

The NWT and Canada:  
**Partners for  
a Sustainable  
Future**









# Introduction

## Premier Bob McLeod

Our government strives to create a strong, prosperous Northwest Territories: a flourishing, diversified economy built on responsible development where residents are empowered by a strong education system, job opportunities, and vibrant communities.

Climate change, the need for clean and reliable energy and the cost of living are issues we will continue to address to ensure our residents have the opportunity to learn, grow and develop. As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau acknowledged in his letter to our government during the 2015 Federal Election, “The Northwest Territories has huge potential for growth, but it needs a real partner who will invest in its people, infrastructure, and research, in order to ensure that this growth is realized.”

It’s critical to our vast territory that we strengthen our collaborative partnership with the Government of Canada, like the partnerships we have fostered between our government and our Aboriginal government partners. Strong, effective and efficient governments are essential for helping Northerners achieve their social, environmental and economic goals. Strong partnerships will help create an NWT where all people can thrive and be healthy, where a well-managed environment contributes to our economic wellbeing and quality of life, and where a strong economy provides jobs and opportunities for all our communities.

The NWT and Canada share many common goals and priorities, and there are areas where we can benefit most from a strong partnership.

The Government of Canada has committed to making public investments to encourage economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. This is essential for the Northwest Territories as we work towards a stable, secure economy. Investments in areas like transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, housing, and green energy production help us create jobs, reduce the cost of living, and allow us to invest in social infrastructure to support our society’s most vulnerable members.

The North is limited by our need for infrastructure to support individuals, communities and industry. Highway upgrades and expansions, clean energy, telecommunications and housing are all in short supply in the NWT and are essential to our ongoing development.

The Government of Canada has committed to a collaborative working relationship with provincial, territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments to deliver positive change for Canadians. We support their efforts, and look forward to working with the federal government in the best interests of northerners and Canadians.



Photo Credit: GNWT







# A Unique Part of Canada

The strength of the Northwest Territories comes from our people. Our population of 44,000 resides in 33 communities, ranging in size from 84 residents to more than 20,000. We are diverse: approximately half of the population is of Aboriginal heritage, including Dene, Inuvialuit and Métis. Many residents still live in small, remote communities and continue to rely on activities such as hunting, trapping and fishing to help support themselves and their families. Others balance both traditional and modern lifestyles, retaining important traditions while at the same time participating in the modern economy. Larger communities like Yellowknife and Inuvik are also home to diverse, multicultural populations, with ties to countries across the globe.

The Aboriginal people and cultures of the NWT have a significant influence over all aspects of life in the Northwest Territories, from school curriculum to our consensus-style government. Aboriginal governments play a key role in many areas of the economy, education, and the management of lands and resources. Aboriginal-owned businesses are thriving and make significant contributions to the NWT's economy.

The Northwest Territories is working to ensure our population is healthy and our society is inclusive. As is the case in the rest of Canada, there are disparities between health outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people experience higher rates of chronic diseases, including cancer and Type 2 diabetes, and they are more likely to be hospitalized for mental health or addictions related issues. While we have a younger population than Canada as a whole, our population is aging and the demand for supports and services for seniors is increasing.

We face different challenges than other jurisdictions because we have very limited existing infrastructure and services to serve this population, particularly in our smaller and more remote communities.



The Northwest Territories covers approximately 1.3 million square kilometres and is the third largest jurisdiction in Canada. Our most northerly community, Sachs Harbour, is located at 72 degrees of latitude. This geography presents opportunities, but also challenges for program delivery. Connecting our small population over a vast distance is a challenge. The NWT's transportation infrastructure is made up of only 2,200 kilometres of all-weather highway connecting 12 of 33 communities year round. In winter, an additional 1,650 kilometres of winter roads and ice bridges connect another 17 communities.

*"I believe that confronting our collective challenges can only be achieved by sitting down together and engaging in open dialogue. I look forward to meeting again with Premier McLeod, and working in partnership to make a positive difference in the lives of all Canadians in the Northwest Territories."*

*- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau*

Photo: Dene Drummer in Fort Simpson, National Aboriginal Day 2011 (GNWT)

Four NWT communities do not have any road access and rely solely on air services year round. This lack of access not only increases the cost of living, it affects all types of service delivery from healthcare to education, as well as the overall quality of life. With the NWT being disproportionately impacted by climate change, all-weather roads are being affected by permafrost degradation and the long-term viability of winter roads and ice bridges is being threatened by warmer winters.

