



# **APPLICATIONS FOR WELL SUSPENSION OR ABANDONMENT**

## **GUIDELINES AND INTERPRETATION NOTES**

**OFFICE OF THE REGULATOR OF OIL AND GAS  
OPERATIONS**

**Draft: August 2020**

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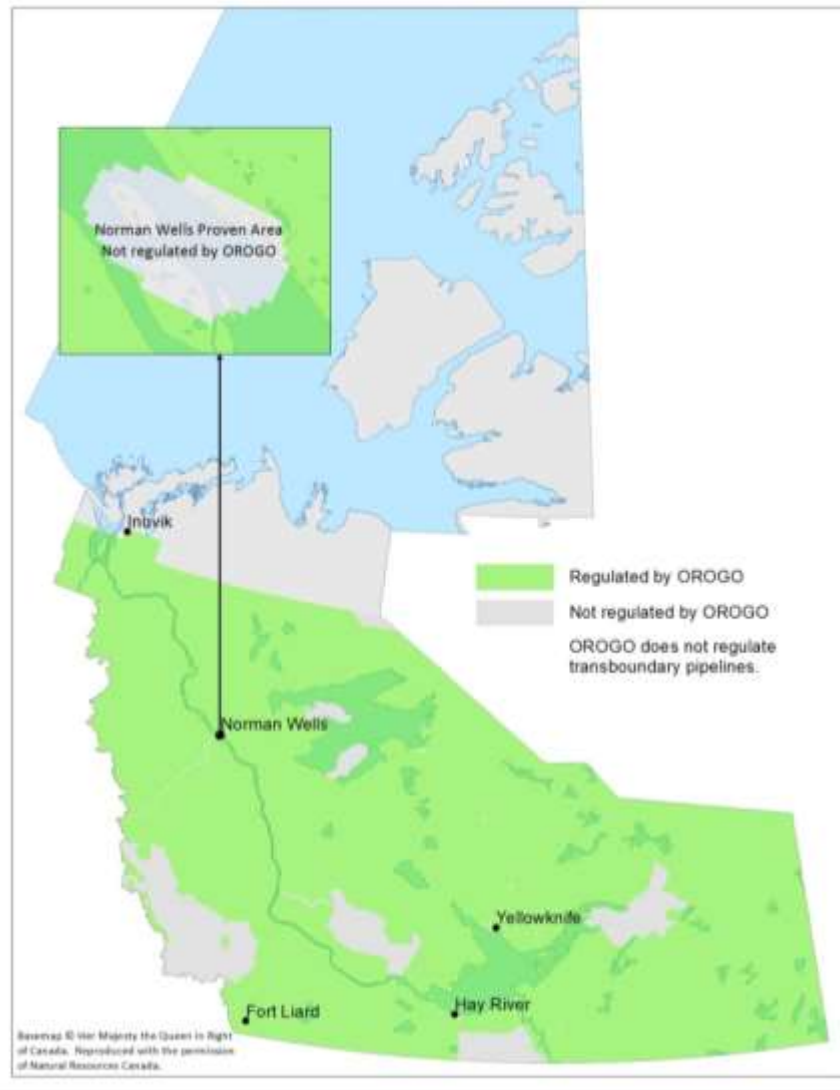
# Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes

## 1 INTRODUCTION

<b>Purpose</b>	The <i>Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i> (Guidelines) provide guidance on the process of applying to suspend or abandon a well and the required contents of application packages.
<b>Legislative Requirements</b>	<p>Section 6 of the <i>Oil and Gas Operations Act</i> (OGOA) states that an Operations Authorization (OA) and an Operating Licence are required in order to carry out any work or activity relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring or drilling for oil or gas, or</li><li>• Producing, conserving, processing or transporting oil or gas.</li></ul> <p>Section 10(1) of the <i>Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations</i> (OGDPR) states that a Well Approval is required in order to suspend or abandon a well or part of a well.</p> <p>Requirements for an OA application are found in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sections 10, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 64 of OGOA; and</li><li>• Section 6 of the OGDPR.</li></ul> <p>Requirements for a Well Approval application are found in section 12 of the OGDPR.</p>
<b>Plain Language</b>	These Guidelines have been written in plain language in order to make them accessible to as many readers as possible.
<b>Legislation is Paramount</b>	Where a conflict exists between the Guidelines and OGOA or its regulations, OGOA or its regulations are paramount.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>The objectives of the Guidelines are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase applicants' knowledge of the application process and the required contents of application packages;</li><li>• Promote the submission of appropriate application packages to increase the efficiency of the application process;</li><li>• Enhance certainty and predictability in regulatory decisions; and</li><li>• Promote accessibility and transparency in oil and gas regulation.</li></ul>

