



MEETING AOC 137-19-21

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT**

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**FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 2021**

**COMMITTEE ROOM A, LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**3:00 P.M**

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**AGENDA**

1. Prayer
2. Review and Adoption of Agenda
3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
4. Public Matters
  - a) Emerging Stronger with the Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Premier.
5. In Camera Matters
  - a) Wrap-up discussion
6. Date and Time of Next Meeting: At the call of the chair.
7. Adjournment



# Emerging Stronger

## *Planning the NWT's Social and Economic Recovery Together*

Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Public Briefing

June 25, 2021

# Overview

AOC-137-007

- Foundations of Recovery – *Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories*
- Immediate Response to the Pandemic
- Early Social and Economic Impacts
- Initial Lessons Learned
- Next Steps

# Foundations of Recovery<sup>AOC-137-008</sup>

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- The *Mandate* is built on social and economic priorities identified by all Members of the Legislative Assembly
- Progress on the Mandate will support recovery
- *Emerging Stronger* identifies actions to be undertaken in addition to, and in support of work on the Mandate

# Immediate Response to the Pandemic AOC-137-009

- The GNWT:
  - acted quickly to make social and economic supports available
  - worked with business, industry, Indigenous governments, community governments and NGOs to provide necessary services
  - continues to work with the federal government to secure resources to respond to the impact of the pandemic, and with the CPHO to help guide recovery

# Early Economic and Social Impacts

AOC-137-010

- Prior to the pandemic, the NWT economy was in decline and social needs were already apparent
- Tourism, aviation and mineral sectors remain hard-hit
- We saw the impact of business closures and loss of employment on residents' ability to meet basic needs
- Immediate need for increased mental health and addictions services

# Initial Lessons Learned

AOC-137-011

- Respond to challenges in an efficient, coordinated and evidence-based way
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous and community governments and NGOs
- Advance emergency response based on lessons learned
- Improve broadband infrastructure for fast and reliable internet services
- Meet the needs of vulnerable populations
- Improve services and expand equitable access to care
- Provide accessible, quality education and training
- Work-force development within infrastructure projects
- Ensure GNWT capital planning supports equitable opportunities and climate resiliency
- Support the hardest hit sectors
- Better support businesses
- Expand and diversify the economy

# Respond to challenges in an efficient, coordinated and evidence-based way

AOC-187-019

The response to the pandemic demonstrated that the GNWT can act quickly and decisively. Using the crisis caused by the pandemic, the GNWT will:

- Build a better foundation for more responsible fiscal policy.
- Report quarterly on a range of social and economic indicators
- Improve data collection and reporting to better inform decision-making and program delivery, and provide information to residents on the performance of government programs.



# Partner with Indigenous and community gov'ts and NGOs

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AGC-137-013

Community partners deliver childcare, early childhood education, disability and long-term care; on the land programs, and emergency response.

The GNWT will:

- Establish an external advisory table to focus on strengthening the not-for-profit sector
- Continue direct engagement with Indigenous governments to promote greater collaboration

# Advance emergency response based on lessons learned

AOS 137-014

The rapid deployment of supports in the early stage of the pandemic demonstrated the potential that exists for deepening partnerships with and within the community sector going forward. The GNWT will:

- Conduct after-action reviews and other system improvement initiatives, including for the COVID-19 Incident Management Team
- Work with community governments to update plans and templates to include emergency sheltering and pandemic response needs

# Improve Broadband Infrastructure AOC-137-015

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The pandemic demonstrated that access to quality, affordable internet and devices is critical and confirmed the wide gaps that exist in digital connectivity throughout the NWT. The GNWT will:

- Continue to press for federal policy changes to ensure applications for investment recognize the NWT's challenges.
- Urge the CRTC to take action to improve the affordability and reliability of internet services in the NWT

# Meet the Needs of Vulnerable Populations

AOC 137-016

The pandemic pushed the GNWT to act quickly and decisively in the areas of income assistance, sheltering, housing and harm reduction as it relates to addictions. The GNWT will:

- Improve the Income Assistance program to ensure it is meeting the basic needs of residents
- Accelerate work on integrated service delivery
- Create an NWT approach to managed alcohol, accelerate work on the Alcohol Strategy and review the regulatory changes introduced during the pandemic
- Work with partners to address longer-term funding needs for shelters

# Improve Services and Expand Equitable Access to Care

AOC-137-017

Due to the pandemic the health and social services system is better prepared to support virtual care options. The GNWT will:

- Plan and implement a new Electronic Medical Record system, including scoping options for improving the ability of patients to access information from their health record and providers
- Accelerate efforts to offer sustainable virtual care solutions to NWT residents and explore potential for future capabilities to share information between providers and patients

# Provide Accessible, Quality Education and Training

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ACC-137-018

Disruption of education and daycare services reinforced the crucial role of early learning, childcare and education in child and family wellbeing, parents' and guardians' ability to report to work, and the development of the NWT workforce. The GNWT will:

- Continue to provide post-secondary students with increased funding in the 2021-22 school year
- Review the Student Financial Assistance program to ensure benefits are supporting students to achieve their post-secondary goals
- Expand online course offerings at Aurora College
- Expand and enhance AC teaching and research facilities
- Transform Aurora College into a polytechnic university
- Defer or make optional large scale student assessments

# Integrate Work-force Development within Infrastructure Projects

AOC-137-019

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The GNWT has the opportunity to support workforce development through its infrastructure investments.

The GNWT will:

- Work with Indigenous governments, communities and businesses to improve training investments and career pathways
- Provide regional-based Career and Education Advisor supports to grade 9-12 students
- Invest in apprenticeships through the NWT Housing Corporation and the Department of Infrastructure

# Ensure Capital Planning Supports Equitable Opportunities and Climate Resiliency

Contract opportunities could be better distributed to create more equitable levels of activity across regions and stimulate the economy. The GNWT will:

- Accelerate the review of GNWT procurement policies including the *Business Incentive Policy*, the *Negotiated Contracts Policy*, and consider developing an Indigenous procurement policy
- Invite Indigenous governments and businesses to be involved as equity partners in key strategic investments



# Support the Hardest-Hit Sectors

ABC-127-021

Tourism and other industries reliant on in-person customers and social contact have experienced the steepest impacts of the pandemic and may be the slowest to recover. The GNWT will:

- Assist the tourism, aviation, construction, hospitality and mining sectors and seek to position for survival and rebound
- Work with the NWT Tourism to reestablish positive public sentiment towards travellers entering communities
- Invest on marketing to Canadian domestic travellers
- Work with NWTT to provide clear communication on public health criteria that will drive changes in travel restrictions and allow operators to position themselves for rebound

# Better Support Businesses AOC-137-022

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The pandemic highlighted the need to better connect business to support programs as they become available, and remove regulatory burdens to encourage entrepreneurship.

The GNWT will:

- Better align business support programs, and further examine existing roles, resources and support
- Examine existing contribution programs to ensure priority on northern benefit and investment
- Accelerate work underway to reduce red-tape
- Enhance BDIC financial programs and expand investment options in response to changing needs of NWT businesses and advance legislative amendments and improving operational processes.

# Expand and Diversify the Economy AOC-137-023

The pandemic emphasized the disparities between public and private sectors and further underscored the need for economic development and diversification. The GNWT will:

- Find ways to move proposed mining projects into the production phase with community support
- Work with Canada and Indigenous governments to prioritize and implement remediation projects
- Assess potential for development of a ‘remediation economy’
- Facilitate prospecting/exploration in areas of high mineral potential
- Work with the Conference Board of Canada to update the *NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment* to 2035
- Renew and implement the *Skills 4 Success Action Plan*
- Launch economic diversification strategies for agriculture, arts and film

# Next Steps

- Recognize that the pandemic is an ongoing global public health crisis that may require evolving approaches
- Continue to engage partners who have already engaged and seek additional feedback
- Monitor and report publicly on key social and economic indicators
- Take action based on fiscal responsibility and proven effectiveness