**“The NWT welcomes the prioritization and focus on the Arctic by Canada and the U.S. and we look forward to contributing our Northern perspective, experience, and strong voice to collaborative Arctic work among national and sub-national jurisdictions.”**

*- Premier Robert McLeod*

Connecting the NWT to the rest of the world also presents challenges. About a third of our population relies on dial-up access to the internet, limiting opportunities for accessing information, distance education, electronic healthcare and participation in the digital economy.

Powering and heating our homes, schools, institutions and businesses is essential for the health and safety of our residents in a cold climate, and in the NWT, this is accomplished through a combination of hydroelectric power and diesel generation. Diesel is an expensive option – both financially and ecologically – and our electrical infrastructure is aging. As a result, the NWT is seeking reliable, greener options for our communities.



Sunset fishing on Great Slave Lake (D. Walker/GNWT)

Our natural resources are our main economic driver, accounting for 40% of our gross domestic product. The NWT has a rich and diverse geology which includes oil and gas, and minerals. The Northwest Territories has made Canada one of the world’s largest producers of diamonds, and has brought international attention to Canada’s diamond potential. While the NWT looks to diversify its economy, mining and mineral-related activities are an important source of employment for northerners and other Canadians. While there is huge potential for growth in the mineral sector, the lack of transportation access drives development costs up by 2.5 times, and in many cases, makes mine development unfeasible.

**“Canada’s North is an extraordinary place to visit, live, and invest. The people, and the strength of these communities, are our country’s best guarantee of Canadian sovereignty. The Northwest Territories has huge potential for growth, but it needs a real partner who will invest in its people, infrastructure, and research, in order to ensure that this growth is realized.”**

*- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau*

Tourism is a growing industry that takes advantage of our pristine natural environment. The Northwest Territories is one of the best places in the world to view the spectacular aurora borealis and the NWT has developed an international reputation for its northern lights.

The NWT is at a critical stage in its evolution. Over the past several decades, a number of land, resources, and self-government agreements have been finalized, changing the political dynamics of the territory. Aboriginal-owned development corporations have become major players in the growth of the NWT economy. Training programs related to development projects have been the catalyst for many northerners to develop the knowledge and transferable job skills they require now, and into the future. Underpinning this growth has been a deeply held respect for the environment, which is the focus of traditional activities, a source of healthy food and clean water, and central to the identity and spiritual well-being of NWT residents.

**“Northerners know our land and its resources better than anybody and have a direct interest in seeing good decisions made about it. We want to benefit from the managed development of northern resources. Giving Northerners greater responsibilities and a greater voice in decision making can’t help but lead to better, faster decisions about how we manage our land, resources and water.”**

*- Premier Robert McLeod*

**“The Liberal Party of Canada recognizes that Northerners best understand the needs of their communities, and that decisions for the NWT are best made by them. A Liberal government will meaningfully engage with the Government of the NWT to discuss additional means for furthering self-determination.”**

*- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau*

Northerners have proven that we are strong and resourceful in meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world. As we move forward, we will continue to address issues like the effects of climate change, the need for clean, reliable energy, and ensuring that all residents have opportunities to learn, grow, and develop their talents. Partnerships are key to accomplishing these goals. The Northwest Territories has already made significant contributions to the Canadian federation, and believe that we can move forward to a sustainable future by building on these partnerships.



Making dried meat, Wekweèti (Tessa Macintosh/GNWT)







# Strategic Partnerships: Where We Can Work Together

The Government of Canada has renewed its commitment to working in collaboration with provincial, territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments to deliver positive change and demonstrated results for Canadians. The Government of the Northwest Territories supports this approach, and looks forward to working with the federal government, and all levels of government, in the best interests of northerners and Canadians.

The NWT and Canada share many common goals and priorities, and there are areas where we can benefit most from a strong partnership.

The Government of Canada has committed to making public investments to encourage economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. This is essential for the Northwest Territories as we work to evolve towards a stable, secure economy. Investments in areas like transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, housing, and green energy production help us create jobs, reduce the cost of living, and allow us to invest in social infrastructure to support our society's most vulnerable members. The North struggles with a critical lack of infrastructure to support individuals, communities and industry. Highway upgrades and expansions, clean energy, telecommunications and housing are all in short supply in the NWT and are essential to our ongoing development.

