

NWT SCIENCE AGENDA

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories has always been, and continues to be, an important area for scientific research by governments, regulatory bodies, industry and academic institutions.

Later today the Honourable Jackson Lafferty will table the “Building a Path for Northern Science: Government of the Northwest Territories’ Science Agenda”. This is the first time the GNWT has clearly defined and prioritized government-wide scientific research needs. Work on the Science Agenda began in 2007 and is the result of extensive consultation with GNWT employees engaged in research, researchers and community members.

The Science Agenda is based on the principle that science is a critical component of ensuring sustainable development, health and wellness, cultural retention and economic diversification and development.

The NWT is experiencing a period of powerful changes and challenges. Climate change, new technologies, resource development, economic change, and social change are all requiring the Government of the Northwest Territories GNWT adapt and modify its programs and services.

The GNWT needs reliable evidence-based information, derived from scientific investigations and research, to make informed policy decisions. The Science Agenda establishes a strategic framework for science, and identifies science priorities, which will guide future research and science integration for the GNWT.

It sets a path for this Government and the people of the Northwest Territories to play a key role in the development and management of science knowledge and the use of traditional knowledge in all scientific and other research conducted here.

The Science Agenda will act as a guiding document in policy decisions on a number of fronts for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Government of the Northwest Territories, including land, water, and climate change.

Mr. Speaker, five core priority areas for research have been identified. They are cultural sustainability; environmental science and stewardship; health and wellness; natural resource management; and, sustainable communities. Strategic goals, sub priorities and implementation actions have been identified for each of these core areas. The Agenda also recognizes that technological advances, traditional knowledge and climate change are issues that cut across all five core priority areas.

Given the high level of scientific interest, research and activity in the Northwest Territories, we recognize the need to work in collaboration with other governments, Aboriginal organizations, communities, academic institutions, industry and other organizations and agencies to make sure these priorities and the scientific needs of NWT residents are met.

The Science Agenda, with its commitment to various forms of scientific and traditional knowledge, will build on work already being done to promote science education in our schools. We want students to get a better understanding of how important science is to their communities and lives.

Mr. Speaker, scientific needs will evolve as our Territory grows and changes but the importance of reliable, timely and accessible information will remain essential to ensure wise and effective decision-making processes.

This Science Agenda sets the path for achieving this. Mahsi cho.