



Government of
Northwest Territories

September 09, 2024

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MLA, TU NEDHÉ-WIILIDEH

Oral Question 266-20(1) Burial Sites in Taltson River Area

This letter is in response to your Oral Question of June 07, 2024, and my commitment to provide you with an up-to-date list of the work being conducted by the groups involved in the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project.

To address your question, I want to start by sharing that the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving the Akaitcho Dene First Nations, the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). Strategic direction for the project is provided by the Taltson Steering Committee, which includes Akaitcho Dene First Nations Chiefs, Northwest Territory Métis Nation Presidents, and GNWT Ministers of Finance and Infrastructure. The Steering Committee formed a Technical Working Group, which consists of professional advisors, technical representatives, employees or members designated by each of the parties, who are most appropriate to deal with the issues that are likely to arise under the project.

This project is a collaborative effort and we are dedicated to collaborating with Indigenous governments to address legacy issues, ensuring a shared future through cooperative governance that strengthens our relationships and advances mutual priorities.

The GNWT, Akaitcho Dene First Nation and Northwest Territory Métis Nation agree the project will not proceed without addressing the legacy impacts of the existing Taltson facility. The Steering Committee gathered publicly available information regarding the legacy impacts of the existing Taltson facility and directed that a Taltson Legacy Impacts Report be compiled. This report included information on burial sites and was finalized in May 2023, with input from the MOU Indigenous partners. Currently, discussions are ongoing between Indigenous governments, Canada, and the GNWT to address these issues. Resolving these legacy issues is essential for the project's progress. Working Group representatives met with Government of Canada officials in May 2024 to discuss the way forward.

The GNWT has committed \$1.2 million annually to support the participation of the signatories to the Taltson MOU. The Technical Working Group includes representation from each of the Indigenous partners and meets monthly. Currently, three primary workstreams are being pursued:

- Work to advance the legacy impacts through discussions with Canada.
- Information gathering on selecting a preferred transmission line route for the project that will form the basis of a regulatory application.
- Completion of the business case for the Taltson Hydro Expansion Project and advancement of commercial agreements between the parties.

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These workstreams have been supported and in some cases led by Indigenous membership. We have participated in multiple member and leadership discussions in Dettah, Ndilo, Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, Hay River and Lutselk'e over the last number of years. This has resulted in field visits and site tours to define options and share what is important to Indigenous partners in shaping the project footprint. Examples of recent partner collaboration include:

- Field visits to investigate winter road options for construction access to Nonacho Lake (May 2024).
- Site visit to submarine cable installation and Ruskin Hydro Facility in Vancouver, B.C. (February 2024).
- Site visit to Taltson power hydro plant and South Valley spillway (July 2023).
- Field visits to investigate transmission line routing options through and around Wood Buffalo National Park and across Great Slave Lake (October 2022).
- Field visits to investigate lake entry points and overhead/submarine transmission line routing west of Taltson Bay (October 2021).
- Great Slave Lake bathymetry, also known as lake bottom mapping, to consider submarine cable routing options (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020).

Project partners have also led contracted services to study the use of electric heat in the South Slave region, updates to a regulatory roadmap for the project, and a study of land tenure along potential transmission line routes.

To ensure effective information sharing and capacity building with Indigenous partners, we have held multiple Steering Committee meetings and briefed partner leadership and membership. Contribution funding has been provided to Indigenous governments, empowering them to participate actively in the project, conduct site investigations, and lead engagement and Indigenous Knowledge initiatives.



Caroline Wawzonek
Minister, Infrastructure

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Principal Secretary
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