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# News Release    Communiqué

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## **SENES CONSULTANTS NAMED TO CARRY OUT FIRST NWT ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT**

**YELLOWKNIFE, NWT (December 30, 2004)** - The Honourable Andy Scott, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and the Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Minister of State for Northern Development, announced that SENES Consultants Limited will carry out the first Northwest Territories Environmental Audit.

“The recommendations that come out of the audit will be important for protecting and improving the quality and health of the environment,” said Minister Scott. “The audit will also assist the way in which environmental and resource management decisions are made in the Northwest Territories.”

“The issues that will be examined, the type of information that will be collected, and the area that will be covered, make this audit unique in the Northwest Territories, in Canada, and possibly the world,” said Minister Blondin-Andrew.

“NWT Aboriginal organizations have been involved throughout the process of getting the environmental audit underway,” said John B. Zoe, spokesperson for the Aboriginal organizations on the Audit Sub-Committee. “As a result, Aboriginal people and northern communities will help to protect the land for future generations by making sure that the environmental audit takes into consideration things such as traditional and local knowledge, heritage resources and the social and cultural environment.”

SENES (Specialists in Energy, Nuclear and Environmental Sciences) Consultants Limited is a leader in the provision of specialized scientific environmental services, including audit planning and implementation. It has completed over 3,700 projects throughout the world, including many in the NWT, Yukon and Nunavut. The project team chosen for this work combines strong auditing, project management, technical and northern experience necessary to undertake this complex and unique environmental audit.

The audit will identify trends in the current quality of the environment, factors that may be contributing to changes in the environment, and the significance of these trends. It will also review the effectiveness of current and proposed environmental monitoring programs, as well as the effectiveness of regulatory regimes and responsible bodies.

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With the exception of Wood Buffalo National Park, the audit will cover the entire Northwest Territories, including the Mackenzie Valley and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). The ISR has been included because the environmental effects of upstream developments are of concern to the Inuvialuit, because the Inuvialuit wanted to be involved, and because the other organizations participating in the audit wanted to take an NWT-wide approach.

The auditor will first carry out research and preliminary interviews to develop an audit plan. This plan will include the methodology and specific topics to be investigated, as well as key dates, including a proposed date of completion. The auditor may collect scientific, traditional or local information from people and organizations by conducting interviews or site visits. The audit is expected to be complete by April, 2005.

Parties directly involved in the audit will be Aboriginal organizations, boards established under the MVRMA, other co-management boards and the federal and territorial governments. Industry, non-government organizations and the public will be asked to provide comments or contribute relevant information.

The auditor will be required to submit a final report to the Minister of DIAND, who will then make it available to the public.

The auditor was chosen through a competitive bidding process and review by a multi-party committee that will continue to provide assistance to the auditor throughout the audit, at the request of the auditor. The committee is composed of representatives from the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Sahtu Secretariat Inc., Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, Inuvialuit Game Council, North Slave Metis Alliance, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, Deh Cho First Nations, Government of the Northwest Territories and Government of Canada (through DIAND).

On December 14, 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin and Territorial Leaders released the framework for the first-ever jointly developed Northern Strategy. Consultations will continue over the coming months towards the finalizing of the strategy that is aimed at improving the quality of life of Northerners and building the capacity of Northerners to manage their own affairs. Today's announcement supports the protection and stewardship of the environment – one of the key components of the framework for the proposed Northern Strategy.

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**For more information, please contact:**

David Livingstone  
Director, Renewable Resources and Environment  
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
(867) 669-2647

John B. Zoe  
Dogrib Treaty 11 Office  
(867) 766-3391

Steve Matthews  
Habitat/Environmental Assessment Biologist  
Department of Renewable Resources and Economic Development  
(867) 873-7775