Although the global economy is uncertain, and the prices of many of the NWT's commodities are currently low, this is an ideal time to make key investments to ensure that the NWT is prepared to make the most of opportunities that arise in future, for the benefit of our residents and all Canadians.

National funding programs and transfers to the territories should continue to recognize the unique characteristics of the North, including our large land mass, harsh climate, high cost of providing services, and demographic factors.

The GNWT is pursuing long-term and stable funding agreements that will enable us to invest in public infrastructure with sufficient flexibility to address the priorities of our jurisdiction, allocates funding on a base, rather than a sole per capita, formula and specifically addresses the strategic needs of the NWT.



Wekweeti, NT (Tessa Macintosh)

The NWT is a land and people of tremendous potential. Our territory has the human and natural resources to fuel nation-building projects that will have profound impacts, north and south of the 60th parallel, today and for future generations.

The NWT is already undergoing rapid change associated with a changing climate. Mitigating future change and adapting to what has already occurred will be critical to the North.

Federal support is needed to both seize opportunities and to adapt to a new, warmer North.



## Priority 1 - Safeguarding the environment as we adapt to rapidly changing climatic conditions

The North's unique ecosystem is critical to the health of the planet. The decisions we make about protecting biodiversity and ecological integrity serve not only the interests of NWT residents and other Canadians, but people all around the globe.

Our Arctic climate is warming rapidly, with significant consequences for the NWT and the world at large. Although the world has pledged to keep average temperature increases under 2 degrees, the NWT's Mackenzie Valley has already warmed by 4 degrees. Global warming has resulted in changes in shorelines resulting from melting sea ice. Degrading permafrost and shifting weather patterns are making community re-supply increasingly difficult and, in some cases, dangerous. Winter roads are more difficult to build with warmer weather, reducing the length of access and increasing the cost of living. Melting permafrost is impacting public and private infrastructure, buildings are falling apart decades before they are due for replacement, while roads and runways are heaving and dipping.

Aside from the impacts to roads and residential buildings, thawing permafrost is changing hydrology and flooding forests. Climate change also results in changes to water quality and contributes to drought and forest fires. These effects impact habitat for animals and the availability of country foods, the core of many northerners' diet and culture. Identifying innovative solutions to such trends is essential to the health and well-being of our people and the health of our territory's economy.

Photo: Canoeing on Blachford Lake (Enviro Foto/GNWT)



The NWT has benefited from federal research and development programs and partnerships, many of which hold the promise of long-term solutions to environmental challenges. These research and related activities have the potential to create value-added jobs and new markets for Canadian expertise, as circumpolar nations confront similar issues.

Northern traditional knowledge continues to play an important role in changing the North. Elders and hunters from communities across the NWT are at the heart of many regional and international Arctic research programs. Many continue to be engaged in ongoing polar research activities, as well as activities under the GNWT's *Water Stewardship Strategy*, wildlife work and other territorial programs.

Climate change also opens up new opportunities in industries, including Arctic shipping, fishing, forestry and even agriculture in the southern-most reaches of the NWT. Especially promising are opportunities for increased eco-tourism operations.

The GNWT is pleased that the federal government recognized many of these points in the recent U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership. We share the federal government's interest in responsible, science-based leadership in the search for solutions.

Most of all, we appreciate the federal government's commitment to working together with Aboriginal peoples and other northerners. The greatest success going forward will come from a continued, coordinated partnership approach to both research and climate change adaptation programs. The GNWT is committed to developing a climate change strategy that takes into account the energy demands of a cold climate and the NWT's higher cost of living, while reflecting international and national commitments to lower greenhouse gas emissions. The strategy will explore options for carbon pricing, and local alternatives such as biomass, wind, and solar power. Ongoing collaboration between our two governments

will advance NWT socio-economic and environmental priorities, and help the territory and Canada adapt successfully to a fast changing climate and meet our mitigation targets.

**"I look forward to working with Premier McLeod in a spirit of openness and collaboration to address the unique challenges and opportunities of the Northwest Territories."**

*- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau*

As an active member of the Canadian federation, the Northwest Territories worked with our partners to develop a Canadian Energy Strategy, by participating in intergovernmental working groups on energy efficiency, energy delivery, technology and innovation, and transitioning our country towards a lower carbon economy. Given our interest in moving to greener energy production, we are also members of the pan-Canadian Task Force on Reducing Diesel in Off-Grid Communities.