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<b>Authority</b>	These Guidelines are issued by the Regulator under section 18 of OGOA.
<b>Regulator's Discretion</b>	Application of these Guidelines is subject to the Regulator's discretion under OGOA.
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	



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# Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes

## 2 APPROVALS REQUIRED

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the approvals required in order to suspend or abandon a well. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operations Authorizations (OAs);</li><li>• Situations where a Well Approval is required;</li><li>• Situations where a Well Approval is not required;</li><li>• Duration of an OA and/or Well Approval; and</li><li>• Timing of Applications.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants understand which approvals are required from the Regulator in order to suspend or abandon a well.</p>
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Section 6 of OGOA states that an OA and an Operating Licence are required in order to carry out any work or activity relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring or drilling for oil or gas, or</li><li>• Producing, conserving, processing or transporting oil or gas.</li></ul> <p>Section 10(1) of the OGDPR states that a Well Approval is required in order to suspend or abandon a well or part of a well.</p> <p>Section 10(2) of the OGDPR identifies specific situations where a Well Approval is not required to suspend or abandon a well or part of a well.</p>
<b>Operations Authorization</b>	<p>An OA is required to suspend or abandon a well, no matter what method is used.</p> <p>The OA shows the Regulator approves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The scope of the proposed activity; and</li><li>• The applicant's systems for managing the proposed activity, including systems for ensuring safety, environmental protection and appropriate emergency response.</li></ul>
<b>Well Approval Required</b>	<p>A Well Approval is required to suspend or abandon a well in all cases, except those described in the following sub-section.</p> <p>The Well Approval for suspending or abandoning a well is called an Approval to Alter the Condition of a Well.</p>

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The Well Approval shows the Regulator approves the technical program for the suspension or abandonment of the well.

### **Well Approval Not Required**

A Well Approval is not required to conduct a well suspension if:

- The applicant proposes to use a wire line, slick line or coiled tubing operation;
- The applicant will not remove the Christmas tree in order to perform the work;
- The work does not alter the completion interval;
- The work is not expected to adversely affect recovery from the well; and
- The equipment, operating procedures and qualified persons exist to conduct the operation as set out in the authorization.

### **Duration**

OGOA and the OGDPR do not limit the duration of an OA or a Well Approval.

The Regulator determines the duration of an OA or a Well Approval and may extend it if necessary.

### **Timing of Applications**

Applicants are encouraged to apply for OAs and Well Approvals well in advance of the planned activity.

Applicants may apply for an OA and a Well Approval at the same time. However, the Well Approval cannot be issued until after the OA is issued, since it is associated with the OA.

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### 3 PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the option for a pre-application meeting. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The purpose of pre-application meetings;</li><li>• Topics for discussion during pre-application meetings;</li><li>• The timing of pre-application meetings;</li><li>• Participants in a pre-application meeting; and</li><li>• How to request a pre-application meeting.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants make use of pre-application meetings to learn more about the process and requirements for suspending or abandoning a well before applying.</p> <p>As a result, the applicant submits a complete application package and the Regulator can process the application more efficiently.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>A pre-application meeting allows applicants to ask questions of the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations (OROGO) in an informal setting, prior to the application and decision-making process.</p>
<b>Topics for Discussion</b>	<p>Topics for a pre-application meeting could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The application process;</li><li>• Timeframes for submitting an application;</li><li>• Application package requirements;</li><li>• Technical questions about methods of well suspension or abandonment; and</li><li>• Any other questions the applicant has about suspending or abandoning a well in OROGO's jurisdiction.</li></ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<p>Pre-application meetings must occur <b>before</b> an application is submitted to the Regulator.</p> <p>Once an application has been submitted, all communication between the applicant and the Regulator will take place in writing and is part of the evidence for the Regulator's decision.</p>
<b>Participants</b>	<p>The applicant may invite consultants or sub-contractors to the meeting.</p>
<b>Requesting a Meeting</b>	<p>Applicants can request a pre-application meeting by contacting OROGO at <a href="mailto:orogo@gov.nt.ca">orogo@gov.nt.ca</a> or by phone at 867-767-9097.</p>



# Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes

## 4 APPLYING FOR AN OPERATIONS AUTHORIZATION

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the process of applying for an OA for well suspension or abandonment. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The contents of an OA application package;</li><li>• Relevant OROGO Guidelines; and</li><li>• The OROGO service standard for OA applications.</li></ul> <p>An OA application checklist for preparing an application package is at the end of this section.</p>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants have the information needed to submit a complete application for an OA for well suspension or abandonment.</p>

# Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes

## 4.1 Contents of an OA Application Package

**Contents** This section of the Guidelines describes the required contents of an OA application package. It provides information on:

- Requirements under OGOA;
- Requirements under the OGDPR;
- Financial information requirements;
- Requirements under the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA);
- Requirements under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* for Crown Consultation; and
- Version tracking.

