**There will be 150 positions for the Secretariat. How many of those positions are being filled by current GNWT staff? How many are new hires?**

Response: We are currently in the process of hiring staff into the Secretariat positions. Positions are being filled by a combination of redeployed existing GNWT staff, new casual hires, and new one-year term hires. All GNWT hiring policies are being followed.

As of October 2, 2020, we have filled 103 of the 150 positions.

45 of the 103 positions (44%) are filled by GNWT staff (reassignment or transfer assignment).

58 of the 103 positions (56%) are filled by new casual or term hires.

**For the positions being filled by current GNWT staff, will departments be looking to fill the now-vacant positions of staff that have transitioned to the Secretariat?**

Response: How each Department backfills behind the reassignment/Transfer Assignment will be up to the department to determine, and will depend on a number of factors including other opportunities to meet the duties (more transfer assignments, overtime, sharing of duties, etc.), urgent nature of the work, etc. Each department is being asked to guarantee the position of the individuals coming into the Secretariat so that employees do not lose indeterminate status by transferring into the Secretariat.

**Can you confirm that the budgeted amount for the Secretariat until March 31, 2021 is $31.7 million?**

Response: Yes, the total expected cost to operate the COVID Secretariat from August 1, 2020 until March 31, 2021 (8 months) is estimated to be $31.7 million. This is the amount that will be sought through a Supplemental Funding Bill during the October session. This represents the amount to operate ProtectNWT, 811, Compliance and Enforcement, highway and airport borders, isolation centres, logistics, non-health PPE, and corporate service functions like policy, administration, communications, finance, etc.

**Where is that $31.7 million coming from? Is any of that funding coming from the federal government? If so, how much and were there ‘rules’ on how the federal funds had to be spent (for example, on something like the Secretariat), or does the GNWT have the flexibility to choose how the funding is spent?**

Response: The GNWT will provide the funding for the Secretariat. Funding will come from funding reserves and new funding sources like the federal government.

The GNWT has obtained some funding from the federal government to respond to COVID. While there is some latitude and any federal funding is the result of negotiations and a related agreement, in general the federal funding does include the activities of the Secretariat, among other items. At present over 50% of the GNWT expenditures on COVID, which includes the Secretariat costs, are expected to be offset by federal revenues. The GNWT continues to look for additional offset opportunities.

**I’m also trying to understand the $87 million cost and the context for the $2.6 million of new money.**

**Is the $87 million the anticipated costs from the onset of the pandemic through to the end of the 2 year term?**

**Is the $2.6 million “new money” in that it’s above and beyond what was originally planned as part of the GNWT’s response through to March 31, 2021?**

Response: When the Secretariat was originally set up, it was projected that the COVID response measures would be required for one to two years. In planning for the worst case scenario we projected the total cost to be $86.1 million for two calendar years (24 months). These projected costs would be spread out over 3 fiscal years, with $31.7 million required in the 2020/21 fiscal year (August 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021).

It is noted that the required response to COVID will change over time, and therefore the projected future costs will also change. The COVID Secretariat will also look for cost saving opportunities.

In messaging for the budgeted amounts, it has been noted that the majority of the costs are to support the existing operational response to COVID, and in fact only $5.2 million of the $86.1 million are considered to be “new” costs – over and above the existing COVID operational response costs. The $5.2 million in new costs is approximately $2.6 million per year. In fact, since this includes some one-time costs to set up office space, the amount of the “new” costs included with the $31.7 million is $2.7 million.

Note that all of the Secretariat costs can be considered to be “new” when compared to pre-COVID expenditures.