Providing reliable, clean energy to communities is a priority for the Northwest Territories. It is important in the NWT that we work with all of our partners to decrease remote communities' dependency on diesel fuel, and focus on cleaner, renewable sources by implementing our biomass and solar energy strategies and identifying options for other renewable energy. We look forward to collaborating with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada on the department's new initiative to implement renewable energy projects in off-grid communities.

Of our territory's abundant assets, few are more remarkable than our hydroelectric power potential. The NWT's rivers and lakes contain an estimated 11,000 megawatts of potential hydro power. The NWT has abundant, untapped clean, green energy that could be used to power the homes, businesses and industries of the North, including future resource development projects. Harnessing this power would decrease northern reliance on diesel fuel, reduce the costs of living and doing business in the North, and help Canada to reach its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

**"Our government is dedicated to responsible development that is sensitive to the priorities of Northerners around both economic development and protection of our land, wildlife and water."**

*- Premier Robert McLeod*

Strategic investment in NWT hydroelectric development and the modernization of the territory's electricity transmission network would provide a secure, economical and environmentally-friendly source of renewable energy – generating huge benefit to the North and the country at large.

Constructing all-weather roads in place of winter roads would provide a climate-resilient solution for long-term community access, and greater economic sustainability. Adapting to a changing climate is key to the long-term resiliency of our infrastructure, and we must continue to collaborate with Canada and universities on research and development initiatives.



Mackenzie Mountains (Alasdair Veitch/GNWT)





## Priority 2 - Constructing key infrastructure essential to diversify our economy and improve the quality of life of our residents

Transportation and communication needs in the NWT are unique – underdeveloped systems serve a large land mass where 64% of our communities are not yet connected to the all-weather highway system year round. Unlike other jurisdictions, the federal government still retains responsibility and authority for new roads in the NWT.

Advancing the Mackenzie Valley Highway is an important step in building inclusive economic growth in Canada and a better future for Aboriginal people in the NWT, particularly through the next priority segment between Wrigley and Norman Wells. We also need to construct an all-weather road from Highway 3 to Whatì. These strategic corridors would not only improve access and lower the cost of living to many NWT communities, but they would also provide long-term economic opportunities. Replacing these existing winter roads with more resilient all-weather roads would provide certainty of long-term access with warmer winters and climate change impacts already occurring.

Central to the development of the mineral exploration and mining sectors in the NWT is the construction of transportation infrastructure that encourages exploration and gets resources to market, particularly in the Slave Geologic Province. The long-term sustainability and growth of the mining sector in NWT and Nunavut depends upon improved transportation access into this region.

Rail infrastructure also plays a role bringing goods into the NWT, and we will work with private sector partners such as CN Rail to continue improving the rail line to Hay River, and to expand the system to meet demand.

Photo: Little Doctor Lake (GNWT)

Port facilities and marine services are important means for resupplying our communities, and expanding the economic potential of the NWT. The federal government's recent budget identifies funds for improving federal marine facilities. We will encourage Fisheries and Oceans Canada to maintain federal community resupply sites in the NWT, to restore safe marine operating conditions in the Port of Hay River and at key sections of the Mackenzie River Corridor, and to improve charting and navigational aids.



With shipping activities increasing in the High Arctic, updated hydro-graphic chart information will be essential in reducing environmental risk and will improve response capabilities should an emergency arise. Improved data collection, through climate and hydrometric stations, will help ensure developments are undertaken in a sustainable fashion and allow for well-planned climate change adaptation programs.

Improvements to our communications infrastructure holds exciting potential for the NWT. The Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link, when complete, will provide a high speed fibre cable link along the Mackenzie Valley right to the shores of the Arctic Ocean at Tuktoyaktuk. The 1,200-kilometre link will connect seven communities along the valley, with the capacity to provide access to a further five communities through microwave.

In addition to attracting new industry to the NWT, the fibre optic link would improve data communications for our communities, enabling them to diversify

their economies and increase their residents' prosperity. The technology would also be beneficial to governments delivering services in the territory, as it would make tele-health, distance education and other services for residents and businesses more widely available, while reducing costs. We look forward to working with the Government of Canada on initiatives to enhance broadband connections for rural and remote communities.

