

Government of
Northwest Territories

June 26, 2023

FRIEDA MARTSELOS
MLA, THEBACHA**Oral Question 1340-19(2) Indigenous Employment Policy**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on February 10, 2023, regarding the proposed Indigenous Employment Policy and the Employment Equity Policy. During our exchange, I offered to review these two policies with Members of the Legislative Assembly, via briefing, prior to their finalization. I also acknowledged I would share the feedback received from relevant stakeholders with regards to the proposal of the two new policies and the feedback received.

The briefing scheduled with Members of the Legislative Assembly on May 29, 2023 was cancelled but has since been rescheduled for June 19, 2023. I am pleased that I had an opportunity to provide a fulsome update to committee on what we heard through the engagement process.

During the October 2020 session of the 19th Legislative Assembly, Premier Cochrane committed to reviewing the *Affirmative Action* policy during the term of the 19th Legislative Assembly which resulted in the Department of Finance undertaking a jurisdictional comparison on hiring policies across Canada. I am pleased to inform you that significant progress has been made since in this regard.

In response to Cabinet's direction in August 2022, the Department of Finance has worked diligently to review the Affirmative Action Policy 15.04 and seek feedback on replacing it with two new policies: the Indigenous Employment Policy and the Employment Equity Policy. It was initially envisioned two policies would meet the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT's) goals to foster a representative workplace within the GNWT, with the Indigenous Employment Policy taking priority over the Employment Equity Policy.

To ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach, the Department of Finance has actively engaged with various stakeholders. This engagement process includes Indigenous Governments, the public, and internal consultations within the GNWT. Community engagement sessions also took place in February and March 2023.

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To solicit feedback and participation, letters were sent in October 2022 to Indigenous leaders and Members of the Legislative Assembly, inviting their valuable input on the approach. Furthermore, on December 13, 2022, a presentation was delivered to the NWT Council of Leaders Secretariat to encourage their engagement.

The Department of Finance has also actively sought feedback from various communities, where written feedback on the policy review was received from the Délı̄nę government on January 17, 2023. Additionally, an engagement session with the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated took place on January 31, 2023. Moreover, an engagement session with the Indigenous Employee Advisory Committee (IEAC) was held on February 3, 2023 and with the GNWT Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (GACDI) on April 3, 2023.

Recognizing the importance of public participation, representatives from the Department of Finance visited nine (9) communities, conducting a total of 17 in-person and online public engagement sessions. Furthermore, an online survey was launched, which received an impressive 540 responses from Northwest Territories (NWT) residents.

To provide employees with a platform to voice their thoughts, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance hosted a virtual employee Town Hall on April 24, 2023. This event focused on the new policies and attracted more than 100 attendees.

With these comprehensive engagement efforts, the Department of Finance is now drafting a What We Heard Report that will reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the NWT community. By involving key stakeholders and actively seeking feedback, the Department of Finance is committed to developing policies that promote inclusivity, representation, and equality within the GNWT.

Thank you.



Caroline Wawzonek
Minister of Finance

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