

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES POLICY

**January, 1998
Official Languages Unit
Government of the Northwest Territories**

1. **Statement of Policy**

It is the policy of the Government of the northwest Territories that members of the public have reasonable access to its programs and services in the official languages.

2. **Principles**

The Government of the Northwest Territories will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

- (1) A government's ability to communicate in the official languages of the public it serves is an important part of the operation of good government.
- (2) In order to understand and benefit from government's programs and services, the public requires information in the official languages.
- (3) A government's provision of services in its official languages recognizes and support the efforts of communities in maintaining and developing those languages.

3. **Scope**

This Policy applies to all departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories and to those boards and agencies listed in Schedule 1.

4. **Definitions**

The following terms apply to this Policy:

Deputy Head - the deputy minister of a department, the chief executive officer of a public committee, board or council, or such person as may be appointed as deputy head.

Official Languages - as established under the *Official Languages Act*. The official languages of the Northwest Territories are Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun, North Slavey and South Slavey.

Official Languages Guidelines - written instructions that establish specific responsibilities with respect to the use of official languages in the delivery

of the programs and services of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

5. Authority and Accountability

(1) General

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Executive Council. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy rests with the Executive Council. Authority and accountability is further defined as follows:

(a) Minister

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (the Minister) is accountable to the Executive Council for the implementation of this Policy.

(b) Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (the Deputy Minister) is accountable to the Minister and responsible to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.

(2) Specific

(a) Executive Council

The Executive Council may approve the Official Languages Guidelines and amendments to the Guidelines.

(b) Minister

The Minister:

- (i)** is responsible for coordinating the delivery of official languages services throughout government;

(ii) may recommend amendments and exceptions to the Official Languages Policy to the Executive Council; and

(iii) may recommend Official Languages Guidelines and amendments to the Guidelines to the Executive Council.

(c) Ministers

Ministers are responsible for the delivery, in accordance with the Official Languages Policy and Guidelines, of programs and services of departments, boards and agencies for which they have responsibility.

(d) Deputy Heads

Deputy Heads are accountable to their respective Ministers for the application of the Official Languages Policy and Guidelines within their areas of responsibility.

6. Prerogative of Executive Council

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take actions respecting Official Languages outside the provisions of this Policy.

Premier and Chairman of the
Executive Council

Schedule

Boards and Agencies

Schedule 1

SCHEDULE 1

BOARDS AND AGENCIES

The Official Languages Policy applies to the following boards and agencies:

- (1) Legislative Assembly
- (2) Assessment Appeal Tribunal
- (3) Divisional Education Councils
- (4) District Education Authorities in Yellowknife
- (5) Hospital / Health Boards of Management
- (6) Labour Standards Board
- (7) Liquor Licensing Board
- (8) Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
- (9) Northwest Territories Power Corporation
- (10) Social Assistance Appeal Board
- (11) Territorial Board of Revisions
- (12) Workers' Compensation Board

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES GUIDELINES MANUAL

**August, 1997
Official Languages Unit
Department of Executive
Government of the Northwest Territories**

INTRODUCTION

The Official Languages Act of the NWT recognizes Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut (including Inuvialuktun and Innuinaqtun) and Slavey (including North and South Slavey) as Official Languages.

The Official Languages Policy of the Government of the Northwest Territories states that a government's ability to communicate in the Official Languages of the public it serves is fundamental to the operation of good government.

Consequently, this Manual has been prepared to provide guidelines for the delivery of services in the official languages to the public. The guidelines set minimum standards for the delivery of services in the Official Languages. Each Guideline specifies the institutions to which it applies.

The Guidelines are designed to assist in the provision of services to the public on the Official Languages and as such, do not provide standards for the delivery of programs designed to enhance, maintain and revitalize French or Aboriginal languages in a cultural setting. Furthermore, the Official Languages Guidelines do not supersede any obligations, with respect to Official Languages, arising from the Official Languages Act, the Education Act, the Jury Act, the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, or any other territorial legislation.

The Official Languages Guidelines Manual is subject to revisions as required.