Our small, dispersed population makes it virtually impossible to achieve economies of scale. As a result, there is significant investment required to implement and maintain infrastructure to meet core municipal needs such as water, wastewater, solid waste and protective services.

Communities have identified a need to invest in infrastructure that supports health and housing to meet the basic needs of residents. The territorial government will work with the Government of Canada to leverage available funding through Canada's new infrastructure plan to invest in community public infrastructure and transportation.

Housing is a key aspect of sustainable communities. Social housing is critical in small remote northern communities where there is limited market housing, challenges with accessing financing, limited economic opportunities and high costs – challenges common to all three territories across the North. Public housing represents about 40% of dwellings in remote NWT communities. The Government of the NWT will continue to work with Aboriginal and local governments to support their housing initiatives efforts to address homelessness. While the benefits of aging in place are well recognized, our communities lack basic infrastructure, such as seniors' independent living accommodations and long-term care facilities. The federal government's recently announced investments in affordable housing and housing for seniors are an important step toward alleviating this issue. The GNWT is committed to working with the Government of Canada to implement these initiatives as quickly as possible.





## Priority 3 - Supporting and investing in our people

The Northwest Territories is a land rich in resources, and the resourcefulness of our people is our greatest asset.

The GNWT takes a principled approach to engaging with Aboriginal governments built on respect, recognition and responsibility. The territorial government supports the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and will do its part to implement its calls to action. The NWT and Nunavut are already leading the way by recognizing official Aboriginal languages and implementing curriculum that educates our young people on the truth of residential schools, something that was subsequently recommended by the commission. The Government of the NWT will continue to support work to address the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, including a national inquiry. The GNWT also hopes to work with the Government of Canada to support shelters of victims of family violence in First Nations communities in the NWT.

**“Our Government will work tirelessly to equitably settle outstanding land claims with our Aboriginal partners so that certainty may be gained for industry, and economic prosperity may be realized for Northwest Territories residents.”**

*- Premier Robert McLeod*

In the NWT, self-government agreements are paving the way for Aboriginal governments to take greater control and share responsibility for the delivery of education, health and justice related programs and services. As we enter a new era of reconciliation, we will continue to honour and respect the importance of Aboriginal languages and cultures in the NWT and Canada. Starting at the beginning to ensure that the foundation for learning and skills

Photo: Fort Simpson Jiggers (D. Brosha)

development is strong will support stable families, safe and healthy communities. Support systems will mirror and reinforce the North's cultural heritage as people successfully transition from education to employment. Higher education is fundamental to individual health and welfare, social well-being and developing our local economies. Education improves labour market prospects for individuals, reduces their risk of unemployment and boosts earnings. Placing priority on skill development and closing education and employment gaps will help drive positive social and economic outcomes across the North. We want our education and training programs to lead to employment and build long-term capacity for existing and emerging economic opportunities. The GNWT welcomes the federal government's recent commitment to extend the Northern Adult Basic Education Program for one year, and encourages the government to collaborate closely with the GNWT and stakeholders on the future of the program.

Physical, spiritual and mental wellness is essential for the residents to reach their full potential. Healthy lifestyles, including mental health, involve physical activity, strong relationships with family and community, and time on the land. The territorial government emphasizes prevention, making sure supports are in place for when they are needed, and works to ensure that programs and services recognize the history and cultures of the NWT.



Moise Rabesca at Sah Naji Kwe, Rae (Tessa Macintosh/GNWT)

**"The people of the North and the strength of their communities are our country's best guarantee of Canadian sovereignty."**

*- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau*

The needs of our residents continue to change, and our growing population of seniors requires attention. Government of the NWT will work with the Government of Canada to ensure that the healthcare offered to residents continues to evolve and addresses areas of specific concern, such as improved access to mental health services, as well as home care services for seniors.

We have noted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation that the federal government provide sustainable funding for Aboriginal healing centres, identifying the Northwest Territories and Nunavut as priorities. The territorial government has recognized a need for a standalone Aboriginal wellness centre affiliated with Stanton Territorial Hospital, and would be pleased to work with the federal government on this initiative.

The cost of living in the Northwest Territories presents a major challenge, and the GNWT is taking a number of approaches to address the issue. Supporting sustainable livelihoods and traditional economies is critical to ensuring that northerners can remain in their communities and continue to practice traditional ways of life. The Government of the NWT supports communities in areas such as culturally based tourism and community based traditional economy programs. Food security is a major concern, particularly in the smaller, more remote communities.



