



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 17-20(1):  
Response to Tabled Document 27-20(1): Petition for Public Inquiry into  
the Hay-River-Enterprise-Kakisa Wildfire**

**Motion**

THEREFORE I MOVE, that the that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to Tabled Document 27-20(1) – a petition signed by 1,077 persons, including 396 residents of the Northwest Territories - and table it in this House within 120 days.

**GNWT Response**

The 2023 wildfire season was unprecedented and required swift action by territorial and community governments in a quickly evolving situation. The Government of the Northwest Territories acknowledges the interest in understanding the roles and actions of territorial and community governments during the 2023 wildfire evacuations in several NWT communities.

In the NWT, an After-Action Review is always conducted after a major disaster event to identify lessons learned and improve responses to future events. The GNWT is conducting two After Action Reviews (AAR) as a result of the 2023 wildfire season: the wildfire response AAR led by Environment and Climate Change (ECC) and the emergency response AAR led by Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA). The GNWT has elected to hire independent third-party contractors to conduct both reviews at an arm's length from the government. Municipal governments also conduct their own distinct After-Action Reviews after an emergency event.

The wildfire response AAR is focused on several key aspects that are expected to provide more information on some areas of interest noted in Tabled Document 27-20(1) calling for a public inquiry, including:

- An evaluation of the effectiveness of ECC's preparedness and response to the 2023 wildfire season;
- Observations, conclusions and key recommendations to assist the GNWT in improving the effectiveness of its wildfire management program for future wildfire seasons; and
- A detailed review of actions taken on two specific wildfires, the Behchokò/Yellowknife and Enterprise/Hay River fires to identify potential issues and opportunities for improvement.

The emergency response AAR will include a thorough information gathering and engagement approach and will focus on:

- Risk monitoring and assessment;
- Emergency preparedness activities;
- Response activities (evacuations, transportation, hosting etc);
- Operational and public communications; and
- Transition to recovery

Each of these areas will be assessed from the perspective of community governments, local, regional and territorial emergency management organizations, Indigenous governments, non-government organizations and the public. All communities that were evacuated in 2023 will be part of this analysis and will be engaged directly.

Tabled Document 27-20(1) requests a public inquiry to investigate aspects of the 2023 season that intersects with both wildfire response and emergency response. It is expected that the information gathered independently from the two territorial After-Action Reviews will be thorough and will include many lessons learned, including opportunities to improve emergency preparedness across the territory.

The interests expressed in Tabled Document 27-20(1) and the feedback and findings of the territorial After Action Reviews will be carefully considered as Executive Council reflects on the request for a public inquiry.