

CHARTING THE NEXT COURSE

Final Report on Consultations

August 2007

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Message from the Minister

Exciting things are happening in the Northwest Territories. The dream of the Northwest Territories becoming self-reliant and strong, with a thriving economy and opportunities for our people, is becoming a reality.



In order to determine our economic future we need to decide what we want the Northwest Territories economy to look like in twenty years, and how the Government of the Northwest Territories can help bring this about. This can only be achieved if as many people as possible participate so that all perspectives can be considered. Therefore, in November 2006 I undertook to consult with Northerners on the development of a Northwest Territories macroeconomic policy to help us make the right investments and the best choices in the years ahead.

I received a broad range of input from representatives of Aboriginal governments, the business community, outside experts, social and environmental organizations, industry groups, community governments and individual residents to help develop the Macroeconomic Policy Framework. This input was provided through written submissions, through the Internet, and through series of roundtable discussions held last fall and this spring.

I am pleased to present this report summarizing the results of the consultations. Northerners told me they want the Northwest Territories economy to be balanced, diversified, and sustainable. They told me that people in the North should be the primary beneficiaries of future economic growth and that we need to take the necessary steps now to get ready for economic growth.

Northerners want the economy to serve people over the longer term, and not be overly dependent on the ups and downs of natural resources. People want the economy to build on the traditional economy in the Northwest Territories, to provide opportunities for both big and small businesses, and for smaller communities to benefit from economic growth.

I want to thank everyone who participated in the consultation process. The input provided has been extremely valuable in the development of the Government of the Northwest Territories Macroeconomic Policy Framework.

This is an exciting time in the Northwest Territories. A time of hope and optimism about the future. A time when our dreams for the Territory, for communities, and for our children can be realized. Now it's time to get to work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Floyd K. Roland'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Floyd K. Roland
Minister of Finance

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Introduction

The Northwest Territories is on the brink of tremendous economic opportunities – opportunities with the potential to transform the territory into a key economic driver not only for the North but for all of Canada. And opportunities that will open new doors for communities, for individuals and families across the territory.

In the face of these opportunities, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and all Northerners have some important choices to make. What kind of economy do we want for the NWT? How do we capitalize on the opportunities ahead and ensure that we not only achieve economic success but that we're able to benefit fully from growth, manage its impact and also preserve the values that are important to Northerners? What should the priorities be for investments by the GNWT and what are the most important actions to take?

Those questions are at the heart of work that's been underway since February 2006 to develop a new Macroeconomic Policy Framework for the NWT. In the fall of 2006 Finance Minister Floyd Roland announced a broad consultation process. As part of this process, a series of roundtable discussions was held – two in the fall of 2006 and one in May 2007. Members of the Legislative Assembly, recognized experts, Aboriginal governments, the business community, organizations, industries, community governments and residents all provided important input to the process.

The objective is to put the basic Framework in place for an economic roadmap to guide the choices and decisions we make in the years ahead. It's not intended to detail each and every action or step that will be taken. Those choices will be made by elected leaders and communities in the years to come. Instead, the Framework will provide the overall direction. It will outline what we want to achieve and the priorities we need to focus on in the years to come. Future governments and communities will be able to use the Framework to guide their choices and investment decisions. And citizens across the NWT will be able to hold their elected leaders accountable for the actions they take to achieve our vision of a self-reliant territory with a strong and thriving economy.

This document describes the opportunities and challenges ahead identified by participants. It describes a vision for the preferred future for our economy – a vision that reflects the consistent views of those involved in the process. It outlines four clear priorities for the future. And it gives a snapshot of the types of actions that were proposed in each of those priority areas.

Based on the results of the consultations and on economic studies and analyses undertaken in recent years, the Minister of Finance released the Macroeconomic Policy Framework in August 2007.

Economic Challenges in the North

WHAT'S OUR ECONOMY LIKE TODAY?

Since 1999, the NWT has had the fastest growing economy in Canada, with an average growth rate that's three times faster than the Canadian economy as a whole and twice as fast as either Newfoundland and Labrador or Alberta.