For clarification on the Official Guidelines Manual, please contact the Official Languages Unit at (867)920-6960 or Fax (867)873-0122.

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BACKGROUND – NWT OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

History of the NWT Official Languages Act

The Official Languages Act of the Northwest Territories was enacted in June of 1984. Modelled on the Federal Act of the same name, it had two essential purposes: the 1984 Act guaranteed equal status for the use of French and English by members of the public using government programs and services; and it officially recognized the Aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories.

Significant amendments have been made to the Official Languages Act in order to extend equality of status to northern Aboriginal languages and to establish the Office of the Languages Commissioner. Recognition of the official status of Aboriginal languages is intended to preserve and promote Aboriginal cultures through protection of their languages.

The Act is, in effect, a "constitutional" document, in the sense that it cannot generally be changed by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories unless the Parliament of Canada approves the changes by an amendment to the Northwest Territories Act (Canada). Approval by Parliament, however, is not needed for the Legislative Assembly to grant language rights in addition to those already in the Official Languages Act.

All provisions of the Act have been in force since December 31, 1993.

The Official Languages Act

The Official Languages Act applies to all institutions of the Legislative Assembly and GNWT departments, corporations, boards and the courts. The Act does not apply to municipal or community governments, private businesses or institutions outside the jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly or the Government of the Northwest Territories. Institutions located outside the NWT, such as medical facilities or educational institutions, do not have obligations under the Official Languages Act of the NWT.

The Official Languages Act of the NWT recognizes Chipewyan, Cree, Dogrib, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuktitut (including Inuvialuktun and Innuinaqtun) and Slavey (including North and South Slavey) as official languages. These languages are given equal status under the Act.

Sections 14 of the Official Languages Act describe the broad obligations of the GNWT with respect to the provision of services to the public and the right of the

public to communicate with the government in the official language of their choice.

Services in the Official Aboriginal Languages spoken in a region or community are offered in regional, area or local offices. These services are offered by the Government where there is a significant demand for service or where the nature of the office makes it reasonable to expect to communicate or receive services in that official language.

Services in English and French are offered in the head offices of Government and Legislative Assembly institutions. Services in English and French are also available in regional, area or local offices of the Government where there is a significant demand or where the nature of the office makes it reasonable to expect to communicate or receive services in that official language.

Other sections of the Act address the rights of the public and the obligations of the Legislative Assembly and the GNWT with respect to language use in the Legislative Assembly, courts, and government publications.

NWT Languages Commissioner

The Act provides remedies to members of the public who believe their language rights under the Official Languages Act have not been upheld or have been violated. A member of the public can contact the Languages Commissioner, who can assist a complainant seeking redress through the courts.

The Languages Commissioner is responsible to the members of the Legislative Assembly. The Languages Commissioner has authority to investigate complaints, make recommendations and report to the Legislative Assembly. The Languages Commissioner also monitors compliance with the spirit and intent of the Act by government departments and agencies. Finally, the Languages Commissioner prepares an Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly.

Government Administration

The government of the Northwest Territories is obliged to provide services in the Official Languages according to the provisions of the Official Languages Act.

The Deputy Head of each government institution is responsible to the Premier, through their respective Minister, for the provision of services in the official languages.

The Department of Executive is responsible for the official languages planning; overall coordination of the provision of government services to the public in the

official languages; ensuring that the public's rights under the Act are met; and that the public is aware of these rights.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment administers a majority of the contribution programs for community language initiatives.

Financial Support

Following the enactment of the Official Languages Act in 1984, an agreement was signed between the territorial and federal governments. In this agreement, the federal government agreed to provide funds for the enhancement of Aboriginal languages and to pay 100% of the costs associated with the provision of French language services.

The federal contribution to language initiatives in the NWT is of critical importance. Many ongoing Aboriginal language initiatives require continuing federal support in order to achieve the goals of revitalization, maintenance, and enhancement. The federal contribution is also critical to continue providing services to the Francophone community and to the existence of the Programme de Développement Communautaire et Culturel.

