



# STATEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Government of  
Northwest Territories



### STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) recognizes that environmental considerations, including the right to a healthy environment, should be integrated into all decisions and actions that may have significant impacts on the environment. The GNWT commits to carrying out its responsibility in such a manner to protect the environmental rights of the people of the Northwest Territories (NWT), recognizing residents possess a unique relationship to the land, the rich, vast diversity of which has shaped their values and experiences. This Statement of Environmental Values (Statement) is a means to record the government's commitment to the environment and to decisions and actions made in the best interest of residents.

#### 1. PRINCIPLES

The GNWT will adhere to the following principles when implementing the Statement of Environmental Values:

- 1) If there is a threat of significant harm to the environment, lack of complete scientific certainty is not considered to be a reason for postponing reasonable measures to prevent that harm (precautionary principle).
- 2) A person who causes an adverse effect on the environment is responsible for taking remedial action and should bear the costs of that action (polluter pays principle).
- 3) The integrity, biological diversity and productivity of the ecosystems in the NWT are to be protected, maintained and restored (ecological sustainability principle).
- 4) The needs of the current generation should be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (intergenerational equity principle).
- 5) There should be a just distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among residents of the NWT (environmental justice principle).
- 6) Development of resources should occur in a manner that supports long-term economic, cultural, and social well-being of residents of the NWT (sustainable development principle).
- 7) Decisions that may have a significant impact on the environment should recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 26).

### 2. SCOPE

If there is a conflict or an inconsistency between a provision of this Statement of Environmental Values and a provision of the *Environmental Rights Act*, the provision of the Act prevails to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency.

As set out in the Act, this Statement applies to all departments of the GNWT and the following agencies, as set out in the Act: the Northwest Territories Business Development and Investment Corporation, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, and Aurora College.

This Statement applies to all decisions and actions that may have a significant impact on the environment, made by GNWT departments and the abovementioned agencies.

For the purpose of this Statement, decisions that may have a significant impact on the environment include all decisions that may meet the threshold of causing or likely to cause significant harm, as set out in subsection 9 (2.1) of the *Environmental Rights Act*.

This statement shall be applied as part of the broader legislative and policy framework of GNWT departments and agencies, including, for example, adherence to the Sustainable Development Policy and agency establishing and governance legislation.

### 3. AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

#### 1) General

This Statement is issued under the Authority of the Executive Council. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Statement rests with the Executive Council in accordance with the *Environmental Rights Act*.

Authority and accountability is further defined as follows:

#### a) Premier

The Premier is accountable to the Executive Council and the residents of the NWT for the implementation of this Statement.

#### b) Ministers

Ministers are accountable to the Premier for the implementation of this Statement.

#### c) Boards

Boards of applicable GNWT agencies are accountable to their respective Minister for the implementation of this Statement.

d) Deputy Heads

Deputy Heads of applicable GNWT departments are accountable to their respective Minister and the Premier for the implementation of this Statement.

e) Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

The Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for the coordination of the administration of this Statement.

2) Specific

a) Executive Council

The Executive Council is accountable for the application of this Statement, including the principles and provisions within, to all decisions and actions that might significantly affect the environment.

The Executive Council may, in accordance with the *Environmental Rights Act*, amend this Statement from time to time.

b) Premier

The Premier shall take reasonable measures to ensure the GNWT adheres to the principles and provisions set out in this Statement when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

c) Ministers

Ministers shall take reasonable measures to ensure departments adhere to the principles and provisions set out in this Statement, and to collaborate with applicable agencies to encourage adherence to the principles and provisions set out in this Statement, when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

d) Boards

Boards of GNWT agencies shall:

- (i) Take reasonable measures to adhere to the principles and provisions set out in this Statement when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment; and
- (ii) Take reasonable measures to ensure the integration of environmental considerations in providing advice pertaining to the setting of government priorities; the development of policy and legislation; and the development, design, and delivery of programs and services.

e) Deputy Heads

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Deputy Heads of GNWT departments shall:

- (iii) Take reasonable measures to adhere to the principles and provisions set out in this Statement when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment; and
- (iv) Take reasonable measures to ensure the integration of environmental considerations in decisions, actions, and advice pertaining to the setting of government priorities; the development of policy and legislation; and the development, design, and delivery of programs and services.

f) Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

The Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources will:

- (i) In collaboration with other Deputy Heads, coordinate the administration and government-wide implementation of this Statement; and
- (ii) Monitor advancements in environmental principles and best practices, and periodically review this Statement, to inform recommended amendments to this Statement from time to time.

#### 4. PROVISIONS

1) General

The GNWT and the residents of the NWT have a shared responsibility and goal to ensure the wise use and management of the environment on behalf of present and future generations.

The GNWT shall strive to enact public policy that reflects a desire for environmental protection at the territorial, regional and local levels, and the promotion of related internationally recognized best practices.

2) Priority setting and Strategic planning

The GNWT will integrate environmental considerations into priority setting activities regularly undertaken, including but not limited to, government-wide and departmental strategic planning, business planning, and annual budgeting.

3) Legislation, Policy, Program and Service Development, Design and Delivery

The GNWT will ensure the integration of environmental considerations into legislative and policy proposals and related legislation and policy development

brought forward for approval and will take reasonable measures to integrate environmental considerations into program design, and program and service development, implementation and ongoing delivery. Best efforts should be made, where appropriate, to include environmental considerations into program evaluation.

#### 4) Recognizing Indigenous Knowledge and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Decisions and actions that might have a significant impact on the environment should use the best available information, including Indigenous traditional knowledge and values, local and community knowledge, and scientific knowledge.

The GNWT recognizes the special relationship that Indigenous peoples have with the environment, and that Indigenous peoples and communities are deeply connected, spiritually and culturally, to the land, water, air and animals. The GNWT is committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. When making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, the GNWT will provide opportunities for the involvement of Indigenous peoples, whose interests may be affected, in applicable GNWT decision-making to ensure Indigenous interests are appropriately considered.

Nothing in this Statement is intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the NWT may have to consult with Indigenous peoples. The GNWT will implement this Statement in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights in accordance with section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

#### 5) Public Engagement and Open Government

The GNWT is committed to the principles of Open Government, demonstrated through efforts to increase openness, transparency and accountability. The GNWT believes that public engagement supports and improves sound, evidence-based decision-making that reflects the values of NWT residents.

When making decisions that might significantly affect the environment, the GNWT will provide opportunities for public engagement in GNWT decision-making to ensure residents' interests are appropriately considered.

Through Open Government, the GNWT is committed to timely sharing of accurate environmental information and data to ensure the GNWT is accountable, and residents of the NWT are informed about government decision-making.

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Whereas the government and residents have a shared responsibility and goal to ensure the wise management of the environment, The GNWT will provide NWT residents with the means to participate in the decision-making process and hold the GNWT accountable.

### 6) Integration with Other Considerations

Departments and agencies shall integrate the principles of this Statement and consider environmental impacts with other considerations, including social, political, legal, economic and knowledge considerations, when making decisions and taking actions that might significantly affect the environment.

## 5. PREROGATIVE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Nothing in this Statement shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take action respecting the environment outside of the provisions of this Statement.

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Premier and  
Chair of the Executive Council