Increasingly, our economy is being driven by mining. Fueled primarily by dramatic growth in diamond mining, the mining sector now makes up about half of the NWT's economy. The service sector makes up a significant portion of our economy, but less than it did in the past. Industries such as manufacturing, construction, utilities and the resource harvesting sector continue to make up about 10 per cent of our economy.

Our labour market is operating at close to full capacity. More people are working in smaller communities but their employment rate continues to be lower than Yellowknife. Almost 90 per cent of people of working age with a high school education or more are employed. However, many of the people who could work in our economy have less than a high school education.

In terms of income, the proportion of high-income earners is increasing while the proportion of low-income earners is decreasing in many communities. Not surprisingly, communities with agreements with diamond mines (Lutselk'e, Gamèti, Behchokö, and Whati) saw the largest increase in their employment income. Average weekly earnings in the NWT were 30 per cent higher than the Canadian average.

WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE?

Looking ahead, we expect to see completion of a third diamond mine at Snap Lake in 2007 and additional investment at the Diavik and Ekati mines. A fourth diamond mine is currently going through the environmental assessment process.

These investments will result in continued strong growth in our economy and put more pressure on an already tight labour market. This pressure will increase substantially if the much-anticipated Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proceeds.

Other opportunities ahead include expansion in mining, tourism, forestry, fishing, fur harvesting, and hydro-electricity.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL OUTLOOK?

The significant economic growth in the NWT since 1999 is not reflected in corresponding growth in the GNWT's revenues. The GNWT receives limited fiscal benefits from rapid resource development while it incurs costs in both programs and services and increased need for capital investment.

One of the clear challenges for the government is the fact that the majority of its revenues come from the federal government. We rely on the federal government for almost 70 per cent of the government's total revenues.

Some important milestones were achieved recently.

- The 2007 Federal Budget announced new arrangements for Territorial Formula Financing resulting in an increase of \$25 million in annual funding for the territory.
- The federal government agreed to increase the limit it imposes on borrowing incurred by the GNWT.
- Our territory's effective approach to fiscal responsibility resulted in a favourable credit rating, which was upgraded in November 2006.
- The GNWT maintains fair and competitive taxes in order to encourage people to live here and businesses to invest in growing the NWT's economy.

WHAT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD FOR OUR ECONOMY?

Combined with good news about the future potential for our economy, there are some important challenges ahead. Fiscal resources are limited and that limits the government's ability to provide important programs and services and essential infrastructure. Perhaps the biggest challenge is to get greater control over our territory's non-renewable resources. The federal government controls the pace of, and reaps the fiscal benefits of, resource developments in our territory while we are responsible for making the necessary investments to build and sustain the economy, protect the environment, and prepare people to participate fully in our growing economy. Under the current situation, 90 to 95 cents out of every dollar in government revenue from resource developments flows out of the NWT and only 5 to 10 cents stays here. That has to change. NWT residents should be the primary beneficiaries of resource developments in our territory.

Other specific challenges we face in the NWT include the following:

- New developments and construction projects require people. With almost full employment, we will not be able to meet the demand for skilled workers from NWT residents alone. Plus we face a serious challenge because a significant portion lack the education and skills needed to benefit from the jobs that are available.
- An influx of new people combined with people moving to communities where there are work opportunities will put increasing pressure on our medical services, education facilities, roads, water and waste disposal.

- While many communities will benefit from future economic growth, some will not and the disparities between smaller and larger communities could grow.
- The cost of living continues to be high in the North. This is a barrier to economic development in the NWT, especially in smaller communities. One of the reasons we have so many people flying in and out for jobs is because it's expensive to live here.
- The lack of essential transportation infrastructure makes it difficult for some communities to benefit from economic growth and for people to get to jobs available in communities in our territory.
- There are serious social problems that need to be addressed, especially drug addiction and alcoholism. We need to deal with the human problems, not just the economic ones.
- Protecting the NWT's environment means paying attention to the special features of the North, including climate, socio-cultural conditions and the ecosystem.
- Without a new agreement with the federal government on non-renewable resources, we will not be able to achieve our goal of a self-reliant territory and a major economic driver for Canada.