The GNWT is pleased with the federal government's recent commitment to expand the Nutrition North program by \$64.5 million over five years, with an additional \$13.8 million per year ongoing. We encourage the federal government to demonstrate transparency in implementing the program, with a focus on ensuring the public has the information it needs to understand how the program works, where the subsidy goes, and how it affects food prices for consumers. The GNWT likewise welcomes the federal government's recently announced increase to the Northern Residents Deduction, and will work with territorial partners and the federal government to index the deduction to inflation.

Exploration and mining provide significant opportunities for training and employment for NWT residents. Skills training for northerners will be improved, and Aboriginal governments will be supported to build capacity in dealing with mining-related activities.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are important for the diversification of the NWT economy, and provide opportunities for employment. In many cases, they capitalize on the NWT's natural assets, such as aurora

viewing, or eco-tourism. The territorial government will continue to work with these business owners to grow their potential.

**"Northerners have the capacity to come together with big ideas to tackle the most important issues of our time."**

*- Premier Robert McLeod*

The Government of the Northwest Territories believes that northerners are best-placed to manage our land. The implementation of the *Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement* in 2014 was a major step forward in self-determination in the NWT. We will continue to work with the Government of Canada, Aboriginal governments, industry and environmental organizations to ensure our regulatory regime is integrated and effective. As a next step in northern governance, we will pursue an agreement with the Government of Canada regarding the management of offshore resources.



Pingo in Tuktoyaktuk (J.F. Bergeron/GNWT)





# Partners in a Better Canada: What We Have to Offer

As a contributing partner to the Canadian federation, the NWT has a crucial role to play in shaping Canada's future. We have a lot to offer – to Canada and to the global community – and we are happy to share our experience and expertise.

## Commitment to Aboriginal Rights

In a country determined to improved relationships with Aboriginal peoples, the NWT provides many examples to showcase how settled land claims and government-to-government relationships are providing the necessary tools for Aboriginal people to participate fully in the economy and become corporate partners on major economic projects.

In 2012, the GNWT articulated its commitment to these improved relationships with Aboriginal governments in 2012 with a document called *Respect, Recognition, Responsibility: The Government of the Northwest Territories' Approach to Engaging with Aboriginal Governments*. The document lays out guiding principles and key actions aimed at renewing and improving relationships with Aboriginal governments. Memorandums of understanding have been developed between the GNWT and seven Aboriginal governments, setting out a mutual commitment to work together on issues of concern, and agreement how and when discussions will take place.

With the implementation of the *Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement* in April 2014, the GNWT committed to sharing resource revenues with Aboriginal governments. Unique in Canada, the GNWT has an agreement to share up to 25% of its resource revenues from public lands with the Aboriginal governments who are partners in devolution. The first resource revenues were shared in 2015, with over \$6.6 million distributed among five regional and four community Aboriginal governments.

A key outcome of the NWT devolution agreement is the establishment of an Intergovernmental Council to enable the GNWT and the Aboriginal governments who are partners in devolution to collaborate on matters related to land, resource and water management.

Likewise, initiatives like the *NWT Water Stewardship Strategy* and *Wildlife Act* have used a collaborative approach with Aboriginal people. Continued cooperation as such initiatives are implemented helps us develop relationships and build trust over time.

The Government of the NWT recognizes that settling land, resources and self-government agreements is essential to Aboriginal self-determination. The territorial government is committed to resolving outstanding agreements and working to successfully implement existing agreements.

The NWT is a leader in the negotiation and implementation of Aboriginal rights agreements. The GNWT is negotiating Aboriginal rights agreements – a federal policy priority – with processes underway in all regions to clarify Aboriginal peoples' rights over land, resources and governance.

Supporting Aboriginal culture is key, and NWT students have been benefitting from Dene and Inuit language through a culture curricula, developed by indigenous educators. In 2012, the Government of the NWT and the Government of Nunavut launched the first curriculum for high school students to learn the legacy and history of residential schools.

The Northwest Territories was the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide a formal response to the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, releasing *'Meeting the Challenge of Reconciliation: The Government of the Northwest Territories' Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action'* on October 5, 2015.

