

**THE HONOURABLE DIANE ARCHIE
MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

Contracts for Work Related to Taltson Hydro Expansion

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Frame Lake on June 3, 2022, regarding contracts for work related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion.

A request was made to provide details of all the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion project, including studies on submarine transmission lines, from April 1, 2020 to June 3, 2022, indicating whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the *Business Incentive Policy*. There was an additional question about planned actions to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the project.

The Member for Frame Lake previously raised a similar question on June 10, 2020 regarding contracts for work related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories between September 1, 2015 and September 1, 2020. A response was provided and a detailed list of contracts was tabled in this house on October 15, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member's first two questions, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the detailed list of the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydro Expansion project, including whether the contractors' *Business Incentive Policy* status received any consideration in the evaluation of the proposals or bids.

Through the public procurement process, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports territorial and local content through the application of the *Business Incentive Policy*. To date, contracts

entered into for the Taltson Hydro Expansion project have been specialized and technical in nature. The *Business Incentive Policy* was applied in each competitive contract evaluation. Sole source contracts and contribution agreements do not include the *Business Incentive Policy* as part of the selection process.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the method of procurement taken for each specific project activity, the Government of the Northwest Territories strives to maximize the benefits to local residents and businesses from the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project. You may recall our Government-established contribution agreements with the Arctic Research Foundation to complete specialized studies on Great Slave Lake. These studies have provided a wealth of hydrographic data, including detailed mapping, soil sampling and lake-bottom profiling. The Arctic Research Foundation's work was supported by local equipment, labour, guides, and boat crews, and was used as an opportunity to host local and Indigenous youth through the Northern Youth Leadership Program to develop leadership and life skills. Over a period of two seasons of work, the Arctic Research Foundation spent 900,000 dollars on northern content. This work, along with a number of transmission line engineering studies, has been critical to enable the project working group to confirm technically viable transmission line corridors for the project.

Regarding the Member's third question, the Government of the Northwest Territories has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations and the Northwest Territory Métis Nation to advance the project together. The Salt River First Nation was an original signatory to the MOU but has since made the decision to withdraw. It is hoped that a mutually acceptable path forward will be established in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the MOU would allow the parties to work together to ensure northern employment, training and business opportunities are maximized by using a collaborative approach to project

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development. Indigenous governments have, over the last two years, collectively received 720,000 dollars in funding to support their participation on a project Working Group and Steering Committee with local and Indigenous benefits at the forefront of the discussion.

The Steering Committee has recently directed specific priorities be investigated, such as electric heat studies in the South Slave Region, as well as a literature review of the legacy impacts of the original Taltson Hydro facilities be completed. The GNWT has multi-year agreements with MOU signatories that will ensure funding for ongoing engagement and participation in the annual amount of 1.93 million dollars. Most of that funding will support Indigenous and community led participation in the project.

As has been stated previously, much of the work completed for the Taltson Hydro expansion to date has been technical, as it has focused on examining the viability of four potential transmission line routes either across or around Great Slave Lake. We have narrowed the list of technically viable transmission corridors down to two and we are pleased to be moving beyond technical design and towards partner and community engagement on local land use, Indigenous knowledge gathering, and baseline fieldwork that will form the basis of regulatory applications. As we continue to move the project forward beyond technical considerations, the skill sets required are broadening. The Taltson Hydro Expansion project is expected to provide more opportunities for northerners to shape the project footprint and leverage northern involvement and expertise to improve outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that the benefits flow to Northwest Territories residents and businesses through the ongoing work to expand Taltson is an important consideration as we continue to advance the project. It will be several years before this project advances to a final construction decision. In the meantime, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be working with Indigenous partners to undertake studies, complete planning and regulatory work, and hold public community engagement sessions to support participation and maximum benefits for residents and businesses in this long term, transformational opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.