In the face of those challenges, Northerners have an opportunity to chart a new course – to plan ahead and anticipate the potential impact of growth and to take steps now to ensure we achieve the full potential of economic growth across the territory.

The Consultations – What We Did and What We Heard

The consultation process began in November 2006. An economic background paper and a workbook summarizing the key issues we face were distributed widely. Two roundtables were held in the fall of 2006, one focused on the business community and the second on representatives of community and Aboriginal governments and of social advocacy groups. Comments were also invited from the general public. An interim report on the results was released along with the GNWT's 2007 Budget in February.

A third roundtable, bringing together all participants from the fall sessions, was held in May 2007. What follows is a summary of what we heard about the NWT economy.

WHAT KIND OF ECONOMY DO WE WANT?

If we could paint a picture of the economy we want twenty years from now, what would it look like?

That was the key question addressed by people who participated in the consultation process. And the clear consensus was this:

The future economy for the NWT should be balanced, diversified and sustainable.

People don't want to see our economy focused only on one industry. They see opportunities for more balanced developments, building on the traditional economy in the North and involving big and small businesses, large and small communities.

Most importantly, people said they don't want to see more "boom and bust" cycles. They want sustained growth. They want communities, regions and individual citizens to benefit from prosperous times. And they want future growth to be managed in a responsible way so that long-term benefits can be achieved.

What does a balanced economy include?

- It recognizes the competitive advantages of the NWT.
- It ensures that residents benefit from the development of their resources, that it supports opportunities for wealth creation, contributes to the health of communities, fosters independence, and protects and manages the use of land for future generations.
- It is determined by residents of the NWT, respects cultural diversity and land claims, and proceeds at a pace that is determined by communities and regions.
- It promotes and fosters partnerships – between aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups and corporations; between the public sector and the private sector; and between communities and regions.
- It builds capacity and develops potential within individuals, organizations, communities and regions.
- It encourages economic diversity to create jobs and business opportunities and to foster creativity and innovation.

As part of this balanced economy, views were divided on whether the NWT should seek more large resource developments but there was agreement that our current dependence on the non-renewable resource developments is not healthy. Even a mix of non-renewable resource projects would be more sustainable over the longer term than relying solely on one sector like diamond mining. Some said that we need to put the necessary infrastructure in place before we pursue more large-scale economic projects. And the importance of having a revenue-sharing agreement in place was stressed so that, if and when major projects go ahead, residents in the NWT will be the primary beneficiaries.

A balanced economy would support growth in both large and small communities. It should be marked by equity and balance across communities, regions and individuals. We want to be independent of big corporations but interdependent on each other. Tourism was viewed as a key to the future economy, with no community too small to develop tourism opportunities. One of key drivers of a balanced economy has to be small business, and we need to develop an economy that provides opportunities for small businesses to start up, expand and succeed.

A balanced economy promotes healthy communities where people have reasonable employment opportunities. There must be adequate, affordable housing for community members. And to ensure that citizens can be full participants in a balanced economy, we need to take steps to ensure more students graduate from high school, continue on for further educational opportunities, and if that means leaving the NWT, we hope they plan to return to the NWT to work and raise their families.

In summary, a balanced economy should ensure that residents benefit from the development of their resources. It should respect cultural diversity and land claims. It should build on the traditional economy in the North, build capacity and develop potential within communities, and create jobs and opportunities for both big and small businesses in both large and small communities. Finally, a balanced, diversified and sustainable economy will protect and manage the use of land for future generations, be determined by the residents of the NWT, and proceed at a pace determined by the people and businesses of the NWT.

What Are The Key Priorities?

If that's the kind of economy we want for the future of the NWT – a balanced, diversified and sustainable economy – what are the priority areas we need to focus on in order to achieve it?

It was clear from the discussions that it isn't feasible for government to try to be all things to all people or to tackle too many issues at once. Instead, we need an agenda that is targeted, realistic and reasonable. We need to identify a limited set of priorities then determine which actions need to be taken in each of those priority areas.

From the discussions at the May roundtable, a clear consensus emerged around four priorities for government action:

- Invest in education
- Build community capacity
- Invest in infrastructure
- Protect the NWT's environment

PRIORITY 1: INVEST IN EDUCATION

Education is central to the future of our society and our economy. Education is key to the future of the NWT's economy and the success of individuals, families and communities.

As it stands today, too few of our young people finish high school and go on to further training and education. Education continues to be the greatest barrier to employment. While 93 per cent of people with a university degree are employed, only 37 per cent of people with less than a grade 9 education are employed. Looking ahead to the future of our economy, people will need more education and skills in order to participate fully in the labour market and improve their quality of life. Increasing training in the trades in particular will increase the number of Northern workers who get high paying jobs as economic growth continues.

People said it's time to raise the bar on education. It's time to set higher standards and expectations for our students and our schools. We need to take education seriously, develop a culture of learning in communities, and improve the quality of education young people receive.

Proposed strategies

Participants in the consultation suggested the following strategies:

- Expand the focus on trades training to prepare people for current and future jobs in the NWT
- Ensure that the quality of education in the NWT is comparable to that of other Canadian provinces
- Provide incentives for young people to stay in school and for adults to upgrade their education and skills
- Encourage young people to stay in school, work hard and achieve higher marks so they can continue their education either in the NWT or in colleges and universities in other parts of Canada
- Expand life skills education in schools
- Partner with industry to improve access to training

PRIORITY 2: BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Steps should be taken to build the capacity in communities – especially smaller communities – to plan, address issues, make decisions and build their own sustainable economies. Communities should set their own priorities but the GNWT should support their work to develop community-based plans, and do it with fewer strings attached.

There was a clear message that social development should go hand in hand with economic development at the community level.

Future actions should support the New Deal for Northwest Territories communities in their aspirations to achieve greater control and local government autonomy.

Proposed strategies

Participants in the consultation suggested the following strategies:

- Ensure that each community has the capacity to plan, implement, monitor and update their own Community Sustainability Plans
- Provide stable, predictable funding to communities to enable future planning
- Allow community government to borrow to finance infrastructure projects that reflect their own community priorities
- Provide more flexibility to communities in terms of financing projects, entering into partnerships and changing project plans
- Improve community capacity by increasing the proportion of adults employed in each community and the proportion of business services delivered by NWT-based businesses
- Build regional capacity

PRIORITY 3: INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Investing in infrastructure should be a top priority for government. That includes investing in roads, airports, highways, affordable housing, wireless technology, hospitals, treatment centres, schools and post-secondary facilities.

Transportation infrastructure was seen as a clear priority. Improving and expanding transportation is essential so people can get to jobs in other locations, the costs of living and doing business can be reduced, and economies in smaller communities can grow. Specifically, investing in transportation provides a range of benefits including:

- Lower travel costs
- Reduced travel times
- Improved safety
- Greater access to goods and services
- More employment and business opportunities
- Increased travel and cultural exchanges among communities

Proposed strategies

Participants suggested the following strategies:

- Establish a comprehensive approach for evaluating the costs, benefits and anticipated impact of infrastructure projects and determining which should proceed on a priority basis
- Ensure that infrastructure projects contribute directly to the development of a balanced, diversified and sustainable economy
- Balance transportation projects with environmental protection
- Ensure that communities have access to safe water supplies
- Expand the supply of housing
- Expand roads connecting communities

PRIORITY 4: PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Northerners care about their environment and want to make sure that the environment is protected as resource exploration and development continues to expand.

Protecting the NWT's environment means paying attention to the special features of the North. That includes climate, socio-cultural conditions, and the ecosystem. People believe that resource developments can proceed with some trade-offs that accommodate improved levels of protection for land, water, fish and wildlife.

Proposed strategies

Participants suggested the following strategies:

- Take positive steps to protect the environment
- Put efficient environmental processes and regulations in place
- Be proactive in protecting sensitive areas, adapting to change and exploring alternative energy sources
- Finalize land use plans
- Develop a climate change adaptation strategy
- Monitor and address current and potential threats to our environment

What Actions Have Been Taken?

The GNWT has already taken important steps as part of its Budget for 2007-08 that reflect much of what was said in the initial round of consultations in the fall of 2006.

