



Northwest Territories Architectural Society

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A Discussion Paper In Support of An Architectural Profession Act for the Northwest Territories

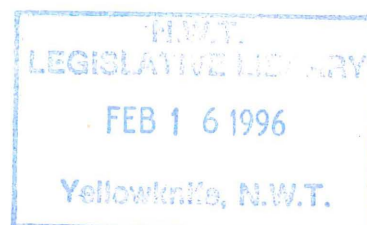
BACKGROUND

The design of buildings in the Northwest Territories at present can be undertaken by any person. Unlike all other Canadian provincial jurisdictions which have regulated the architectural profession, the Northwest Territories has yet to enact legislation or set standards for the training, skill, qualifications and experience of building designers except where the currently adopted National Building Code (NBC) requires fully trained designers in engineering specialties. As a result, any person from within the NWT or from any other jurisdiction can provide building design services, with no assurance to the public that he or she has beneficial experience, training or skills in this highly technical undertaking.

Lack of Territorial legislation for architectural practice can lead to lack of assurance of the quality of buildings in the NWT in those areas of design and quality management not regulated by Local Authorities or through the self-interest of building owners and developers. The safety and durability of buildings called for in the NBC represents a minimum standard developed primarily in southern Canada. Climatic, cultural and distance considerations present in the NWT require building designers to be more specifically qualified and better trained in northern conditions. Without Government sanction of northern architectural professional development through legislation, the Society believes there can be no genuine progress in the cost effectiveness, quality, efficiency and durability of buildings in the NWT.

THE PURPOSE of an ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION ACT

The purpose of enacting an Architectural Profession Act in the NWT is to protect the public through maintaining agreed upon standards of skill, experience and training for building designers. Building owners, developers and occupants need to have assurance that their investment, their enterprise or their occupancy is safe, economical and durable. The design of any building, regardless of size and complexity, requires diligent and thoughtful application of training and experience - in a word, competence. The public in the NWT is not expected to entrust the design of industrial structures, complex financial accounting or the diagnosis and treatment of a health condition to untrained and unqualified individuals. For this reason engineering, accounting and medical practice are regulated through legislation, as are many other specialized activities. The public also should not be expected to entrust the design of buildings to



persons lacking appropriate training and skills.

The second purpose of an Architectural Profession Act is to encourage, foster and support the development of advanced professional and technical skills and training opportunities within the NWT in the field of building design and design management.

THE BENEFITS of an ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION ACT

Regulations developed from an Architectural Profession Act will provide for establishing, reviewing and maintaining the professional and technical skills and competence of building designers. Benefits that flow from such professional regulation include increased safety, durability and reliability in the built environment, and provision of informed choices to people who require building design services. Public input to standards and protection of its rights as consumers through representation on the governing council of a professional association and through recourse to regulation are essential benefits that do not now exist in the NWT but which would be enabled through an Architectural Profession Act.

Development and retention of building design and design management skills to meet the specialized needs of the north would be fostered in the NWT by the creation of an Architectural Profession Act. This would add to our ability to incorporate specialized northern requirements and specialized northern knowledge into our buildings, and strengthen our ability to shape our northern future through northern based skills. Building designers will be encouraged to obtain skills appropriate to northern needs here, rather than be forced to look elsewhere.

The Northwest Territories Architectural Society (NWTAS) supports development of an Architectural Profession Act in the NWT, and urges the general public to communicate with their government representatives about the concerns and benefits of professional regulation.

Further information can be obtained from the Northwest Territories Architectural Society through its mailing address, or through any of the current NWTAS council members.



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