



OFFICE OF THE GRAND CHIEF

DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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January 8, 2021

The Honourable Caroline Cochrane
Premier of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9
Caroline_cochrane@gov.nt.ca

Dear Premier,

Re: GNWT Officials Travel for Non-Essential Purposes

In the Northwest Territories, we are blessed that the Covid-19 pandemic has had minor impacts to date compared to other jurisdictions. Residents have heeded the advice of your office and the Chief Public Health Officer to not travel for non-essential purposes and to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Prior to the winter holiday season, your office, and the Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Kami Kandola requested that residents stay home and not travel South; especially over the Christmas holidays, to mitigate a surge in COVID-19 cases.

This week, I learned through the media that prior to the Christmas holidays both Cabinet and ordinary members of the Legislative Assembly travelled out of the NWT. During the Christmas holiday period, several senior officials in your government also travelled south for personal holidays. This news is concerning because we heard it from media rather than your offices. It would be important for you to provide a public report on those who travelled, the reason for travel, whether it was deemed essential or non-essential and whether their travel was authorized and by whom.

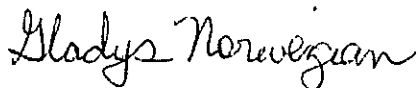
This news that the Deputy Minister of Health and the newly appointed head of the COVID-19 secretariat travelled south for Christmas is especially disturbing as the Department of Health and Social Services which they work for has the frontline responsibility to help keep northerners safe from COVID-19. NWT residents in the Dehcho Region, as in all other NWT regions, had to change their plans and be alone during the holidays in support of the GNWT request to stay home and help keep our territory safe. There is a clear distinction between the way they observe the guidelines compared to the two top senior officials in charge of the COVID-19 measures and compared to those identified Cabinet and caucus members who also travelled south over the last few months.

I have received several calls from my regions' leadership questioning the example set forth by you in accepting that these officials your government's elected representatives and your senior officials. On behalf of our Dehcho leaders, I ask how you, as Premier, will hold them accountable for their personal decisions to travel outside of their province prior to and during the Christmas holidays.

Furthermore, I ask that you put strict policy in place for GNWT elected members and staff that hold them to the policies to which all NWT residents are subject regarding measures like travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. This travel scandal has reached far into the hearts of our people and has highlighted entitlement that wreaks of colonialism and has engendered a lack of trust between the public and government.

I look forward to hearing from you about these matters so that we can regain trust in your government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gladys Norwegian".

Gladys Norwegian
Dehcho Grand Chief

Cc Dehcho Leadership
Minister of ENR, Shane Thompson
Regular MLAs