



September 27, 2024

SHERYL YAKELEYA
MLA, DEHCHO**Oral Question 256-20(1): Nutrition North Program**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on June 24, 2024, the Nutrition North Program.

Nutrition North Canada works closely with its Advisory Board, Indigenous Working Group, and the newly established Inuit-Crown Food Security Working Group to find ways to refine programs and support food security. Indigenous Working Group members include a representative from the Dene Nation, the Sahtu Dene Council and the Tłıchǵ Government. Canada has also appointed two additional advisory board members from the NWT, including the chair, Nellie Cournoyea.

To be eligible for the Nutrition North Canada subsidy, a community must:

- be considered isolated and lack year-round surface transportation, excluding isolation caused by freeze-up and break-up that normally lasts more than 4 weeks at a time.
- meet the territorial or provincial definition of a northern community.
- have an airport, post office, or grocery store.
- have a year-round population according to the national census.

With this eligibility criteria in mind, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has advocated for the including of additional NWT communities, and in May 2021, Tsiigehtchic was added by Nutrition North Canada. In September 2023, the GNWT recommended a number of changes to the Nutrition North Program to address the impacts of climate change, such as wildfires and low water levels, that impact the ability and cost of transporting food to all NWT communities. If accepted, this recommendation might benefit all NWT communities impacted by climate change.

Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) has advised the GNWT that the Nutrition North Program is going through an internal review as part of its regular, five-year internal review/evaluation process. CIRNAC advised that the internal review process is expected to be complete in the Summer of 2025.

The GNWT offers a number of food security related programs that Indigenous governments in Fort Providence, Kakisa, and K'atl'odeeche First Nation may wish to apply to for funding. The Anti-Poverty Fund has distributed significant financial assistance to many Indigenous governments across the NWT, the Community Harvester Assistance Program, NWT On the Land Collaborative, and Take a Family on the Land are just three of the programs offered through the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

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The Healthy Choices Fund supports local food initiatives, while community-based projects like meal programs receive funding from the Small Community Homelessness Fund. Schools and education bodies also receive support to provide healthy meals, and Indigenous governments can use Community Wellness Initiatives to strengthen food security and can also access funds from partners such as Canadian Feed the Children for distribution to schools.

There are other opportunities to partner with Indigenous leadership to address food security in the NWT. For instance, the Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (ITI) administers the Northern Food Development Program, to increase local food production, and Agri-food Funding, in partnership with the federal government.

Discussions among the NWT Council of Leaders have included impacts on the supply chain and barge cancellations, which have had an impact on availability and cost of food in many NWT communities. The GNWT takes a broad approach to food security, and transportation is one of many factors it is working to address. To address the many other factors, the GNWT invites Indigenous leaders to explore all our food security programs. Our staff stand ready to answer any questions they may have and work with them to advance funding proposals.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

R.J. Simpson
Premier

c: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning