

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
9TH ASSEMBLY, 5TH SESSION**

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PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

OF AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY

**PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

**Presented by the Honourable George Braden
Minister of Economic Development and Tourism
To the Legislative Assembly
For Discussion**

March 1980

1. The Government of the Northwest Territories supports the development of commercial agriculture in the North for the economic and social benefit of Northern residents.

Emphasis is placed on the kind of agriculture that would yield the greatest benefit to Northern residents. It was felt that the Government should, under an agricultural policy, focus its support on commercial agriculture - in other words, farming for the traditional purpose of making a living. Other measures, such as the Market Gardening Policy, are already available to assist persons seeking to pursue part-time or hobby farming.

2. Land will be made available for commercial agriculture. No land will be made available for homesteading.

Homesteading is a method of land development under which government sets aside areas of land for settlement. Persons are then free to enter, claim and develop these unoccupied lands. Homesteading was originally used by the Federal Government to encourage large-scale immigration to Western Canada. It is not considered appropriate for the present conditions of the Northwest Territories.

3. The Government of the Northwest Territories will be responsible for the selection of land for agriculture.

Public control of land selection is essential, in view of outstanding native land claims. It is also desirable to prevent scattered and unplanned land development which could eventually produce major infrastructure costs to the Government.

Present demand for agricultural lands is centered on the Hay River Corridor; the Slave River Lowlands; the Mackenzie River Valley between Fort Providence and Fort Simpson; and the Liard Valley.

4. In order to maximize benefits to Northern residents, land selection will:

- be based on a process of full public consultation

Public consultation would include community meetings, and submissions to the Government from all interested Northern groups, associations, and individuals.

- not prejudice native land claims

Incidentally, the Federal Office of Native Claims has advised this Government of its intention to review every G.N.W.T. application for transfer of Federal land for agricultural use.

- minimize demand for public funds.

Approval of the agricultural policy principles will lead to the development of a policy proposal, which will outline specific land selection criteria to encourage agricultural land development close to existing infrastructure (for example, roads and power lines).

5. All initial dispositions of land for agricultural use will be made on a leasehold basis.

In addition to safeguarding public control of land development in the Northwest Territories, this provision would afford both the Government, and the person starting a commercial farm, a period of time to ascertain whether the enterprise would be successful in the long term.

6. Public funds required to make agricultural lands available will be recoverable, amortized over a reasonable period. The agricultural operator will be responsible for his own municipal-type services.

Under this principle, costs of land surveys, access roads, and power could qualify for public funding assistance on a cost-recoverable basis. Costs of municipal-type services, including water and sanitation, site development, and road maintenance, would not.

Tentative cost estimates, based on experience in the Hay River Corridor, place costs of basic land surveys at \$2,500 - \$3,000 per farm operation, and costs for construction of farm access roads at \$70,000 per kilometre.

7. Economically viable commercial farming proposals will be eligible for assistance under Government of the Northwest Territories business-assistance programs.

Commercial farming proposals with economic viability would be eligible for funding assistance under G.N.W.T. business-assistance programs. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism currently defines an economically viable commercial farm operation as one which covers all fixed and variable operating costs, including depreciation (capital cost allowance) with a return to the operator.

In view of the present financial constraints facing our Government, new money would not be made available expressly for commercial farming proposals. Such proposals would be required to compete with other kinds of business proposals for existing business-assistance funding.



Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

June 26, 1987.

Hon. Donald Stewart
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

RE: AGRICULTURAL USE OF LAND IN THE HAY RIVER AREA

Further to our brief discussion yesterday, the following points summarize the information we were able to obtain from various officials of the federal and territorial governments.

We contacted Ian Johnson, GNWT ED&T; Floyd Adlem, DIAND Lands; Gary Vanderhaden, GNWT MACA, among others. None of our contacts knew of any negotiations or discussions at the present time to make additional land available (lease or purchase) for agriculture prior to the conclusion of the land claims process. The settlement of land claims continues to take precedence over land leases and sales in the policies of both governments.

As far as the Hay River/Enterprise corridor is concerned, we were told that this parcel was set aside by the Commissioner under the provisions of the Area Development Act. This designation does not allow the GNWT to dispose of the land, but rather, set conditions on its use and development. I'm still waiting to see if an actual block land transfer has been done but it would appear unlikely.

Regarding the use of land within the Hay River / Enterprise corridor, I have been advised that there is a (so-called) Market Garden Policy that allows people lease small parcels of land (eg. Paradise Gardens) to grow vegetables for market. I am still trying to obtain a copy of the policy (it isn't an official policy of the GNWT) and will forward anything I receive on to you.

The Hay River / Enterprise Corridor Association is part of the Regional Council, and apparently has been lobbying for some time for larger parcels of land that would allow more intensive use of land (ie. crops and cattle). To date they have been unsuccessful, the policies of both federal and territorial governments on the priority of land claims being the major stumbling block.

We also managed to find out as a result of our questions that OPCO, a holding company of the Hay River Band, Villard Egg production, and another unnamed company are currently trying to establish an agricultural business based on non-land intensive activities such as turkey, egg, and dairy production.

Please find attached a document entitled, "Principles for the Development of an Agricultural Policy", a paper brought into the House by George Braden as TD 32-80(1), TD 11-81(1), and Sessional Paper 1-81(2). The paper was debated in the Hay River Session in May 1981. There were no motions passed, and many MLAs suggested that land claims should be resolved before an agricultural policy was adopted. Heeding such advice, Mr. Butters commented:

...as mover of the motion of support for principle one, I would suggest that the government withdraw that, take the guidance and direction that we have received from the House during the committee of the whole debate, and at a proper time or a more appropriate time bring back those principles for reconsideration and discussion, and that in the interim we would look at the particular situation in which a few local agriculturalists may find themselves...p.111

...the suggestion from Members on the other side was that the development of a policy at this time was presumptuous, and until the land claim matters had been resolved, the development of a policy should be shelved. The policy cannot be implemented so that it would be better to see what occurs as a result of the land claims negotiations before a policy is developed. There may be additional principles as a result of those discussions...p.112

My reading of these sections leads me to believe that a comprehensive agricultural policy is indeed deferred by pending land claims, but that there still is room to manoeuvre for special cases. However, as you pointed out, Mr. McBrien is on land outside of the corridor, and the real authority over the matter of additional land rests with the federal government.

I will send additional information as it is received.



Kevin O'Keefe
Research Officer

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