

## **Yukon Liberals Response to TechYukon Questionnaire 2016**

1. Will your party support a business accelerator program for technology companies and

Will you continue to support TechYukon, Telecommunications development Directorate and Technology Innovation fund of the Cold Climate Innovation Centre?

### **Answer**

Yes, the Yukon Liberals will support a business accelerator program for technology companies.

Yukon's economic performance has declined every year for the past several years. We need to reverse this poor performance and economic diversification is one of the pillars of that strategy. We need to grow the Tech sector as well as all of the other sectors of the economy. We feel strongly that there are numerous opportunities to work with the sector to help build a strong economy and broaden our approach to building strong partnerships for the future.

In addition, a Liberal Government will implement the following initiatives related to the Technology field which we feel will strengthen the sector's ability to grow and innovate.

- Provide the necessary funding and accelerate the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project.
  - Leverage federal funding to enhance connectivity and bandwidth in all communities across Yukon.
  - Establish a \$10 million economic infrastructure investment fund through the Yukon Development Corporation to advance economic diversification and innovation.
  - Establish a 5-Year funding plan for technology innovation projects.
  - Improve government support for the Yukon's growing technology sector by working with industry to ensure the proper infrastructure is in place to expand and pursue new initiatives.
2. Access to venture capital and incentives to produce knowledge based products and services is a major stumbling block for local technology companies. For example the Government of B.C. provides a 30% tax incentive for investment in new companies or products and has implemented a \$100m capital investment fund.

What would your party do to make Yukon companies competitive with those jurisdictions and to renovate its aging incentive programs like the Business Incentive Program?

### **Answer**

To remain competitive, a Liberal Government has already announced that it will eliminate the Yukon small business tax and lower the corporate tax rate from 15% to 12% and reduce red tape for small businesses.

We also plan to expand the Small Business tax credit program from \$1m per year to \$5m per year. In addition, we will be modernizing the program to fit the current reality of business investment.

As noted in the previous question, the Yukon Development Corporation mandate will be revised and broadened and the Corporation will have a \$10m infrastructure investment fund to advance economic diversification, including technology innovation.

We will also restructure the procurement system to ensure Yukon companies have a level playing field when it comes to competing for government contracts. This will include the following measures:

- All tender submissions will demonstrate measurable Yukon benefits as part of the evaluation process.
- Tendering standards will ensure that local contractors have a level playing field and there are no barriers to entry when competing for government contracts.
- As a priority implement the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel Report in an accelerated manner, completing its implementation by 2018.
- Ensure tenders include locally produced products that meet the required standards.
- Travel expenses (which are ultimately paid by the buyer) will be included in all bids for services, like software, and consultancy.
- Work with the business community to further review barriers and establish fair and transparent Yukon contracting practices that ensure local contractors have a level playing field when competing for Government contracts
- Add a local servicing and warranty provision to all tenders.

3. How will your party use tools such as supply chain management, budgeting process, incentives and local-friendly procurement policies to enhance the capacity of the local technology sector?

The capital IT spending envelope was recently increased to \$9.5m, in part due to TechYukon's lobbying after years of stagnation. What will your party do to continue this investment and to ensure that maximum benefit falls to Yukon companies and Yukon job creation.

### **Answer**

Yukon Liberals agree that something has to be done to strategically target government spending in a manner that maximizes local spending and local job creation. We have listed a number of those initiatives in the answer to question #2 including ensuring local service and warranty are part of government contract requirements and the use of locally created or produced products where available.

We will continue IT spending at the current levels and examine the need to increase this funding going forward. We need to develop a strategic plan that indicates how we will maximize technology when conducting business and particularly in providing services in communities. As mentioned previously, we will make sure that communities get

increased band-width and connectivity. Not just some communities but all communities and we will move on this commitment immediately after the election.

It is also our plan to set up an Independent Task Force on Economic Enhancement and Environmental Sustainability, comprised of representatives of private industry, environmental groups, First Nations, and municipalities, to:

- recommend sustainable economic and environmental practices and standards;
  - advise the government on innovation and economic diversification opportunities;
  - Assist in the creation of a long-term Yukoners-first framework for economic development
  - develop an economic strategy focused on new investments in innovative and emerging businesses; and while meeting our vision of Good Jobs in a Clean Environment;
  - recommend options to increase access to federal funding, private investment, and partnerships with First Nations programs;
- Expand the mandate of the Yukon Development Corporation beyond the energy sector, to support the establishment of new industries in Yukon and enhance the existing economic sector, in recognition of the importance of all sectors of our economy.

I want to stress that we are convinced that spending money locally will create benefits for all Yukoners and we will take steps to ensure that government spending is focused on building a strong Yukon economy.

4. The Yukon jobs program is a valuable resource for helping companies train their employees but demand for this help frequently exceeds the supply available. What will your party do to increase access to training support for technology companies?

The future of the technology sector depends heavily on the availability of talent to be recruited and trained. Unlike many jurisdictions, Yukon does not include education in computer programming in its curriculum. What will your party do to address this issue?

Will your party support a summer job training and mentoring program for Yukon students enrolled in technology-related studies?

## **Answer**

Yukon Liberals support the implementation of the Yukon version of the revised B.C. K-12 School curriculum. The revised curriculum includes courses in computer science, computer programming at the high school level and they are building in coding into the K-9 curriculum. We hope this will be a good start to building a pipeline of potential Yukon talent that will be available for the Tech sector.

Summer job training and mentoring programs can be accessed via the STEP program and we would also be pleased to work with TechYukon to ensure that the jobs program

has sufficient capacity to meet the demand and to support training opportunities for Yukon companies and Yukon students.

5. What steps will your party take to improve internet infrastructure in Yukon, and to ensure that local companies are involved in the work of implementing those improvements?

What will your party do to ensure technology companies have affordable, reliable access to the high speed internet service they need to create and support their products?

**Answer**

Again, we fully support your goal of improving internet infrastructure in all Yukon communities. We will move quickly to get the fibre redundancy project completed and as mentioned we will be adding tender conditions that provide a level playing field for Yukon companies. We will also be taking steps to ensure all Yukon communities have a high level of broadband infrastructure and connectivity.

We are committed to growing the Tech sector along with the Yukon economy and to do that we will need a strong IT infrastructure that is both affordable and reliable. We want to encourage competition, build new infrastructure and we believe that the procurement changes we propose will enable us to build all sectors of Yukon's economy.

We want to work with TechYukon and will be supporting the association and the industry as a major part of our economic plan. We will be looking for your input, your suggestions and your advice as we implement our plan to diversify Yukon's economy