

Government of  
Northwest Territories

May 30, 2023

RONALD BONNETROUGE  
MLA, DEH CHO**Oral Question 1461-19(2) Northwest Territories/Alberta Transboundary Water Agreement**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on March 9, 2023, regarding the oilsands tailings pond leak at the Alberta tar sands projects. During our exchange, I committed to inviting the Alberta Premier to come meet with the Council of Leaders, the Indigenous governments of the Northwest Territories (NWT), if Minister Stephen Guilbeault does not achieve a proper resolution.

On March 1, 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) was advised by an Indigenous Government about the recent tailings pond leak south of the NWT Border. The GNWT is of the view that the Government of Alberta was required under the Alberta-NWT Bilateral Transboundary Water Management Agreement to notify the GNWT of the seepage and spill as early as practicable. As a result, the GNWT has initiated a formal dispute resolution process under the Bilateral Agreement.

On March 16, 2023, the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change sent a letter to the Alberta Minister of Environment and Protected Areas suggesting the establishment of a joint Federal-Provincial-Indigenous working group to discuss notification mechanisms and remediation for oil sands spills or seepages, including the most recent oil sands tailings pond leak. GNWT's Minister of Environment and Climate Change wrote to the federal Minister requesting that our Government and the NWT's Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations be included in the working group. The Federal Government has established the Notification and Monitoring Working Group and will include a GNWT representative and the Indigenous Government representative of the Alberta-NWT Transboundary Agreement Bilateral Management Committee.

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On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 I met personally with Minister Guilbeault and reinforced the importance of active participation of both the GNWT and Indigenous governments on committees that monitor the impacts of the oil sands on our waterways.

Once we have clarity on where the GNWT and Indigenous governments will have representation and the Alberta election is complete, we can then further discuss inviting the Alberta Premier to meet with the GNWT and Indigenous government leaders.

I also note that on May 4, 2023, following an initial inspection of the spilling from the Kearn Oil Sands Site, Environment and Climate Change Canada Enforcement has opened an investigation into a suspected contravention of the *Fisheries Act*. This process will also need to be taken into consideration, prior to inviting the Alberta Premier to discuss this issue.



Caroline Cochrane

Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs