



Media Release

Review of GNWT's draft Statement of Environmental Values by Ecology North and Alternatives North

February 22, 2022--Ecology North and Alternatives North have jointly submitted comments on the GNWT's draft Statement of Environmental Values (Statement) on February 10. The Statement is a requirement of the *Environmental Rights Act*. It should show how the GNWT will integrate the right to a healthy environment into all its decisions and actions.

Ecology North and Alternatives North assessed the Statement with Dr. Heather McLeod-Kilmurray, Full Professor, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, and Centre for Environmental Law and Global Sustainability. Dr. McLeod-Kilmurray's research deals with environmental law, climate change and food law. She is a former part-time member of the Ontario Environmental Review Tribunal.

Dr. McLeod-Kilmurray notes "The Statement should detail integration of environmental considerations into GNWT's work. Unfortunately, in several places the Statement is weaker than the *Environmental Rights Act*. We've made recommendations to strengthen the wording and bring it more in line with the *Act* and internationally accepted standards."

Dawn Tremblay, Executive Director of Ecology North saw several good elements in the Statement, but was disappointed that more implementation measures were not included. "The Statement doesn't include anything about climate change, cumulative effects, preventing pollution, and similar priorities or tools. Given the absence of actual measures and targets, we are recommending adding an annual reporting requirement and a tool kit to the Statement, to ensure such factors are taken into consideration". A guideline on integrating this Statement into the workings of the GNWT is another recommendation.

"Accountability and transparency are basic requirements of policy and legislation. This Statement should be more specific about who has particular responsibilities" says Dr. Bob Bromley, a representative of Alternatives North. The groups recommend including implementation of the Statement into Ministers' mandate letters, and an annual report on how the Statement was integrated into the GNWT's actions, decisions, and submissions to Boards (such as the Mackenzie Valley Boards).

A copy of the submission is attached. Alternatives North and Ecology North have also requested an opportunity to discuss their recommendations with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment.

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