

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR JUSTICES OF THE PEACE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

INTRODUCTION

Justices of the Peace are judicial officers who play a crucial role in the administration of justice in the Northwest Territories. They must strive to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes and reinforces public confidence in the administration of justice.

The purpose of this document is:

- a) To provide ethical guidance to justices of the peace in carrying out their judicial and administrative duties;*
- b) To provide ethical guidance to justices of the peace on conducting themselves outside of their official duties in a manner that is consistent with their role; and*
- c) To better inform the public about the high ideals which justices of the peace embrace and toward which they strive.*

INDEPENDENCE

- 1.00** Justices of the Peace must both be AND appear to be independent, impartial, and unbiased.
- 1.01** Justices of the Peace must avoid all conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived. They are responsible for promptly taking appropriate steps to disclose and to resolve such conflicts as they arise. Where Justices of the Peace are unsure of how to deal with possible conflicts of interest, they should take appropriate steps to obtain advice from the office of the Chief Judge.
- 1.02** Justices of the Peace should not be influenced by partisan interests, public opinion, or by fear of criticism.
- 1.03** Justices of the Peace should not use their title and position to promote their own interests or the interests of others.
- 1.04** Justices of the Peace must discharge their duties in accordance with the law.

KNOWLEDGE

- 2.00** Justices of the Peace should maintain their competence by participating in training and education courses and by seeking guidance from the Office of the Chief Judge in specific areas as required.
- 2.01** Justices of the Peace should remain up to date on changes in the law relevant to their judicial function.

CONDUCT

- 3.00** Justices of the Peace are subject to ongoing public scrutiny and therefore they must respect and comply with the law and conduct themselves at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.
- 3.01** Justices of the Peace should approach their duties in a calm and courteous manner when dealing with the public and others and should present and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dignity of the Court and their office.

- 3.02** Justices of the Peace should use plain language to ensure that the reasons for their decisions are understood by everyone.
- 3.03** Justices of the Peace must safeguard the confidentiality of information that comes to them by virtue of their work and should not disclose that information except as required by law.
- 3.04** In discharging their duties, Justices of the Peace must treat everyone respectfully and with tolerance. Justices of the Peace must do so on an equal basis regardless of factors such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, belief system, gender, sexual orientation, age, or mental or physical disability.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- 4.00** Justices of the Peace shall refrain from openly and publicly criticizing the administration of justice.
- 4.01** Justices of the Peace should deal with the tasks that come before them in a timely manner and should make themselves accessible to those requiring their services.