The Department of Executive is responsible for negotiating the federal languages contribution. In addition to federal funding, the Government of the Northwest Territories continues to spend a significant amount of its own resources on Aboriginal language programs and services. The delivery of programs and services in the Aboriginal languages is already a part of service delivery by the GNWT.

Overview of NWT Official Languages

Inuit Languages

- Inuktitut is spoken in the central and eastern Arctic and around Hudson Bay;
- Inuinnaqtun is spoken in the Kitikmeot (Central Arctic); and
- Inuvialuktun is spoken in the Beaufort-Delta area.

Inuktitut is a language of daily use in many parts of the eastern and central Arctic. Inuvialuktun and, to a lesser extent, Inuinnaqtun are considered to be endangered. Syllabics, a system of symbols representing sounds, is used extensively by writers of Inuktitut in the eastern Arctic. A large percentage of Inuktitut speakers are literate in their language and the volume of written material available is increasing. Roman orthography, which is based on the alphabetic writing system, is used predominantly by Inuvialuktun and Inuinnaqtun speakers.

Dene Languages and Cree

- Chipewyan is spoken mainly in the area east and south of Great Slave Lake;
- Dogrib is spoken mainly in the area north of Great Slave Lake and south of Great Bear Lake;
- Gwich'in is spoken mainly in the area west of Inuvik;
- North Slavey is spoken mainly in the Sahtu area north and west of Great Bear Lake;
- South Slavey is spoken mainly in the Deh Cho area west of Great Slave Lake; and
- Cree is spoken mainly south of Great Slave Lake near the Alberta and Saskatchewan borders.

The survival of the Dene languages has been described as being in a precarious state. The use of English by Dene speakers has been increasing steadily over the years. The Dene languages are rooted in oral traditions. The development of a written tradition is recent. Initially, Syllabics or Roman orthographies were used for writing, depending on the Dene language, the region, and the role of the church. In an effort to standardize these writing systems and develop a body of written material, the standardization of the written Dene languages was recommended by the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages in 1986. The GNWT undertook action to implement this recommendation and in 1989 the Dene Standardization Project report was issued.

Like the Dene languages, Cree is based on an oral tradition. In many parts of southern Canada, Cree is written using Syllabics. However, most of the Cree materials produced in the NWT are written using Roman orthography.

French

French is mainly spoken in Yellowknife, Iqaluit, Fort Smith and Hay River. In the Northwest Territories, use of English by French speakers has been increasing steadily over the years.

English

The majority of the population of the NWT speak English.

Summary

Languages remain a highly charged issue for many Canadians. The Official Languages Act (Canada) protects two languages, English and French. Although this federal Act has been in place since 1969, its implementation is ongoing. The Government of the Northwest Territories faces a unique and challenging task under its Official Languages Act which protects eleven languages.

The GNWT will continue to meet its obligations to the speakers of official languages of the NWT. This challenge will require continued cooperation and commitment on the part of GNWT managers and employees. Ongoing feedback from the public will help the GNWT ensure that the delivery of programs and services in the official languages is meeting the needs of the people of the NWT.

The GNWT will continue to play an important role in the area of revitalization, maintenance, and enhancement of Aboriginal languages through support to community-based initiatives.

Designated Areas

Introduction

This guideline designates geographic areas within the NWT for use of official languages by the GNWT.

Definition

- **Designated area:**
Community where GNWT services can be provided in the official languages of that area.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments and the boards and agencies listed in Schedule A.

Application

Appendix I – Designated Areas lists all the communities and the Official Languages in which services may be provided to the public.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Designated Offices

Introduction

This guideline designates which offices, that provide services to the public, will provide those services in the official languages of that Designated Area.

Definition

- **Designated Offices**

The location where government services are delivered to the public in the official languages of a Designated Area.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments and to the boards and agencies listed in Schedule A.

