure for moving people and materiel for the survival and benefit of communities and our economy. DND has instruction to modernize NORAD, including by ensuring airfields used by CAF are able to support a robust presence when needed.

The Yukon has airports and aerodromes in nearly every community, and in many remote locations. They offer access to more places with greater speed than what can move on the highways. The Yukon government manages and maintains five airports and over 20 aerodromes. Whitehorse International Airport, and the airports in Watson Lake and Dawson City have paved surfaces. All others are gravel.

As part of the NORAD modernization, an inventory of the Yukon's airports and aerodromes could be compared against the anticipated NORAD needs. If opportunities for improvement to community aerodromes are recommended, those could have parallel benefits to the local economy not limited to tourism and mineral exploration opportunities.

Clean energy

The Yukon is determined to create an energy-secure future that is powered by clean sources. Our climate change and energy plan, Our Clean Future, defines our goals for clean energy in the territory.

The Yukon's major infrastructure and sustainability efforts are focussed on having a reliable, renewable energy supply that will meet Yukon's energy needs over the next decades. The Yukon government has committed to achieve 97 per cent renewable energy on our main electricity grid by 2030. We have energy production goals and programs that support our communities who are both on grid and off grid.

The Yukon is supporting an expansion of the Atlin, British Columbia hydroelectric facility. Our government was pleased to see funding for the project in Budget 2022,

and is currently engaging with the federal government to find a path forward for the remaining financing associated with this project. It will have direct benefits to energy independence in northern and remote communities, while enabling economic and development opportunities for the Taku River Tlingit First Nation in Atlin.

There are further plans for a pumped water storage reservoir that would add capacity required to meet demand during the winter and in emergencies. DND recognition of the energy security landscape could advance the Yukon's priority in this area.

Reliable, clean energy on the main power grid or produced in an off-grid community is crucial to all civil activity and military operations undertaken in the Yukon. Support from DND to develop clean energy resources will make sure that energy is available when it is needed, even in times of crisis or emergency.

Critical minerals

The security of North America and the Yukon's future prosperity are linked to a secure supply of critical minerals. The Yukon has substantial critical mineral interest that can support clean energy and transition us to a low-carbon economy. I think that we are poised to be a leader in the world when it comes to a secure and environmentally conscientious resource industry.

- Premier Sandy Silver

The connections between a reliable source of critical minerals and the supply chains used to deliver those where they are needed has an obvious link to national and continental defence.

Canada's recent efforts on critical minerals include setting the right regulatory conditions to make sure our resources can become part of the supply chain, and we can deliver to the global market.

The Yukon is examining recommendations from our recent Mineral Development Strategy, which proposes how the Yukon will continue to be a mining leader in North America, inclusive of First Nations rights and reconciliation while maintaining a healthy environment. As well, the Government of Yukon is a signatory to the Canada-U.S. Joint Action Plan on Critical Minerals and is committed to supporting critical mineral exploration and development as a way to secure geo-politically sensitive supply chains

and support the transition to cleaner technologies and renewable energy sources. We remain interested in further dialogue with the federal government on how to promote the development of Yukon's vast mineral potential.

Specific to the Yukon, and different from the other territories, is our export pathway. For bulk materials, we export to the Pacific, and are working to gain certainty on export infrastructure through the Port of Skagway in Alaska. This underscores the way in which consideration of Northern security needs to include the western Arctic and connections to the Pacific.

Digital security

We're waiting for other options right now to provide cell service into rural, remote areas. This is another example of something that is extremely important, and that could be a dual-purpose infrastructure investment as we take a look at modernizing and using our national defence money to actually also help the tourism sector and the mining sector and improve the technologies at our borders and our most remote areas in Canada.

- Premier Sandy Silver

Strengthening communications infrastructure is key to Canada thriving in the future. Security of that infrastructure is essential for continental defence and our ability to participate in the connected world, whether it is fibre optic links, satellite connections, or LTE and 5G networks.

The Yukon has made significant investments in the Dempster Fibre project to bring the Northern Fibre Loop to fruition, with construction beginning on the final leg of the project commencing summer 2021 along the Dempster Highway. This will create a redundant link, and provide Yukoners with fully reliable fibre optic connection, eliminating periodic internet outages. There have also been discussions on creating a fibre link to Skagway, Alaska, which links to several trans-Pacific lines via the northwestern U.S.

While fibre links are the most reliable, constellation satellite links are expected to become more popular in rural and remote locations in the near-term. Infrastructure for the remote access will be privately owned by non-Canadian corporations.

Beyond connectivity, digital threats are not uniquely Northern risks, but bad information can have a higher impact in small communities where there might not be the literal bandwidth to disprove misinformation being circulated, or there may not be the digital literacy to identify it, especially for people who have not grown up with the internet.

The threat to critical infrastructure via digital pathways is real. Cyber attacks and ransomware attacks appear to be growing in scope and frequency. All the more troubling is that these attacks are allegedly executed by private individuals and groups, lending great uncertainty to where or when an attack will happen.

The Yukon is open to hearing DND's concerns and recommendations about a digitally-secure future, and would like to know (at an appropriate level of detail) about security programs that exist, are active on Canadian networks or that are being planned, and if DND has undertaken risk assessments for Yukon's digital infrastructure.

Concluding comments

As we take a look to our needs because of international conflict and the global warming of our Arctic areas, this is a huge opportunity, even though it's scary to see the polar ice caps receding as they are. I think we're against the clock right now.

- Premier Sandy Silver

As CAF and DND develop their new plans for NORAD modernization and builds their focus for a more secure North, the people and communities in the territories need to be top of mind. An investment made without a community's involvement unnecessarily undermines the value of that investment. The people of the Yukon stand ready to engage in discussions about security, and how we can best serve our country as the eyes and ears of the North. Yukon government eagerly awaits this engagement and new opportunities for partnership with the federal government to realize our collective vision of a true North – strong and free.

