

PRESS RELEASE:

Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce Recognizes The GNWT's Efforts To Support Yellowknife Businesses During COVID-19 Pandemic

Yellowknife, NT – February 11, 2021 – The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce is celebrating a number of recent policy wins and would like to thank the Government of the Northwest Territories for listening to our recommendations and taking action to support Yellowknife businesses.

In a June 15, 2016 letter, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce began lobbying the GNWT to decrease the small business tax rate to 2% to create a more competitive tax environment. Our lobbying efforts continued with the release of our 2019 Territorial Election platform, *Vote Growth*, where we urged candidates to focus economic initiatives on increasing our population and attracting more business and investment to Yellowknife. We'd like to recognize and thank Minister Caroline Wawzonek for her innovative budgeting approach that allowed the GNWT to reduce revenues by about \$1.7 million to implement this tax reduction.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce established the Business Resilience Working Group. On April 9, 2020 we released our territorial recommendations and asked the GNWT to consider a wage subsidy to support businesses in their efforts to retain staff. We'd like to recognize and thank Minister R.J. Simpson for creating the Labour Market Recovery Wage Subsidy, the Labour Market Recovery Project Fund and the Community Support program.

It's worth noting that the Business Resilience Working Group made 7 policy recommendations to the territorial government and all of them have been accomplished or have seen notable progress.

When the GNWT announced the creation of the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce released a letter supporting its proposed objectives, along with a commitment to work collaboratively with the Secretariat to support Yellowknife businesses. In our November 3, 2020 letter to Premier Cochrane, we made a number of recommendations that have been successfully implemented – from information sheets that provide clarity on Public Health Orders, providing clarity on capacity limits and required mitigation efforts to host events, to creating an information sheet for businesses who may have an exposure risk at their place of business.

We continued our advocacy work by providing a response to the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat's *Self Isolation and our Communities Discussion Paper*, recommending that the GNWT eliminate cost-coverage for isolation centre stays that are a result of personal or discretionary travel. We also lobbied for a competitive RFP process for isolation services, which resulted in 76 Standing Offer Agreements with NWT businesses. We'd like to recognize and thank Premier Cochrane for hearing our concerns and ensuring the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat is providing value to the Yellowknife business community.

"The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce is pleased to recognize the GNWT's efforts to support Yellowknife businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is still work to be done", said President, Tim Syer. "While the Labour Market Recovery Wage Subsidy has been launched, information about the program including eligibility criteria and application forms are still not easily accessible online. Getting this information online and available to businesses needs to be a priority."

"While businesses across Canada have been forced to close for extended periods of time, and communities face lock-down measures, we'd like to recognize that strict border restrictions and self-isolation requirements have prevented Yellowknife from entering a second lock-down. As NWT residents continue



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to be vaccinated, businesses are looking for certainty about the future and are seeking clarity on the circumstances ("if this, then this") in which restrictions will be eased and tourists will be welcomed back into the NWT", continued Syer.

"We look forward to engaging with our membership and providing further recommendations for the GNWT's consideration as we move forward into the economic recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic".

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