Application

- **Designated Offices for Official Aboriginal Languages**
- Community offices which provide services to the public in a Designated Area shall make those services available in the official Aboriginal languages of that Designated Area.
- An office which provides services to the public in a Designated Area other than the Designated Area in which the office is located, shall make those services available in the official languages of that other Designated Area.
- **Designated offices for French**
- In Yellowknife, offices which provide services to the public shall make those services available in French.
- In Iqaluit, offices of the departments of Justice, Education, Culture and Employment, Renewable, Wildlife and Economic Development, Safety and Public Services, and Transportation which provide services to the public shall make those services available in French.

- In Fort Smith and Hay River, offices of the departments of Justice, Education, Culture and Employment, Renewable, Wildlife and Economic Development, and Safety and public Services which provide services to the public shall make those services available in French.
- In all areas designated for French, offices providing health and social services to the public shall make those services available in French.
- An office which provides services to the public in a Designated Area other than the Designated Area in which the office is located shall make those services available in the official language of that other Designated Area.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Active Offer

Introduction

When members of the public are accessing services, they should be made aware that certain services are available in more than one official language. This guideline describes how this information shall be communicated to the public.

Definition

- Active offer:
Informing the public that a service is available in an official language through a variety of means which may include signage, greeting, or correspondence.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments and to the boards and agencies listed in Schedule A.

Application

For actual service delivery standards see Guideline 4 "Service Delivery".

All designated offices will actively offer services to the public in an official language by the following means:

- Greeting

In a Designated Office, an employee will initially address a member of the public in all of the official languages of that designated office (including English) in which that employee is fluent.

When a member of the public speaks a language which is designated for that area but is not spoken by the employee, the employee will use the methods outlined in Guideline 4 "Service Delivery".

- Interior signs

Signs will be placed in reception areas or on front counters stating, in the official languages of the designated area, that services are available in those official languages. The signs will read: "Services in *name of official language* are available, please ask".

In addition, the sign shall include the official languages of other designated Area(s) when:

- an office in the building provides services to the public from other Designated areas (see Guideline 2, "Designated Offices"); and
- members of the public are required to obtain those services in person.

- Correspondence

All official correspondence with a member of the public must be in the official language indicated by that person.

When language preference is not known, the correspondence will be in English. A statement will be included requesting the member of the public to indicate his/her preferred official language for future communications. This statement, which can be printed on the back of the correspondence, shall be in all the official languages of the designated area(s) served by the office.

- Display of Public Information

When public information is displayed, it shall be displayed in all the official languages of that designated office. The information in each language will be displayed with equal prominence.

For details on the translation of public information material see Guideline 6 "Translation of Public Information Material" and Guideline 7 "Forms".

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Visual Identity Program.

Service Delivery

Introduction

This guideline outlines various methods of delivering services in the official languages of a Designated Area.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all Designated Offices.

Application

The following methods shall be used to deliver services to the public in the official languages:

- **Direct Services**
When a bilingual employee provides a service to a member of the public in that person's preferred official language.
- **Facilitation Services**
When an employee, fluent in the official language preferred by a member of the public, assists in the delivery of a service in an official language.

A list of bilingual colleagues and the languages they speak shall be available in each office.

- **Interpretation Services**
When an interpreter assists in the delivery of a service.

A list of interpreters for the official languages shall be available in each office.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Interpretation – Public Hearings and Meetings

Introduction

This guideline outlines the requirements for the provision of interpretation services during public hearings and public meetings.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments, the Power Corporation, the NWT Housing Corporation, the Workers' Compensation Board, the Assessment Appeal Tribunal, the Labour Standards Board, the Liquor Licensing Board, the Social Assistance Appeal Board, and the Territorial Board of Revisions.

Definition

- **Public Hearings:**

A meeting held by a body established under an NWT legislation in order to review and make a determination on a given matter.

- **Public Meetings:**

A meeting held for furthering or discussing a matter of public concern whether admission to the meeting is general or restricted.

Application

- **Public Hearings**

Interpretation services shall be made available, in the Official Languages of the Designated Area where the hearing is held, for public hearings that, in the opinion of the body, are of general public interest or importance or could benefit members of the public in attendance.