Highlights of the actions taken as part of the 2007-08 Budget include:

Funding to implement full day kindergarten and to lower the pupil-teacher ratio in physical education and trades programs

Investments in child care and literacy programs, and in increasing student support funding

- Investment of almost \$24 million in new school construction
- Money to hire new apprentices
- \$46 million to fund improvements to existing highways and winter roads, to replace bridges and to undertake airport improvements
- \$22.5 million in formula funding to allow community governments to make critical investments in community infrastructure, as well as an additional \$4 million under the municipal funding formula and money to support the development of community energy plans
- \$1 million to conduct important environmental research

In addition, following the release of the Federal Budget with its commitments on funding levels, the GNWT announced further expenditure measures in May 2007, including:

- \$5.5 million to support initiatives identified in the GNWT energy plan and Greenhouse Gas Strategy. Of this amount, \$2.4 million will be funded from the federal government's eco-Trust for clean air and climate change;
- Almost \$1 million to establish apprentices in the GNWT to help address the shortage of skilled tradespersons in the NWT; and,
- An additional \$560,000 for environmental research.

The GNWT and its elected leaders will need to work with community members, business people, and residents to determine the most important actions to take. This will require difficult choices, perhaps like these ideas offered by roundtable participants:

Is it more important to supply digital services to all communities in the NWT, expand the Yellowknife and Inuvik airports or proceed with the Mackenzie Valley highway? What role should the private sector play in infrastructure developments?

Should steps be taken to reduce class sizes, review the potential for a pan-Northern university, or ensure that every community has a public library?

Would a carbon tax help preserve the NWT's environment or should we consider a northern environmental studies institute to look at the challenges of protecting our unique northern environment?

What role should the GNWT play directly and what programs and services are more appropriately provided by non-governmental organizations?

How do we balance the role the GNWT needs to play here in the NWT with the role of the federal government, Aboriginal governments, communities and the private sector in making decisions that affect our Territory?

Decisions like these, along with ideas proposed by Members of the Legislative Assembly, government departments, Aboriginal governments, the business community, organizations and community members across the territory, will need to be carefully considered in allocating the government's limited resources.

How Can Progress be Measured and Monitored?

Putting measures in place to track progress and ensure accountability is an essential part of a policy framework. Measures are important because they allow us to assess the impact of various actions and choices and to change course if necessary. But because measures tend to drive actions, it's important to be sure the measures we choose are the right ones. Then citizens can hold the government accountable for achieving the outcomes identified in its plans.

Participants in the process to date stressed the importance of putting comprehensive measures in place – not just measuring economic performance or the growth in the economy but including broader measures that assess improvements in our quality of life, in the health and education of our citizens, in the capacity of communities, and the protection of our environment.

As work on the Framework continues, a set of measures will be established. The measures will track growth in our economy, new investment, employment, household income, productivity, and a range of additional measures. They will measure whether our economy is balanced, diversified and sustainable. And regular reports will be provided to citizens across the territory.

Next Steps

This report reflects the input, the ideas and priorities of people from across the territory who took part in consultations leading up to the development of a Macroeconomic Policy Framework.

The Framework will then be used to guide future decisions about government spending, investment, taxation and borrowing. Most important, it will provide a roadmap for achieving the kind of balanced, diversified and sustainable economy people in the NWT want and expect.

Appendix 1: List of Submissions

1. “The Economic Impact of NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Outfitters: The Impact on the NWT Economy of the Barren-Ground Caribou Outfitter Industry in 2005”, Ellis Consulting Services (September 2006)
2. “Mineral Economies and Success Factors for Avoiding the Natural Resource Curse: A Sub-National Case Study of Canada’s Resource-Rich Northwest Territories”, Tawna Brown, February 22, 2006
3. Roundtable on Macroeconomic Policy Development, comments by Chief Ronald Pierot, November 20, 2006
4. WWF-Canada
5. GNWT Department of Environment and Natural Resources
6. Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Submission to Charting the Next Course - Developing An Economic Roadmap for the Northwest Territories.
7. Alternatives North, Submission to the GNWT Consultation Process Charting the Next Course: Developing An Economic Roadmap for the Northwest Territories, December 15, 2006.
8. Ecology North
9. Bob Overvold, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
10. Northwest Territories Teachers’ Association
11. GNWT Department of Transportation
12. John Cournoyea
13. Lloyd Cardinal, Fort Resolution Métis Council