The Northwest Territories has also shown leadership on the national stage. Since 2014, the NWT has chaired the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group (AAWG), made up of provincial and territorial Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and the leaders of the five National Aboriginal Organizations, who work together to develop recommendations, and identify actions and strategies to improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples. The NWT played a key role in organizing the first Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2015, and Premier McLeod chaired the meeting. Premier McLeod also co-chaired work to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system, leading to the release of the 'Aboriginal Children in Care Report to Canada's Premiers' in July 2015.



Woman tanning moose hide (Mackenzie Bentley-Little/GNWT)





## Climate Change Adaptation

In a world seeking solutions to climate change impacts, the NWT plays a particularly important role. Rising temperatures, shrinking ocean ice, extreme weather events, increased precipitation, and unstable permafrost are already altering the environment, generating significant cultural and economic consequences and opportunities for our communities.

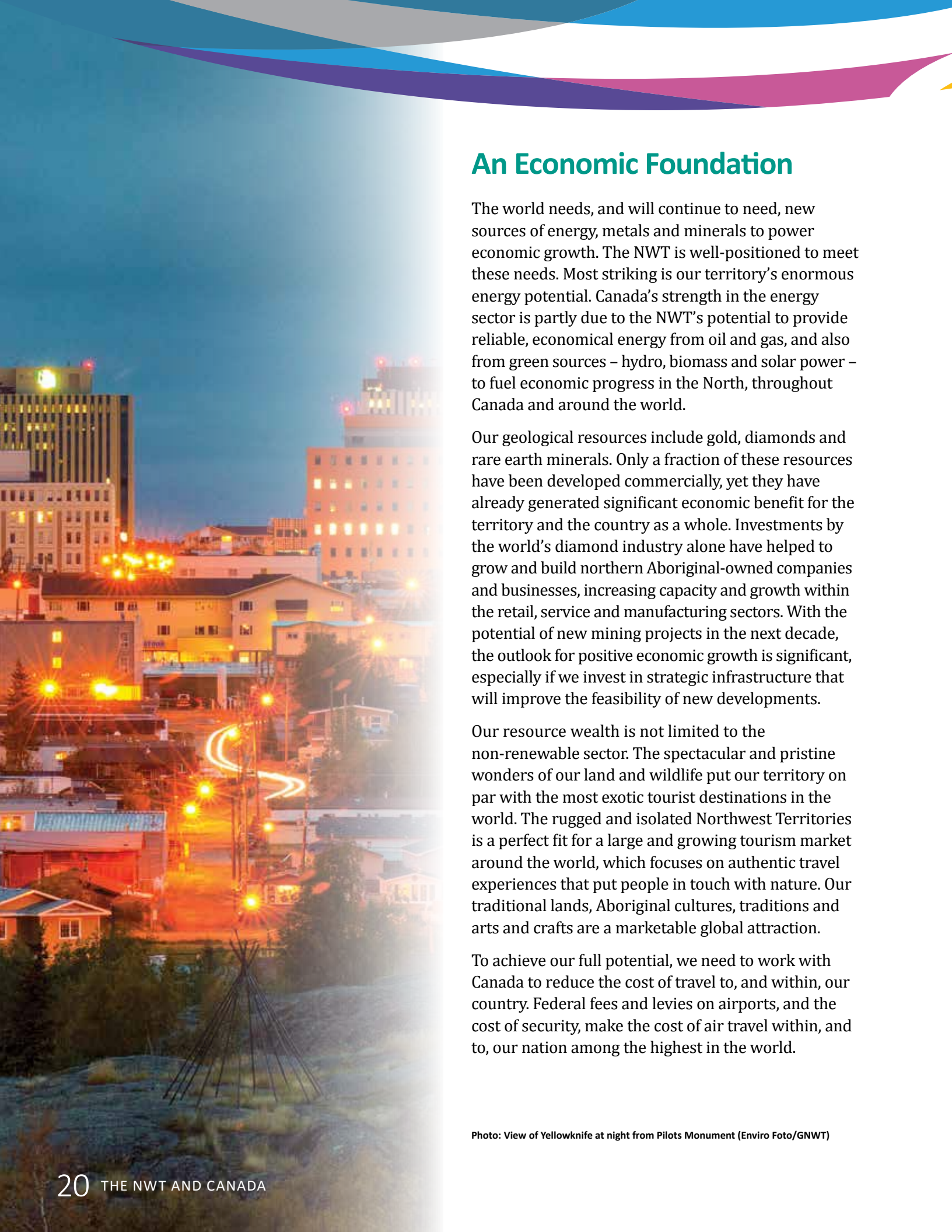
Innovation is required to ensure that northern infrastructure, ecosystems and cultures are resilient to future changes. Fortunately, innovation is an area where we excel. We have consistently engineered environmentally-sound solutions to challenges posed by our environment and daunting climate.

