



Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 31-20(1): Cross-Border Crime Reduction Forum

Motion

MLA Testart moved Motion 31-20(1): *Cross-Border Crime Reduction Forum*. The Motion was adopted in the Legislative Assembly on June 6, 2024.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Mackenzie Delta, that the Government of the Northwest Territories initiate a cross-border crime reduction forum that would involve the Governments of the Northwest Territories, Canada, Yukon, Alberta and British Columbia;

AND FURTHER, the focus of a cross-border forum will increase the response to violence and drug trafficking in rural and remote communities;

AND FURTHERMORE, the focus of the cross-border forum improve efforts to disrupt the illicit drug network, and drug-related crime and violence in Northwest Territories communities;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

GNWT Response

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is concerned by the increasing illicit drug trade and subsequent drug use, property crime, and violent crime in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Illicit drugs in the NWT generally originate from the southern provinces or abroad and are brought into the NWT by criminal elements operating from southern Canada.

Work is underway to address this increase in crime, including the establishment of a Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) within the RCMP's "G" Division in the NWT. The CRU is mandated to conduct drug and alcohol enforcement and assist with violent crime investigations related to organized crime and the drug trade. The CRU will support "G" Division's drug and crime reduction strategies and will place an emphasis on the disruption of illicit drug activities, such as the movement of illegal substances on road networks and at airports.

In addition, the RCMP's "G" Division engages with their counterparts across Canada to gather and share intelligence amongst provinces and territories on violent and organized crime that may impact the NWT, with a focus on critical threats such as drug trafficking. This engagement is especially strong with "K" Division RCMP, who are responsible for policing services in much of Alberta and provide support to the "G" Division for various policing activities.

The GNWT is currently involved in multiple federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) groups related to crime, crime reduction strategies, and policing. The GNWT also participates in interprovincial and bilateral arrangements at multiple levels to develop and implement crime reduction strategies and initiatives. High-level meetings occur between FPT Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and Assistant Deputy Ministers to discuss these issues. The most recent meeting of the FPT Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety included discussion items on illicit substances, including strategic approaches on opioids, Indigenous justice strategies, and contract policing. The next meeting of FPT Ministers is being co-chaired by the NWT in October 2024 and is being held in Yellowknife.

Department officials within the GNWT are also regularly engaging with their counterparts across jurisdictions to exchange information about criminal justice and policing. There are multiple official level working groups which exchange national and jurisdiction-specific data related to violence and drug related crime. Promising new practices and methods of coordination to address these issues are often discussed and developed within these working groups. As part of the GNWT's ongoing mandate commitment to public safety, particularly relating to drug trafficking and criminal activity, the GNWT will also be undertaking an analysis to understand the potential implications that a *Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act* could have in the NWT.

In conclusion, the creation of an additional forum to address cross-border crime reduction would likely duplicate existing interjurisdictional efforts and information-sharing platforms already in place to address violence and drug related crime. The GNWT will continue to work with our FPT partners to address crime reduction and will prioritize the GNWT's mandate to promote the safety of residents and communities in the NWT.