



June 17, 2021

Tim Syer, President  
Deneen Everett, Executive Director  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce  
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Dear President and Executive Director:

**The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce's Response to *Emerging Stronger***

Thank you for your June 3, 2021 letter providing comments on the Emerging Stronger Plan. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is continuing to work closely with the sectors of the economy that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. By connecting with industry organizations and businesses to understand their evolving needs, we aim to ensure businesses are positioned to participate in the post-COVID economic recovery.

The GNWT continues to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy by investing in the economic well-being of industry, businesses and entrepreneurs in the NWT. In doing so, we are continuing streamline processes and deliver supports, such as the recently announced Pandemic Relief Extension Program and the Supplement for Tourism Accommodation Relief Program that are assisting in sector relief and recovery from COVID.

As noted in the document, *Emerging Stronger* is a high-level plan intended to focus our efforts and advance ongoing discussion around social and economic recovery. I appreciate the input and suggestions provided by the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and would like to respond to them individually below.

1. *That the GNWT work with Northwestel to support the Yellowknife Fibre Redundancy Project through a combination of financial support and joint efforts to pursue federal funding to make this \$20-\$25 million project a reality.*

The GNWT is committed to continuing to work with NorthwesTel (NWTel) to progress a redundant fibre line to Yellowknife. NWTel has undertaken preliminary studies of a possible route.

The Yellowknife Fibre Redundancy Project is still in early stages; however, both NWTel and GNWT remain in discussions to pursue to project and will be discussing with the federal government for funding support.

- 2. That the GNWT commit to ensuring that Aurora College has the capacity to be fully independent.*

The successful transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university remains on track, with the launch anticipated in May 2025. A recent advancement has been the introduction of legislation that will lay the foundation for a new governance system that brings added capacity to Aurora College and establishes an arm's length relationship with GNWT. The proposed legislative approach follows best practice, with the Minister maintaining a role in ensuring transparency and accountability, while removed from any operational decisions. This is one of over 100 projects underway as part of the transformation process that will strengthen Aurora College and ensure an effective, efficient and sustainable polytechnic university.

The Chamber is invited to monitor the progress of the transformation of Aurora College to a polytechnic university on the transformation website ([ece.gov.nt.ca/aurora-transformation](http://ece.gov.nt.ca/aurora-transformation)), and encouraged to reach out to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) if a meeting to discuss the transformation would be helpful.

- 3. That the GNWT provide better support for people challenging the Trades Entrance Exam, which would support the development of more skilled tradespeople within the NWT.*

The GNWT is committed to supporting the development of more skilled tradespeople in the NWT. In order to enter into an apprenticeship, an applicant must write the Trades Entrance Exam, meet specified high school course requirements, or pass all five Canadian General Development (GED) tests.

Career Development Officers (CDOs) in the ECE Regional Service Centres are available to counsel any client to help them move towards their career/educational goals. CDOs also provide support for individuals interested in writing the Trades Entrance Exam, including support materials to help clients increase their Math, English and Science skills. This material is also available on our website: [ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apprenticeship-and-trades/forms-and-resources](http://ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apprenticeship-and-trades/forms-and-resources).

ECE is also in the process of reviewing the high school trades entrance requirements. Individuals who meet these requirements do not need to write the Trades Entrance Exam. ECE would welcome more conversations with the Chamber about how we can work together to better promote the available supports.

4. *That the GNWT repeal and replace the current Mechanics Lien Act with a new Builders Lien Act.*

The Minister of Justice is currently undertaking the development of modernized builder's lien legislation, as directed in his Mandate letter. The Department of Justice reviewed best practices in other jurisdictions and engaged external stakeholders regarding potential changes by way of an engagement paper, *A Proposed Builders Lien Act for the Northwest Territories*, from June to September 2020. Results from that engagement were captured in a *Highlights of What We Heard* document, which can be found on the Department of Justice's website: [justice.gov.nt.ca/en/public-engagements-and-consultation-packages](https://justice.gov.nt.ca/en/public-engagements-and-consultation-packages).

It is anticipated that the drafting and translation of the legislation would begin this summer, and that it would be introduced during the winter 2022 sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

5. *That the GNWT pursue all federal funding opportunities to support critical infrastructure projects including the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion Project, Slave Geological Province Corridor and Grays Bay Road and Port Project.*

Transformative and strategic infrastructure projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway (MVH) project, the Slave Geological Province Corridor (SGPC) and the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion project will play a significant role in the economic recovery of the NWT from the effects of COVID-19. The GNWT is committed to establishing collaborative partnerships with Indigenous governments, private organizations and the federal government, to secure funding for large infrastructure projects.

The GNWT has secured \$20 million under Infrastructure Canada's Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan for the construction of the Prohibition Creek Access Road, in addition to \$140 million under Transport Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund (NTCF), to advance the environmental assessment (EA) and planning studies for the MVH (as well as the construction of the Great Bear River Bridge and the Mount Gaudet Access Road). An additional \$40 million in funding under the NTCF has been secured to advance EA and planning for the SGPC project.

The federal government has allocated \$18 million to the NWT to advance the Taltson Expansion Project beyond the feasibility stage. This funding is being used to develop Indigenous partnerships, and undertake planning, regulatory, and feasibility work. As this critical work advances, it will inform future dialogue with Canada, as additional federal investment will be critical to these projects advancing to construction.

While the potential exists for the Grays Bay Road and Port (GBRP) project to connect to the SGPC, funding for construction of the GBRP would need to be secured by the project champions (the Government of Nunavut and the Kitikmeot Inuit Association).

Thank you again for your input, and I look forward to more constructive dialogue between the GNWT and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce as we plan the NWT's social and economic recovery together.

  
Caroline Cochrane  
Premier

- c. Honourable Caroline Wawzonek  
Minister, Industry, Tourism and Investment