**Objective** Applicants understand what an OA application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain in order to be complete.

**Requirements** The requirements for an OA application for well suspension or abandonment are described in:

- Sections 10, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 64 of OGOA; and
- Section 6 of the OGDPR.

The requirements for preliminary screening are described in sections 124 and 125 of the MVRMA.

Aboriginal and Treaty Rights across Canada are recognized in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

**OGOA Requirements** In order to comply with OGOA, an OA application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain:

Required Information	Section of OGOA
A completed application form	10(1)
Declarations about the equipment to be used and the qualifications of personnel	15
Evidence of an approved Benefits Plan <i>or</i> evidence that the requirement for a Benefits Plan has been waived (if this information is not available when applying, it must be received before the OA can be issued)	17

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Required Information	Section of OGOA
Information to support the Regulator in determining the amount of proof of financial responsibility required for the proposed activity	64

### OGDPR Requirements

In order to comply with the OGDPR, an OA application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain:

Information about	Specifically
The proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description of the scope of proposed activities (including well inspections, well interventions and follow up monitoring);</li> <li>• A execution plan for carrying out the proposed activities, including information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Proposed type(s) of well servicing equipment to be used;</li> <li>○ Proposed type(s) of well control equipment to be used;</li> <li>○ Class and pressure rating for proposed well servicing and well control equipment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A schedule for carrying out the proposed activities, including identification of any 24-hour operations;</li> <li>• Proposed flaring or venting of gas (reason for flaring or venting, estimated rate and quantity of gas to be flared and time during which the flaring or venting will occur); and</li> <li>• Proposed burning of oil (reason for burning and estimated quantity to be burned).</li> </ul>

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Information about	Specifically
The applicant's management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safety plan (described in detail in sections 8 and 19 of the OGDPR);</li> <li>• An environmental protection plan (described in detail in sections 9 and 19 of the OGDPR); and</li> <li>• Contingency plans, including emergency response procedures.</li> </ul>
The future plans for the well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description of how the site will be decommissioned and abandoned (applications for well suspension only).</li> </ul>

### Financial Information Requirements

The applicant must have the financial ability to carry out the well suspension or abandonment as planned. This includes the ability to fully implement its safety plan, environmental protection plan and contingency plans.

An application for an OA for well suspension or abandonment must contain:

- Audited financial statements for the most recent fiscal year end;
- Quarterly financial statements for the most recent quarter; and
- Proof of insurance for the proposed activity.

### MVRMA Requirements

An application for OA triggers the requirement to conduct a preliminary screening under the MVRMA.

An application for OA for well suspension or abandonment must:

- Provide information on any preliminary screenings or environmental assessments already conducted for the proposed activity;
- Describe any changes to the proposed activity since the preliminary screening or environmental assessment was conducted;
- Explain why the proposed activity might be exempt from preliminary screening, if applicable (for example, under the *Exemption List Regulations*, under section 157.1 of the MVRMA, or for national security or emergency purposes); and

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- Identify whether the applicant has applied (or will be applying) to a Land and Water Board to obtain a land use permit or water licence that would trigger the requirement for a preliminary screening.

### Section 35 Requirements

OROGO has an obligation to consult regarding adverse impacts to established or asserted Aboriginal and Treaty Rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

As part of its obligation to consult, OROGO will assess the engagement and consultation activities that have already occurred for the proposed activity.

An application for an OA for well suspension and abandonment must include:

- Information on engagement with established or asserted Aboriginal and Treaty Rights holders affected by the proposed project prior to application; and
- A plan for further engagement to occur throughout the life of the project.

OROGO will accept the Engagement Record and Engagement Plan submitted to the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley under their *Engagement and Consultation Policy* (June 2018) for this purpose.

### Version Tracking

During the processing of an OA application, revised versions of documents may be submitted by the applicant.

Revised versions of documents must be submitted:

- As a complete document; and
- Include information identifying the version number and when it was revised.

