

TERRITORIAL LEGAL SNAPSHOT

Northwest Territories

Abortion law, funding, and access — one-page reference

As of Jul 13, 2026

Research completed Jul 13, 2026

Confidence: high



● Abortion is legal at every stage of pregnancy — Canada has had no criminal abortion law since 1988 — but geographic gaps limit access in this jurisdiction.

LEGAL LIMIT	None (nationwide)	OFFERED LOCALLY TO	18 weeks (policy)	✓ INSURED SERVICE	Yes	CLINIC ABORTIONS FUNDED	N/A
✓ MIFEGYMISO COVERED FOR ALL	Yes	TELEHEALTH	Not available	SAFE-ACCESS ZONES	No law	RECIPROCAL BILLING	Unclear
✓ TRAVEL ASSISTANCE	Yes	INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTION	No	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	Not required	MINOR CONSENT	Mature minor common law
PENDING CHANGE	See below						

§ Jurisdiction overview

Abortion is fully publicly funded in the NWT but procedural and medication services are concentrated in Yellowknife and Inuvik, leaving residents of 31 other communities dependent on medical travel.

Medical Care Act, RSNWT 1988, c M-8, s 3(1) · R v Morgentaler, [1988] 1 SCR 30 · NTHSSA NOW Program – Referral Information page

▣ Funding & coverage

Abortion is a medically required insured service under the NWT Medical Care Act, delivered without charge to residents at public hospitals.

Medical Care Act, RSNWT 1988, c M-8, ss 1, 3(1A) · NWT Insured Services Tariff, effective April 1, 2025 · R v Morgentaler, [1993] 3 SCR 463

CLINIC VS. HOSPITAL FUNDING

The NWT has no free-standing abortion clinics; all services are hospital-based and publicly funded without any clinic-exclusion regulation.

TRAVEL & OUT-OF-PROVINCE CARE

The NWT Medical Travel Program covers flights, accommodation, and meals for residents who must travel from their home communities to Yellowknife, Inuvik, or out-of-territory for abortion care.

● Where services actually are

Abortion services are available at Stanton Territorial Hospital (Yellowknife) and Inuvik Regional Hospital through the NOW program, with self-referral accepted. Surgical abortion is routinely available up to 18 weeks and medication abortion up to 9 weeks; these are clinical policy limits, not statutory ones, with later patients referred south.

NTHSSA NOW Program Referral Information · Cabin Radio, 'What is abortion access like in the NWT?' · NTHSSA NOW Program – Referral Information

MINORS

The NWT has no statutory age of medical consent; the mature-minor doctrine governs, meaning a young person who understands the procedure can consent independently.

SAFE-ACCESS ZONES

The NWT has not enacted a statutory safe-access-zone or bubble-zone law; the federal Criminal Code anti-intimidation provisions (Bill C-3) provide limited federal protection.

▣ Recent changes

May 2025	GNWT releases proposed key elements for new Midwifery Profession Regulations under the Health and Social Services Professions Act, potentially expanding midwifery scope.
Sep 2024	New NWT Extended Health Benefits Policy takes effect, restructuring medical travel and drug benefit eligibility with income-based assessment.
Nov 2022	Health Canada removes requirement for ultrasound prior to Mifegymiso prescribing, enabling consideration of expanded access in smaller NWT communities.

- Dec 2021

Bill C-3 receives Royal Assent, creating federal Criminal Code offence of intimidating patients or health-care workers accessing/providing health services.
- Jun 2019

Federal Criminal Code ss 287-288 (formerly criminalizing abortion) formally repealed by Parliament.
- Nov 2018

NWT Minister of Health and Social Services commits to funding Mifegymiso for residents without insurance, followed by universal coverage for all residents in 2019.
- Jan 2017

Mifegymiso becomes commercially available in Canada.

⌵ Pending changes to watch

Midwifery Profession Regulations under HSSPA
Regulation · Consultation completed October 2025; regulations under development

If new regulations expand midwifery prescribing to include mifepristone/misoprostol, midwives could become additional Mifegymiso prescribers in the NWT, potentially improving access in communities where midwives practise.

Expansion of NOW program to smaller communities
Policy · Under discussion; GNWT participating in national working group

If clinical protocols and Health Canada requirements can be met, Mifegymiso could become available in additional NWT communities, reducing medical-travel burden.

⌵ Key authorities

Medical Care Act

Medical Care Act, RSNWT 1988, c M-8

Establishes entitlement to insured medical services including abortion for all NWT residents.

Criminal Code (born-alive rule)

Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 223

Defines when a child becomes a human being — at live birth — and establishes the federal born-alive rule that underpins fetal legal status.

R v Morgentaler (1988)

R v Morgentaler, [1988] 1 SCR 30

Struck down the criminal prohibition on abortion and established that abortion regulation must respect Charter s 7.

R v Morgentaler (1993)

R v Morgentaler, [1993] 3 SCR 463

Struck down a provincial attempt to restrict abortion to hospitals as ultra vires criminal law, limiting territorial regulatory power.

Tremblay v Daigle

Tremblay v Daigle, [1989] 2 SCR 530

Confirmed that a father has no standing to enjoin an abortion and that a fetus has no independent legal personality.

Generated from the structured legal focused deep-research record for NT, Canada (research completed 2026-07-13). This snapshot condenses a much larger sourced dataset — full citations, quoted statutory text, and plain-language explanations are in the full Northwest Territories survey. This document has not been reviewed by a lawyer and should not be used as legal advice.