



## IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Executive	Ministerial Special Advisor	
Position Number(s)	Community	Division/Region(s)
11-9955	Yellowknife	Ministers Offices

## PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

Reporting on an operational basis to a Member of the Executive Council (Minister) and administratively to the Principal Secretary, the incumbent is accountable for providing strategic and political analysis and advice on major policy, program, and operational issues affecting departments within a particular Minister's portfolio.

While this position has limited direct control over financial and human resources, it has significant influence on the overall direction of the departments and decisions made regarding departmental budgets. The Ministerial Special Advisor is directly responsible for providing senior political and strategic support services for a wide range of subject areas within the Ministers portfolio, as well as providing co-ordination, facilitation and analysis services to the Minister.

## SCOPE

The Ministerial Special Advisor is located in Yellowknife and contributes to the development and implementation of approaches to government strategies, policies and program development related to departmental programs within their Minister's portfolio.

The Ministerial Special Advisor functions at a senior level in the government and must possess a wide mix of organizational, communications, analytical, public relations and diplomatic skills as well as a sound knowledge of current and evolving GNWT policies, programs, issues and developments. The incumbent coordinates a number of Ministerial activities and interacts with other Ministerial Special Advisors, the Principal Secretary, departmental senior management, staff of the Legislative Assembly, political staff within other governments, community organizations, industry representatives, and the general public.

The policy and program responsibilities are broad and affect a large and complex network of stakeholders. This environment is compounded by a politicized environment where maintaining good working relationships is critical. The Minister requires the Ministerial Special Advisor to be involved on his/her behalf in extensive contact, consultation and negotiation with contacts identified above.

The position's major challenge is to provide political and strategic advice to the Minister on major issues on a range of issues within the departmental mandates within the Ministers portfolio. As well the Ministerial Special Advisor provides input and advice on positions and approaches that need to reflect a very high level of political, economic and social sensitivity and responsiveness.

This position is a primary point of contact between the Minister's office and the public. The incumbent must be able to diplomatically and efficiently respond to complicated inquiries, demanding and occasionally emotionally charged appeals for assistance, and politically challenging and sensitive requests.

This position is also the main point of contact between the Minister's office and the departments within the Minister's portfolio. The incumbent must be able to handle the additional responsibility of managing requests for information and direction on various issues that the Minister's office receives.

Reviews of submissions, policy papers, issue summaries, reports, and correspondence involve identifying and assessing any political implications or priorities, determining areas of overlap, contradiction or lack of internal consistency and coordination, and developing solutions for the Minister.

The Ministerial Special Advisor is responsible for monitoring political developments and assessing the priority and relevance of critical policy and program documents, papers, submissions, news releases, information and other material flowing in and out of the Minister's office, for ensuring that such documents and material are in compliance with policy decisions and that they are accurate from a territorial policy perspective, and for ensuring that the Minister receives timely and relevant material and information that they require on a regular, ad hoc or urgent basis.

The Ministerial Special Advisor provides advice on the intent and purpose of action or other requests made by the Minister, on Ministerial procedures and guidelines for the development and handling of formal documents and Cabinet/FMB submissions, and on the development of material requested by the Minister.

The Ministerial Special Advisor serves as the focal point of access to or contact with the Minister, and as such, determines the acceptability, relevance, urgency and priority of information or agenda topics for meetings or discussions with the Minister. This requires the Ministerial Special Advisor to exercise the utmost tact, discretion and good judgment, particularly when dealing with the general public, senior public and private sector officials,

and elected representatives on a wide variety of urgent, highly confidential, political or publicly visible policy and program issues.

The Ministerial Special Advisor's scope for personal initiative and freedom of action is considerable and is determined through the establishment and maintenance of confidence and trust with the Minister. Based on experience and the sensitivity to current policy and program issues, the Ministerial Special Advisor assesses a variety of conflicting problems and issues, determines which should be acted upon or referred to a department, and establishes the relative priorities and deadlines for the development of appropriate responses. Inaccurate or untimely decisions in this regard could have adverse or negative effects on the Minister, and could result in a lack of credibility or public embarrassment.

The Ministerial Special Advisor participates in meetings between the Deputy Minister and the Minister. This requires the Ministerial Special Advisor to input directly into the development of strategic directions, and to respond to major policy, program, and divestiture issues, positions and directions, and to communicate information on decisions taken or action requests to be carried out, and to follow-up and report on the status of such activities or actions. The Ministerial Special Advisor must also maintain currency with the priorities, decisions, and positions taken on a broad range of issues and anticipate any trends, directions or issues that may affect the broad policy or program activities of the departments in the Ministers portfolio and effectively advise the Minister.

