
Climate Change in Yukon



Office of the
Auditor General
of Canada

Bureau du
vérificateur général
du Canada

Climate Change in Yukon

What we examined (see Focus of the audit)

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a leading cause of climate change is the emission into the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes. Yukon is a small emitter of greenhouse gases, but like other places in the North, it is disproportionately affected by climate change.

This audit focused on whether selected Government of Yukon departments had worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account present and future generations. The departments selected for the audit were the Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; the Department of Highways and Public Works; and the Department of Community Services.

Why we did this audit

This audit is important because Yukon is experiencing significant climatic changes, which can affect its land, wildlife, and people. These changes can be damaging to infrastructure, ecosystems, and traditional ways of life.

In 2016, many legislative audit offices across Canada decided to look at the issue of climate change and developed similar audit approaches and questions to examine climate change action within their governments. As part of this initiative, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada decided to do federal and territorial climate change audits.

What we concluded

We concluded that the Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; and the Department of Community Services had not worked sufficiently to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We also concluded that the Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; the Department of Highways and Public Works; and the Department of Community Services had not worked sufficiently to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, the Government of Yukon had created a climate change strategy, an action plan, and two progress reports that took present and future generations into account.

What we found

Planning and leading

Overall, we found that the Government of Yukon created a strategy, an action plan, and two progress reports to respond to climate change. In developing these items, the government took good first steps toward providing leadership and direction for responding to climate change. However, the commitments in the government's action plan and progress reports were weak and not prioritized. In addition, deficiencies in the Climate Change Secretariat's reporting made it difficult to assess progress on the government's climate change actions.

These findings matter because the government's development of a strategy and action plan are key to establishing priorities, roles and responsibilities, and actions for its response to climate change. Furthermore, by reporting clearly and consistently on the progress it makes in meeting its climate change commitments, the government helps keep the public informed and strengthens its accountability.

- **The Government of Yukon developed a climate change strategy, an action plan, and two progress reports, but it made weak commitments**

Recommendation. The Climate Change Secretariat, working with departments and other stakeholders, should prepare a comprehensive, territory-wide risk assessment to help prioritize commitments to manage the impacts of climate change.

Recommendation. The Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; the Department of Highways and Public Works; and the Department of Community Services should develop climate change commitments that are time-bound and costed. Commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should indicate the intended levels of reductions.

- **Reporting on progress was not clear or consistent**

Recommendation. The Climate Change Secretariat should publicly report in a consistent manner on progress made on all commitments, and on the expenditures associated with meeting the commitments.

Taking action

Overall, we found that although the Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; and the Department of Community Services had begun to lay the groundwork for adapting to climate change by gathering information, they took limited concrete action. In our opinion, the benefits of gathering information are fully realized only when the information is used to take action in a timely manner.

These findings matter because to respond effectively to climate change, the government must take concrete and timely action, given the severity of climate change impacts and the speed with which they are expected to occur.

- **Departments did not take sufficient concrete action to respond to climate change**

Recommendation. The Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; and the Department of Community Services should complete their work to carry out concrete actions in a timely manner to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This work could include, but is not limited to, implementing recommendations from reports, making information available to decision makers, and explicitly incorporating climate change into directives, processes, and policies so that they are integrated into decision making.

Entity Responses to Recommendations

The departments agreed with our recommendations, and have responded (see List of Recommendations).

Related Information

Report of the	Auditor General of Canada
Type of product	Performance audit
Audited entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Environment (Yukon) • Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (Yukon) • Department of Highways and Public Works (Yukon) • Department of Community Services (Yukon)
Completion date	5 October 2017
Tabling date	5 December 2017
Related audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to Yukon Legislative Assembly

For more information

Media Relations

Telephone.: 1-888-761-5953

E-mail: infomedia@oag-bvg.gc.ca

Twitter: [OAG_BVG](#)