



July 16, 2020

Ms. Deneen Everett
Executive Director
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
4921-49 STREET
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 0A2

Dear Ms. Everett:

Supports for Businesses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Thank you for your May 22, 2020 e-mail regarding supports for businesses during the pandemic. It is great to hear that response measures are assisting businesses in dealing with its impacts, and we are pleased to respond to the items you note that relate to the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI).

Regarding the request for the development of a form for requesting extensions to temporary layoffs, ECE has not considered this to date. However, the current process for requesting extensions to temporary layoffs is fairly simple and straightforward. In short, the process requires employers to write or email the Employment Standards Office to request an extension to a temporary layoff, and provide details on:

- The number of employees affected;
- The number of days they are seeking to extend the temporary layoff by; and
- The rationale for the extension.

These requests are then considered by the Employment Standards Officer, whose discretion stems from Section 43 of the *Employment Standards Act* (Act). The Act requires the Officer to be satisfied that special circumstances justify the extension and the employee(s) will be recalled. In considering these requests, the Officer applies a “reasonableness” standard in determining whether they meet the criteria outlined in the Act. I am pleased to note that information on this process has been included on ECE Employment Standards Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page at: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/employment-standards/frequently-asked-questions>.

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We also want to share with you that despite the pandemic, ECE's Employment Standards officials have continued to provide timely responses to employer requests and queries while working remotely, and are available to answer your members' questions on temporary layoffs or other employment matters by telephone at (867) 767-9351 ext. 71469 toll-free at 1 (888) 700-5707, or by email at employment_standards@gov.nt.ca.

Regarding your request for the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to transition the Business Development and Investment Corporation's (BDIC) Working Capital Loans to interest free loans, and to consider creative repayment options, ITI along with the BDIC continues to do the necessary work to assess the feasibility of this. We are pleased to report that the BDIC will be extending its three month Payment Deferral and Reduction initiative until March 31, 2021. This will apply to those who applied for and received low-interest working capital loans. This is a demonstration of our government's commitment to helping our businesses as they make strides towards recovery. Since March 20, 2020, we have committed over \$20 million in offsets and supports specific to Northwest Territories businesses.

Thank you as well for your invitation to your webinar. Our staff would be happy to work with you to make arrangements for that.

Sincerely,



R.J. Simpson
Minister, Education, Culture
and Employment



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

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