- **Public Meetings**

Interpretation services shall be made available for public meetings in the Official Languages of the Designated Area where the meeting is held when public opinion is sought regarding:

- major changes to legislation, regulations or policy; or
- initiatives which may have a major impact on a community.

Interpretation services in official languages may be provided for other public meetings upon reasonable request.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Translation of Public Information Material

Introduction

This guideline outlines requirements for the translation of public information material used in the delivery of programs and services or in public consultation.

Definition

- **Public Information Material**
Written public documents, posters, brochures, and radio / television public announcements, which are designed to inform or educate the public about various programs and services.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments, NWT Housing Corporation, Workers' Compensation Board, Divisional Education Councils, District Education Authorities, District Education Authorities in Yellowknife, and Health Boards.

Application

For the translation of forms see Guideline 7 "Forms".

- **All Official Languages**

Public Information Material shall be translated into official languages of the Designated Area when:

- the material has been requested on an on-going and frequent basis by members of the public speaking an official language other than English; or
- the substance of the material is of significant importance to the health or safety of members of the public.

Translations may be in either written or oral form.

A summary translation of a public document may replace full text translation when the original document exceeds 20 standard (8.5" x 11")pages.

Public written material (not in translation) must contain a statement indicating that translations can be provided upon reasonable requests.

Radio and Television Public Announcements:

Radio and Television Public Announcements shall be translated into the official languages of the Designated Areas when:

- the information has been requested on an on-going and frequent basis by members of the public speaking an official language other than English; or
- the substance of the information is of significant importance to the health or safety of members of the public.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Forms

Introduction

This guideline outlines requirements for the availability of forms in Official Languages other than English.

Definition

- **Forms:**
Documents such as applications or registrations that must be completed by a member of the public.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments and boards and agencies listed in Schedule A.

Application

The common use of forms will be determined by the respective departments, boards, or agencies on a program by program basis.

Forms shall be available in Official Languages other than English based on the following criteria:

- **French**

Forms under Regulations

Forms under Regulations are promulgated in English and French. These forms shall be designed and published in English and French when:

- i. a form is commonly used by members of the public; or
- ii. a French translation of the form has been frequently requested by members of the public.

When forms are rarely used, a hard copy of this translation shall be kept on file and made available to members of the public as required.

Other forms

In Designated Offices for French, bilingual forms (French and English) shall be printed when:

- i. a form is commonly used by members of the public; or
- ii. a French translation of the form has been frequently requested by members of the public.

■ Inuktitut

In Designated Offices for Inuktitut, bilingual forms (Inuktitut and English) will be printed when:

- i. a form is commonly used by members of the public or
- ii. an Inuktitut translation of the form has been frequently requested by members of the public.

Other Official Languages

In Designated Offices for Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, Dene languages, and Cree, forms commonly used by members of the public will be translated. A copy of the translation shall be kept on file in offices providing services and made available to members of the public as required.

Authorities and References

Official Languages Policy.

Visual Identity Program.

Advertising – Job Postings

Introduction

This guideline outlines the requirements for advertising job postings in Official Languages other than English.

Definition

- **Region:**
The administrative region of the GNWT.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments, Workers' Compensation Board, Power Corporation, NWT Housing Corporation, Assessment Appeal Tribunal, Labour Standards Board, Liquor Licensing Board, Social Assistance Appeal Board, Territorial Board of Revisions, and Legislative Assembly.

Application

- **French**

When a job posting for a position located in a region that includes a Designated Area for French is advertised in English, the job posting shall be advertised in French, in a French language newspaper.

- **Inuktitut**

When a job posting for a position located in a region that includes a Designated Area for Inuktitut is advertised in English, the job postings shall be advertised in Inuktitut, in an Inuktitut language newspaper.

- **Bilingual Positions**

When a job posting for a position requiring skills in English and another Official Language is advertised in English, the job posting shall also be advertised in the required Official Language as follows:

- in the regional or territorial-wide newspaper(s) considered appropriate by the advertising department / board or agency;
- for positions requiring Inuktitut, in one Inuktitut newspaper; and
- for positions requiring French, in one French language newspaper.