Appendix 2: Consolidated List of Roundtable Participants

Mr. Murray Arsenault, Manager
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu, President/CEO
Denendeh Investments Incorporated

Ms. Marion Berls
NWT Association of Communities

Ms. Stephanie Bernardin
Executive Director
Hay River Chamber of Commerce

Mrs. Myra Berrub, President
Hay River Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Dennis Bevington, M.P.
Western Arctic

Ms. Kelly Bluck
Department of Finance

Dr. Paul Boothe, Facilitator
Department of Economics
University of Alberta

Ms. Aggie Brockman
Alternatives North

Mayor Winnie Cadieux
NWT Association of Communities

Ms. Beatrice Campbell, President
NWT Seniors Society

Mr. Angelo Cocco
Territorial Statistician
NWT Bureau of Statistics

Ms. Nellie Cournoyea, Chair and CEO
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Mr. Dan Daniels, Deputy Minister
Department of Education, Culture and
Employment

Mr. Doug Doan
Department of Industry, Tourism &
Investment

Mr. Robert Doherty, President
NWT Construction Association

Dr. Joseph Doucet, School of Business
University of Alberta

Ms. Lillian Elias, Director
NWT Seniors' Society

Mr. Jim Eirikson, President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Yvonne Fleming
Executive Assistant
NWT Association of Communities

Mr. Gerald Gagnon
Department of Finance

Ms. Peggy Garritty, Consultant

Mr. Brian George, P. Eng., President
NAPEGG

Mr. Laurie Gravelines
Department of Finance

Ms. Karen Hamre, Managing Director
NWT Protected Areas Strategy
Management

Mr. Bob Howard
Department of Finance

Mr. Chris Johnston, CEO
NWT Métis Development Corporation

Mr. Winter Lennie, Chair
NWT Métis Development Corporation

Mayor Maggie Levasseur
NWT Association of Communities

Mr. Blake Lyons, Facilitator

Mr. Sean MacGillivray, President
NWT Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Elaine MacIntyre, Department of
Municipal & Community Affairs

Mr. Ben McDonald, Co-Chair,
Alternatives North

Ms. Val McGregor, President
Norman Wells Chamber of Commerce

Councillor Vince McKay, Director
NWT Association of Communities

Ms. Aminata Maiga
Department of Finance

Ms. Margaret Melhorn
Deputy Minister of Finance

Mr. Tim Melnyk
NWT Association of Communities

Mr. John Monroe
Department of Finance

Ms. Suzette Montreuil, Co-chair
Alternatives North

Ms. Julia Mott
Communications Coordinator
Office of the Premier

Ms. Denyse Nadon-Holder
Executive Director
Native Womens' Association of the
NWT

Mr. Richard Nerysoo
Gwich'in Tribal Council

Dr. Mike Percy, Facilitator
School of Business
University of Alberta

Chief Ronald Pierrot
Assembly of First Nations Regional
Office (NWT)

Mr. Gary Reid
Northern Air Transport Association

The Honourable Floyd K. Roland,
Minister of Finance

Mr. Owen Rowe
NWT Construction Association

Mr. Ivan Simons, Director
Fort Simpson Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Allen Stanzell, Executive Assistant
to the Hon. Floyd K. Roland

Mr. Jim Stevens
Department of Transportation

Mr. David Stewart
Department of Executive

Ms. Helen Sullivan, Department of
Education, Culture & Employment

Ms. Sharon Thomas, Executive Director
Status of Women Council of the NWT

Mr. James Thorbourne, President
Inuvialuit Development Corporation

Mr. John Todd, Consultant

Mr. Mike Vaydik, General Manager
NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines

Mayor Gordon Van Tighem, President
NWT Association of Communities

Mr. Peter Vician, Deputy Minister
Industry, Tourism & Investment

Ms. Robin Wotherspoon, Chair
NWT Tourism

Ms. Terry Villeneuve, President
Native Women's Association of the
NWT

Mr. Boyd Warner, Vice-Chair
NWT Tourism Association