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### 4.2 Relevant OROGO Guidelines

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the other OROGO guidelines that may be of use in preparing an OA application package. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidelines for specific parts of the application package;</li><li>• Guidelines on process; and</li><li>• Where to find the guidelines.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants are aware of the guidelines to help them prepare parts of the OA application package and understand the process.</p>
<b>Guidelines for Specific Parts of the Application Package</b>	<p>The following guidelines address specific parts of the application package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Environmental Protection Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i>;</li><li>• <i>Safety Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i>;</li><li>• <i>Well Suspension and Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i>;</li><li>• <i>Contingency Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i> (in preparation); and</li><li>• <i>Proof of Financial Responsibility Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i> (in preparation).</li></ul>
<b>Guidelines on Process</b>	<p>The following guidelines address OROGO's processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Document Submission Guidelines</i>;</li><li>• <i>Public Access to Information Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i>; and</li><li>• <i>Public Hearing Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</i>.</li></ul>
<b>Finding the Guidelines</b>	<p>All the OROGO guidelines can be found on OROGO's website at: <a href="https://www.oro.go.nt.ca/en/guidance">https://www.oro.go.nt.ca/en/guidance</a>.</p>

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### 4.3 OROGO Service Standard for OA Applications

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OROGO's service standard for OA applications; and</li><li>• When OROGO may pause the processing of an application.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants are aware of OROGO's timelines for processing OA applications for well suspension or abandonment.</p>
<b>Standard for Operations Authorizations</b>	<p>OROGO's standard for processing an OA application for well suspension or abandonment is 90 calendar days from receipt of a complete application.</p>
<b>Definition</b>	<p>A <b>complete application</b> contains all of the information described in these Guidelines.</p>
<b>Pausing Application Processing</b>	<p>OROGO may pause the processing of an OA application pending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirmation of an approved benefits plan (or waiver);</li><li>• Response to information requests; or</li><li>• Completion of a preliminary screening or environmental assessment by another regulator.</li></ul>

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### 4.4 OA Application Check List

	Item	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed and signed OA application form	Available at: <a href="http://orogo.gov.nt.ca/eng/resources">orogo.gov.nt.ca/eng/resources</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Declaration form	Available at: <a href="http://orogo.gov.nt.ca/eng/resources">orogo.gov.nt.ca/eng/resources</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirmation of Benefits Plan Approval / Waiver	<a href="http://iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/oil-and-gas-rights-management">iti.gov.nt.ca/en/services/oil-and-gas-rights-management</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information to support the Regulator in determining the amount of proof of financial responsibility required for the proposed activity	<a href="#">Proof of Financial Responsibility Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</a> (in preparation)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Description of scope of proposed activities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Execution plan for conducting proposed activities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule for conducting proposed activities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Plan	<a href="#">Safety Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Protection Plan	<a href="#">Environmental Protection Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information on proposed flaring and venting or burning of oil and gas	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contingency Plan (Emergency Response Plan)	<a href="#">Contingency Plan Guidelines and Interpretation Notes</a> (in preparation)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decommissioning and abandonment plan	For well suspension applications only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Audited financial statements for the most recent fiscal year end	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly financial statements for the most recent quarter	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proof of insurance	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary screening information	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engagement Record and Engagement Plan or similar information	MVLWB <a href="#">Engagement and Consultation Policy</a>



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## 5 APPLYING FOR A WELL APPROVAL

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the process of applying for a Well Approval for well suspension or abandonment. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The contents of a Well Approval application package; and</li><li>• The OROGO service standard for Well Approval applications.</li></ul> <p>A Well Approval application checklist for use in preparing an application package is at the end of this section.</p>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants have the information needed to successfully apply for a Well Approval for well suspension or abandonment.</p>

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### 5.1 Contents of a Well Approval Application Package

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes the required contents of a Well Approval application package. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requirements under OGOA;</li><li>• Requirements under the OGDPR;</li><li>• Including alternative program steps; and</li><li>• Version tracking.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants understand what a Well Approval application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain in order to be complete.</p>
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>The requirements for a Well Approval application for well suspension or abandonment are described in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Section 10 of OGOA; and</li><li>• Section 12 of the OGDPR.</li></ul>
<b>OGOA Requirements</b>	<p>In order to comply with section 10(1) OGOA, a Well Approval application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain a completed application form for Approval to Alter the Condition of a Well.</p>
<b>OGDPR Requirements</b>	<p>In order to comply with the OGDPR, a Well Approval application package for well suspension or abandonment must contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A detailed description of the well, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ A current well bore diagram; and</li><li>○ Well history information, including work over history and reports of inspections completed by the operator;</li></ul></li><li>• A detailed description of the proposed work or activity and rationale, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ A step-by-step program for the proposed operation;</li><li>○ The rationale for the proposed program (for example, analysis of well data logs, daily drilling reports, etc.);</li><li>○ A proposed final well bore diagram;</li><li>○ Confirmation of the type, class and rating of well servicing and well control equipment to be used during the operation; and</li></ul></li><li>• Information on when the well will be abandoned (applications to suspend a well only).</li></ul>

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### **Including Alternative Program Steps**

Any changes to the well suspension or abandonment program after it has been approved will require a variation (see section 6 of these Guidelines).