Advertising - Requests for Proposals / Tender Calls

Introduction

This guideline outlines requirements for the use of French and Inuktitut in advertised Requests for Proposals and Tender Calls.

Definition

- **Region:**
An administrative region of the GNWT.
- **Request for Proposals / Tender Calls**
An advertised request for bids to carry out a proposed contract.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments, Workers' Compensation Board, Power Corporation, NWT Housing Corporation, Assessment Appeal Tribunal, Labour Standards Board, Liquor Licensing Board, Social Assistance Appeal Board, Territorial Board of Revisions, and Legislative Assembly.

Application

- **French**
When a proposed project, which is advertised in English, is to take place in a region that includes a designated area for French, Requests for Proposals / Tender Calls shall be advertised in French, in a French language newspaper.
- **Inuktitut**
When a proposed project, which is advertised in English, is to take place in a region that includes a Designated Area for Inuktitut, Requests for Proposals / Tender Calls shall be advertised in Inuktitut, in an Inuktitut language newspaper.

Authorities and References

Official Language and Policy.

Signage

Introduction

This guideline outlines requirements for the use of official languages for all new and replacement GNWT signs.

Definition

- **Main Directory Board Sign:**
An interior sign located near the entrance to a building or facility which provides information or direction to the public.
- **Directory Sign:**
An interior sign located near the entrance to a floor or other section of a building or facility which provides information or direction to the public.

Applicability

This guideline applies to GNWT departments and to the boards and agencies listed in Schedule A which have the authority to install signs.

Application

On all signs, Official Aboriginal Languages of the Designated Area shall be placed before all other Official Languages.

- **Building Signage**

Exterior Signs:

When an exterior sign is placed on a building or facility which houses a GNWT office, the sign shall be in all the Official Languages of the Designated Area.

In addition, the sign shall include the official languages of other Designated Area(s) when:

- an office in the building provides services to the public from other Designated Areas (see Guideline 2, "Designated Offices"); and

- members of the public are required to obtain these services in person.

Interior Signs:

The wording on the main directory board signs and directory signs shall be in the same Official Languages as the ones used on the building's or facility's Exterior Sign.

Construction Signs:

Construction signs on GNWT buildings or public works, shall be in the Official Languages of the Designated Area where the construction is taking place.

Park Signage

Main Entrance

Parks in the Western Arctic – Signs shall be in the Official Languages of all Designated Areas of the Western Arctic.

Parks in the Eastern Arctic – Signs shall be in the Official Languages of all Designated Areas of the Eastern Arctic.

- **Public Highway Signs**

When pictograms are not in use, ice-road and ferry crossing signs shall be in the Official Languages of the Designated Area where the sign is located.

Authorities **and** References

Official Languages Policy.

Visual Identity Program.

Standardized Dene Orthographies

Introduction

This guideline specifies the use of standardized Dene orthographies in all written material for Dene languages.

Definition

Standardized Dene orthographies:

Standard writing systems which were outlined in the Dene Standardization Project Report of October 1989 and which have been adopted for the Dene languages of the Northwest Territories.

- **Written materials:**

All written communications including signage, curricula materials, correspondence, reports, internal notices, brochures, posters, documents and publications of the Government of the Northwest Territories and Legislative Assembly.

Applicability

This guideline applies to all GNWT departments and to the boards and agencies listed in Schedule A.

Application

Written materials shall be translated according to the standards of the Dene Standardization Project Report.

Authorities and References

The 1989 Dene Standardization Projection Report.

SCHEDULE A

Legislative Assembly

Boards and Agencies

Assessment Appeal Tribunal

Divisional Education Councils

District Education Authorities in Yellowknife

Hospital / Health Boards of Management

Labour Standards Board

Liquor Licensing Board

Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

Northwest Territories Power Corporation

Social Assistance Appeal Board

Territorial Board of Revisions

Workers' Compensation Board