Since the Minister's office is the focus for numerous requests for information and demands for action from members of the public, MLAs, the media, lobbyists and public interest groups, the Ministerial Special Advisor is required to deal with, evaluate and assess the sensitivity, urgency, relevance and priority of such requests, and to report them to and/or consult with senior departmental executives and the Minister in the development of appropriate responses.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Providing political and strategic analysis and advice to the Minister on major policy, program, and operational issues affecting departments within the Minister's portfolio by:
  - gathering critical information in order to provide expert advice and consultative services on all issues related departmental programs
  - conducting research in support of policy, planning and program initiatives
  - evaluating decision papers, policy proposals, planning, and program initiatives
  - providing the Minister with another perspective on the strategy, and/or content of departmental information
  - providing strategic advice to the Minister on relevant major current, new and emerging policy, program, operations, and divestiture issues and develop critical positions and approaches
  - analyzing and situating issues being addressed in the Minister's Office; assessing what more could be needed or would contribute to the advancement

- of the issue
  - liaising and consulting with other Ministerial Special Advisors, the Principal Secretary, departmental senior management, staff of the Legislative Assembly, political staff within other governments, community organizations and industry representatives to obtain information, to seek advice and to initiate action on a wide range of subjects on behalf of the Minister.
2. Working with other Ministerial staff and staff within the Department of Executive to managing the daily operations of the Minister's office by:
    - foreseeing upcoming issues and taking action to support the Minister's needs and assist the Minister in meeting commitments
    - providing leadership and facilitating the development and maintenance of a co-operative working environment with other Minister's Offices, the Premier's Office and with departments Deputy Minister's offices
    - coordinating the smooth operation and administration of the Minister's office including being aware of and managing the resources of the Minister's office in consultation with staff at the Department of Executive.
    - directing the review of all correspondence, material and issues referred to the Minister's office, assess and determine their relative priority, sensitivity and urgency, and expedite those matters of urgent concern to the Minister
  3. Managing information requirements by:
    - determining the extent and purpose of information requirements
    - making others aware of information requirements
    - initiating action to obtain information within very precise time frames
    - providing direction on format, content and style to departments within the Ministers portfolio and establishing time frames for receipt of such information
    - responding to requests for information from the Minister, following up on departmental action required, actioning work as necessary or when urgent issues require a response, and contributing to the co-ordination and facilitation of the work flow within the Ministers office
  4. Serving as a primary point of contact between the Minister's office and the general public by:
    - reviewing all incoming documents (i.e., letters, briefs, invitations, etc.), prioritizing items for the Minister's attention and offering advice on appropriate referrals;
    - coordinating the Minister's public schedule,
    - planning, organizing and arranging external meetings as directed by the Minister
  5. Providing the support necessary to coordinate briefing and submissions material by:
    - directing the review, analysis, coordination and acceptability of briefing material, notes, background material, speeches, Ministerial correspondence, submissions, and other information submitted from all areas of the department for the approval of the Minister
    - providing feedback and opinions of the Minister to the departments on briefing

material, correspondence, etc. which have prepared and recommending approaches and strategies

6. Establish and maintain effective communication links between the Minister and the departments and ensure that executive directions, decisions and action requests as well as the flow of advice, information and interpretations are conveyed with clarity, timeliness and preciseness.

## **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Must be knowledgeable about the national, provincial/territorial and domestic political environments and other governments' positions and policies and be capable of assessing possible implications for the NWT and the Department.
- Must be able to apply this knowledge in a rapidly changing and challenging environment.
- Must be creative, focused on offering solutions and work well in a team environment.
- Must have an ability to analyze, evaluate and interpret a wide range of information including legislation, policies, provincial/territorial/federal and departmental initiatives. Cabinet and FMB direction, financial data, legislative proposals and strategic plans and apply it within the unique socio-political environment of the NWT.
- Must have knowledge of project management and an ability to manage large and small projects from pre-planning to implementation and evaluation.
- Must have superior verbal and written communication skills.
- Must possess an ability to build and maintain a good working relationship with colleagues throughout the GNWT, and with partners of other governments and organizations.
- Must possess knowledge of issues related to Aboriginal Self-Government and Land Claims in the NWT.
- Must have the ability to effectively represent the Department and its position accurately and professionally.
- Must have knowledge of negotiating and be a strong communicator with diplomatic skills in order to calmly and assertively express and defend the views of the department.

- Must have strong strategic-thinking skills and judgment, as well as a demonstrated ability to research, analyze and synthesize multiple concepts and priorities.
- Must have strong computer skills including the ability to work with a wide range of computer applications including word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software.
- Must be able to work to deadlines and respond effectively to frequently changing deadlines.
- Must be able to work in highly stressful situations.
- Must be self-directed, display initiative and be creative. The incumbent is expected to work both as a team member and independently with minimal supervision.

**Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:**

These knowledge, skills and abilities are generally obtained through completion of a Master's level degree with five years of experience or a bachelor degree and ten years of progressive experience in relevant planning, management and/or analytical positions.

**WORKING CONDITIONS**

*(Working Conditions identify the **unusual and unavoidable**, externally imposed conditions under which the work must be performed and which create hardship for the incumbent.)*

**Physical Demands**

*(This involves physical exertion produced by the incumbent in carrying out the responsibilities of the position beyond a standard office environment.)*

While the position operates within a normal office environment, there is frequent travel associated with this position.

**Environmental Conditions**

*(This includes conditions in the work environment that have potential for negative physical impact on the incumbent.)*

Normal office environment.

**Sensory Demands**

*(Sensory demands are an intense, combined used of 2 or more of the 5 senses required to accomplish activities.)*

Periods of concentrated listening during meetings.

## **Mental Demands**

*(Mental demands indicate psychological impacts that are an unavoidable part of the job and place increased mental demands on the incumbent. This section includes travel required of the position as well.)*

This position is subject to high levels of stress related to multitasking, dealing with confidential and politically sensitive information and working to tight deadlines on a daily basis. Frequent travel is required which places additional mental demands on the incumbent.

## **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Position Security (check one)**

- No criminal records check required
- Position of Trust – criminal records check required
- Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check

### **French language (check one)**

- French required
- French preferred
- French not required