Applicants are encouraged to consider various possible scenarios for completing the suspension or abandonment and include alternative steps to address those scenarios in their programs for approval by the Regulator.

Pre-approval of alternative approaches will avoid delaying operations in the field while a request for variation is processed.

### **Version Tracking**

During the processing of a Well Approval application, revised versions of documents may be submitted by the applicant.

Revised versions of documents must be submitted:

- As a complete document; and
- Include information identifying the version number and when it was revised.

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### 5.2 OROGO Service Standard for Well Approval Applications

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OROGO's service standard for Well Approval applications; and</li><li>• When OROGO will pause the processing of an application.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Applicants are aware of OROGO's timelines for processing applications for Well Approvals for well suspension or abandonment.</p>
<b>Standard for Well Approvals</b>	<p>OROGO's standard for processing a Well Approval for well suspension or abandonment is 30 calendar days from receipt of a complete application.</p>
<b>Definition</b>	<p>A <b>complete application</b> contains all of the information described in these Guidelines and is submitted under an existing OA.</p>
<b>Pausing Application Processing</b>	<p>OROGO will pause the processing of an application for Well Approval to allow for the applicant to respond to information requests.</p>

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### 5.3 Well Approval Application Check List

	Item	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed and signed Well Approval application form (Approval to Alter the Condition of a Well)	Available at: <a href="http://orogo.gov.nt./eng/resources">orogo.gov.nt./eng/resources</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed description of the well	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed description of the proposed work or activity	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information on when the well will be abandoned	Applications for well suspension only

# Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes

## 6 CHANGING AN EXISTING OA OR WELL APPROVAL

<b>Contents</b>	<p>This section of the Guidelines describes how to make changes to an existing OA or a Well Approval. It provides information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requesting a variation to an OA or Well Approval;</li><li>• Service standards for processing a variation request;</li><li>• Terminating an OA or Well Approval;</li><li>• Suspending or revoking an OA or Well Approval; and</li><li>• Transferring an OA or Well Approval.</li></ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>Operators are aware of the options and processes for changing an existing OA or Well Approval.</p>
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Section 10(6) of OGOA authorizes the Regulator to vary the terms of an OA.</p> <p>Section 10(5) of OGOA authorizes the Regulator to suspend or revoke an OA under certain circumstances.</p>
<b>Definition</b>	<p>A <b>variation</b> is any change to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Terms and Conditions of the OA or Well Approval (including expiry date, deadlines for submitting specific information, etc.);</li><li>• The approved program; or</li><li>• The type, class and rating of well servicing and well control equipment.</li></ul> <p>A variation may be initiated by the Regulator or by the operator.</p>
<b>Requesting a Variation</b>	<p>The operator may request a variation to an OA or a Well Approval by emailing <a href="mailto:orogo@gov.nt.ca">orogo@gov.nt.ca</a> with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A request for the variation; and</li><li>• Supporting documents (if appropriate) to assist the Regulator in making a decision on the request.</li></ul>
<b>Standard for Variation Requests</b>	<p>There is no service standard for processing a request for variation. The length of time required will depend on the request.</p>

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**Terminating an OA or Well Approval** The operator may request that an OA or Well Approval be terminated early by emailing [orogo@gov.nt.ca](mailto:orogo@gov.nt.ca) with:

- A request for the early termination; and
- Supporting documents (if appropriate) to assist the Regulator in making a decision on the request.

**Suspending or Revoking an OA or Well Approval** The Regulator may suspend or revoke an OA or Well Approval if the operator does not:

- Meet the requirements associated with the OA or associated Well Approvals;
- Meet any commitments made in a declaration under section 15 of OGOA;
- Maintain the certificates required under section 16 of OGOA for the duration of the OA;
- Maintain Proof of Financial Responsibility as required under section 64(2) of OGOA; or
- Meet the requirements of any applicable regulation.

The Regulator will notify the operator of a suspension or revocation in writing.

**Offense** **Carrying out an activity for which the OA or Well Approval has been suspended or revoked is an offense under OGOA.**

**Transferring an OA or Well Approval** OAs and Well Approvals cannot be transferred from one operator to another.

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## 7 REGULATOR'S APPROVAL

These *Applications for Well Suspension or Abandonment Guidelines and Interpretation Notes* are issued under section 18 of the *Oil and Gas Operations Act* effective MONTH DAY, 2021.

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Pauline de Jong