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The Honourable Caroline Cochrane
Premier of the Northwest Territories
PO Box 1320
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November 3, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Secretariat Announcement

Dear Premier Cochrane,

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and the 383 Yellowknife businesses we represent, please accept this letter supporting the objectives of the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat.

We hope that the establishment of a temporary organization dedicated to running existing pandemic services will result in improved efficiency, service standards and greater clarity and support for Yellowknife businesses.

We will continue to work with and support the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat by engaging with our membership, learning about the challenges that Yellowknife businesses are facing and recommending solutions. In that spirit, we would like to share some recommendations based on the feedback we have received over the past few months.

Publish an anonymized list of exemptions to the Public Health Orders.

Businesses are frustrated with the lack of clarity around the requirements for receiving approval to vary from the Public Health Order requirements and feel the rules are applied inconsistently.

An anonymized list of approved exemptions (that includes the required COVID-19 mitigation efforts), will provide greater transparency and accountability from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer, while also serving as a valuable resource for businesses who have received exemptions and those who intend to navigate the exemption process.

In partnership with the NWT & NU Construction Association, we have submitted an ATIPP request for “anonymized versions of Chief Public Health Officer decisions granting businesses variances or exemptions to any Public Health Orders, including reasons for these decisions and/or the criteria applied in making these decisions. The time frame for this request begins on March 24th when the GNWT first announced a state of emergency”.

Create and publish response plans for businesses who may have an exposure at their place of business.

While we recognize that notifying the public of exposure risks quickly is critical to containment, if businesses are given reasonable notice when risk of exposure has occurred, they can be a more effective partner in that containment.

The GNWT needs to create and make public planned responses to help businesses navigate unplanned events. Businesses need to understand their responsibilities and the processes for dealing with a risk of exposure at their business before they are notified that a risk of exposure has occurred.

Clarify capacity limits and the required mitigation efforts to host events.

The upcoming holiday season will be critical for the survival of many Yellowknife businesses, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Phase 2 of Emerging Wiselyⁱ permits indoor gatherings of 25 or less as long as physical distancing and other sanitizing and mitigation efforts can occur.

We know that businesses will be looking for new opportunities to cater to larger groups, while complying with all health and safety requirements. Instead of requiring businesses to submit the Application to Vary from Public Health Orders, it would be helpful for the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer to consider what mitigation efforts are essential for approving such events and making that information available to businesses proactively.

Ensure that any new Public Health Orders or amendments to existing Public Health Orders are accompanied by interpretation aids.

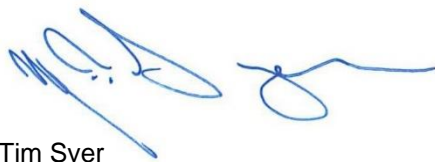
Businesses are looking for greater clarity and additional support to understand and comply with Public Health Orders.

Begin working towards eased restrictions for the City of Yellowknife when there are no cases of COVID-19.

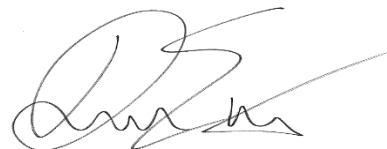
Our members are committed to prioritizing the health and safety of their staff and customers. The consensus among the Yellowknife business community is that strong border restrictions and no cases in the NWT should result in a cautious easing of restrictions.

We intend to engage with our membership further and develop additional recommendations over the coming weeks.

Respectfully,



Tim Syer
President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce



Deneen Everett
Executive Director
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

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¹ GNWT. (2020). *Emerging Wisely*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/services/relaxing-phase-2-next-steps-current-phase>