The Northwest Territories has actively engaged with experts from Canada, Yukon, Nunavut and northern provinces, along with universities, to share information and resources, allowing all three territories to develop potential solutions more effectively and efficiently. The GNWT has also worked with communities to develop innovative solutions. For instance, the government has worked with the community of Colville Lake and the Government of Canada to reduce reliance on diesel through a solar-battery-diesel hybrid project.

By integrating modern science with traditional and local knowledge, we are developing adaptation initiatives that are well suited to our territory. Together we can continue to undertake the required research to adapt our infrastructure to the effects of climate change, and to share with others outside the NWT.

Our three strategic transportation corridor priorities, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, an all-weather road to Whati, and improved access into the Slave Geologic Province, will help us prepare our communities and economy for climate change. There is no denying our winters are getting milder and shorter. We need to think strategically and put climate-resilient infrastructure in place now to support our future.

Photo: Alexandra Falls (Terry Parker/GNWT)



## An Economic Foundation

The world needs, and will continue to need, new sources of energy, metals and minerals to power economic growth. The NWT is well-positioned to meet these needs. Most striking is our territory's enormous energy potential. Canada's strength in the energy sector is partly due to the NWT's potential to provide reliable, economical energy from oil and gas, and also from green sources – hydro, biomass and solar power – to fuel economic progress in the North, throughout Canada and around the world.

Our geological resources include gold, diamonds and rare earth minerals. Only a fraction of these resources have been developed commercially, yet they have already generated significant economic benefit for the territory and the country as a whole. Investments by the world's diamond industry alone have helped to grow and build northern Aboriginal-owned companies and businesses, increasing capacity and growth within the retail, service and manufacturing sectors. With the potential of new mining projects in the next decade, the outlook for positive economic growth is significant, especially if we invest in strategic infrastructure that will improve the feasibility of new developments.

Our resource wealth is not limited to the non-renewable sector. The spectacular and pristine wonders of our land and wildlife put our territory on par with the most exotic tourist destinations in the world. The rugged and isolated Northwest Territories is a perfect fit for a large and growing tourism market around the world, which focuses on authentic travel experiences that put people in touch with nature. Our traditional lands, Aboriginal cultures, traditions and arts and crafts are a marketable global attraction.

To achieve our full potential, we need to work with Canada to reduce the cost of travel to, and within, our country. Federal fees and levies on airports, and the cost of security, make the cost of air travel within, and to, our nation among the highest in the world.

Photo: View of Yellowknife at night from Pilots Monument (Enviro Foto/GNWT)



The scarcity of all-weather roads in the NWT is a barrier to many of communities to developing their tourism potential. The completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway will create a tremendous opportunity to open our territory to visitors from across Canada, and the world.

The NWT, with its strong and vibrant Aboriginal cultures, pristine wilderness, and our welcoming people, can be leveraged as an iconic destination that Destination Canada should be showcasing to international travel markets. Destination Canada must recognize that the NWT and our sister territories must be treated as partners with limited financial resources but unlimited tourism appeal.

The NWT's pristine environment also makes it ideal as a source of foods such as fish, wildlife, berries and mushrooms. The GNWT is working to revitalize its commercial fishery by increasing fish production, encouraging and mentoring new entrants to the Great Slave Lake fishery, and negotiating an agreement to access markets outside of NWT. The federal government can provide valuable support to this work by funding a new fish processing plant in Hay River.

## Partners in a Sustainable Future

The Government of the NWT has demonstrated that it is a reliable and responsible partner with the proven ability to deliver results for the people of the NWT and all Canadians.

By working together, and by continuing to work as partners we can build a vibrant, diversified, sustainable economy that is investment friendly, environmentally responsible and respectful of Aboriginal rights.

The Government of Canada is a key partner in the continued development of the North, a region of great potential, and a defining symbol of the Canadian identity. The Government of the Northwest Territories looks forward to continued cooperation as we work in partnership for a sustainable future.



Bluefish Hydro (GNWT)

