



July 09, 2020

Ms. Jenni Bruce
President, NWT Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Harold Grinde
Chairperson, NWT Tourism

Mr. Tim Syer
President, Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Tom Hoefer
Executive Director, NWT & NU Chamber of Mines

Mr. Matt Belliveau
Executive Director, NWT & NU Construction Association

**NWT Businesses Want A More Balanced Approach
To Protecting Public Health And Supporting Economic Recovery**

I would like to recognize the concerns expressed by your organizations collectively in the June 25, 2020, press release regarding the economic health of our territory.

I want to assure you that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) recognizes the urgency of addressing the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; and is acutely aware of the challenges and extreme impacts that are being faced by our territory's business community.

The health and safety of Northwest Territories (NWT) residents and the economic recovery of our territory are the two highest priorities that we are addressing as your government today.

The NWT, as with all jurisdictions, has had to make strong and difficult decisions in the face of unknowns or what future recovery will look like.

We know new cases of COVID-19 are still occurring in southern Canada every day.

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As we begin to relax restrictions and take steps to restart our lives and our economy, we will do so with the same calculated and measured approach with which we have protected NWT residents and businesses to date; and will continue to guard against moving too quickly that we compromise our ability to respond to the risks that we are also taking.

Your desire to see the GNWT respond and take actions quickly is acknowledged but should not be mistaken for inaction. I assure you that the concerns raised in your press release of June 25, 2020, have been heard and are already being addressed.

We have established the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) as a means to support the information sharing and dialogue that is clearly needed to address our current economic challenges. While I recognize that there have been early frustrations, my hope is that this table will develop into a forum in which to build and strengthen the relationship between government and the private sector and to better understand and meet the needs of NWT businesses and industry.

In addition to establishing the BAC as an advisory body to our government, we are working to build forums, (like the joint special committee of Cabinet and Members of the Legislative Assembly), which will facilitate and improve our responsiveness as a government to future recommendations.

As we further adapt to the reality of our “new normal”, we are looking at what we can do to create a more permanent corporate structure for our government working to address the risks and impacts of COVID-19. Our objective is to provide the clear, more-responsive, coordinated and balanced approach that we will need and that you are requesting regarding our work and planning to Emerge Stronger.

To that end, I can confirm that we have also taken the immediate steps to improve efficiency and timeliness of the Protect NWT unit including securing resources to improve business processes and ensuring better response to the rising number of questions and requests for information that we are receiving.

To the point raised in your news release about returning safely to the workplace; please know that as you prepare to re-establish and conform to new work environments, so are we.

I can confirm that the process has begun to safely transition government employees back into their offices in accordance with advice and recommendations provided by the Chief Public Health Officer.

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Like it has globally, COVID-19 has impacted almost every aspect of our life in our North. Our response has and will continue to include, lessons learned and applied to the business of government and our work with industry and business in our Territory.

We appreciate that NWT residents are eager to recover from COVID-19. We want to know your concerns ongoing and your ideas on what can be done. But the development of a comprehensive recovery plan must also include the investment of both thought and time. COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges at every level of society that will require governments to develop a broad range of new policy and operational responses. Many of these responses will be interconnected and need to be well thought out before they are implemented.

Through it all, our hope and intent is that we – as elected leaders, business owners and residents, chart our course together and with a shared sense of unity and purpose. I look forward to our ongoing discussions and work together.

Sincerely,


Caroline Cochrane
Premier

c. Katrina Nokleby, P.Eng.
Minister
Industry, Tourism and Investment

Ms. Shaleen Woodward
Principal Secretary

Mr. Martin Goldney
Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Pamela Strand
Deputy Minister
Industry Tourism and Investment