



GREENING the **NWT** ECONOMY:

**Local Pathways to
Territorial Prosperity**

ECOLOGY NORTH

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THE CASE FOR A GREENER ECONOMY

- As governments and societies around the world grapple with the recent economic meltdown, there is a need to turn this crisis into an opportunity, to rethink our northern economy so that it is more durable, ecologically sustainable, and locally resilient.
- A sustainable or “green” economy – one that will best serve the needs of northerners for generations to come – takes full account of how our business activities affect our “triple bottom line” which encompasses financial, environmental and social wealth.
- A transition to a sustainable economy is both necessary and profitable. More than helping to address a host of ominous global crises we face, a green economy offers an opportunity to cash in on green technology, one of the world’s fastest growing industries.
- A green economy could address three top priorities shared by most northerners:
 - Cultivate a more localized, stable economy less vulnerable to boom-bust cycles.
 - Reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and the economic impacts of oil dependency.
 - Reduce our contribution to climate change and minimize future adaptation costs.

UNDERSTANDING GREEN ECONOMICS

- Green economics falls under many labels, including ecological economics, environmental economics, and sustainable economics. All terms are more or less interchangeable and embrace the natural and social roots of our economy. However defined, this field of economics is characterized by a consistent set of principles:

Follow natural limits and laws

Just as the earth’s life support systems operate on closed, interdependent processes, so too does the world of economics. Economics can learn much about long-term stability and creative development by observing how ecosystems organize and operate.

Quality over quantity

The goals of economic development must shift from simply pursuing more money and things, to achieving a more sustainable quality of life based on fewer wants, and richer, more enduring values related to one’s local community, culture, and society.

Local over global

By pooling local resources among communities, for instance, hydro power provided by one community, fish resources by another, and so on, revitalization of the northern economy could move down a path of toward collective self-sufficiency.

Diversify for stability

In both ecology and economics, diversity and stability go hand in hand. The development of diverse, renewable resource based business opportunities will help buffer the impacts of the economic roller-coaster that now characterizes our northern economy.

Invest in green technologies and jobs

Northern “pioneer enterprises” based on a variety of green technologies offer a powerful way to help enrich our economy, spur local job creation, promote energy independence, and reduce the impacts of climate change.

Create a heritage fund

A reservoir of financial capital is a key support tool for the process of green economic conversion. Revenues can come from various sources including resource royalties, carbon taxes, general taxation, or public investment.

Conserve energy

Reducing unnecessary energy waste, switching to renewable energy, and recycling waste heat from industrial and commercial operations can result in significant financial savings while slashing greenhouse gas emissions.

Reduce material waste

Sustainability is a natural extension of a long-established “total quality management” principle to reduce waste and rationalize production. This principle is one of those “no-brainer” draws of the green economy since it makes such plain economic sense.

Account for full costs

The long term perspective that defines green economics requires that the normal spectrum used to measure profits and losses must be expanded. Real wealth must account for environmental and social values as well as financial ones

Redefine capital

Green economics looks beyond the mighty dollar as the only kind of capital wealth. It calls for a more holistic yardstick of measuring economic progress which embraces not only financial capital but also, natural, human, social, and built forms of capital.

Tap local creativity

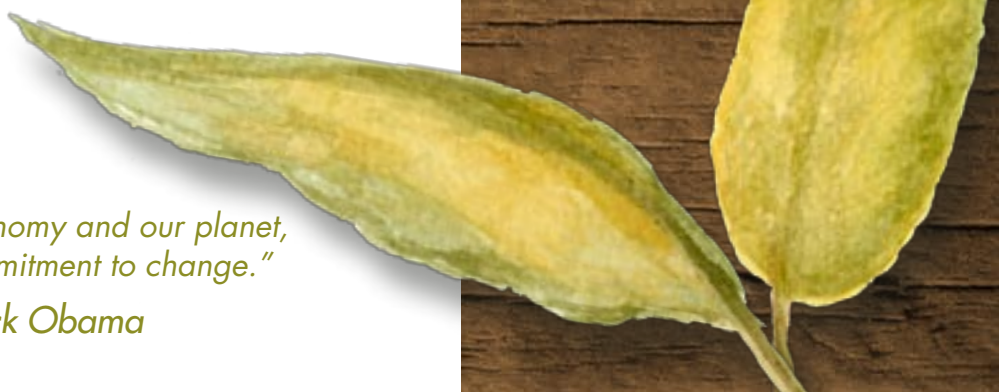
Retooling the NWT economy towards more sustainable goals will call for much creative thinking and dialogue among individual consumers, businesses, Aboriginal organizations, and all levels of government.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

- Though the future NWT economy will be shaped by progressive consumer choices and business management, the kinds of societal changes needed to bring about a truly sustainable economy require strong government leadership. This calls for a combination of public encouragement, financial investments, infrastructure development, and policies that put social and environmental benefits on par with financial profits.
- While continuing to depend on non-renewable resource development for years to come, we must increase investments in the renewable sector to build resilience to global and boom-bust forces that currently rock our economy. Mining, oil and gas projects should serve as bridges, not barriers, to our eventual – but inevitable – return to more local, renewable resource based economies.

“For the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change.”

- US President Barack Obama





For more information, please contact Ecology North. Copies of this document and the discussion paper can be downloaded on our website at www.ecologynorth.ca.

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Ecology North is a NWT-based charitable, non-profit organization formed in 1971 to support sound environmental decision-making on an individual, community and regional level. Current priorities for Ecology North include climate change, sustainable living and public education.

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