

August 31, 2020

19th Legislative Assembly
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT
Delivered via email

RE: Key Challenges as identified by Business Advisory Committee

Dear Caucus of the 19th Legislative Assembly,

On behalf of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), we would like to provide an update on the work we are doing, to the Member of the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Over the course of weekly meetings since June, we have refined a list of 12 Key Challenges facing all businesses throughout the NWT regardless of size, sector, and ownership. We are constantly assessing these 12 Key Challenges in three categories: short term, medium-term, and long term based on urgency and need. As the COVID pandemic has evolved, we have re-assessed several of these challenges.

In the attached document, we have provided the top 5 Key Challenges that the BAC believes require the most urgent response from the GNWT. The BAC would like Members of Legislative Assembly to know that BAC is comprised of volunteers from the business community who have committed considerable time and effort to our work. We hope that this information can help inform you on the effects of the COVID pandemic on Northern and Indigenous businesses and for you to know that the NWT business community stands ready to be partners in charting a course through this pandemic.

Because the COVID pandemic continues to evolve, this is much a living document, for the BAC and we will be working to provide a similar summary of all 12 Key Challenges we can provide to the Legislative Assembly and release to the public.

We look forward to working with all of you and the forward-moving momentum that both BAC and the 19th Legislative Assembly genuinely desire to grow the NWT economy.

Sincerely,

Jenni Bruce
President NWT Chamber
Co-Chair Business Advisory Council

Paul Gruner
President & CEO Det'on Cho Corporation
Co-Chair Business Advisory Council

NWT Business Advisory Council (BAC) Key Challenges Summary
Updated August 28, 2020

Challenge Identified		Notes and Recommendations
1	Government procurement needs to play a greater role in economic recovery to ensure that more procurement dollars stay in the North.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Government of the Northwest Territories procurement policies prioritize Indigenous and Northwest Territories businesses. • GNWT's procurement policies should focus on rewarding Indigenous and NWT businesses that best retain value in the North and prevent leakage of procurement dollars to other jurisdictions including those businesses which may not be eligible for the Business Incentive Program but who have large resident workforces. • Businesses need more notice of which capital projects are coming from the GNWT so there is time to prepare resources and bids. • GNWT should provide notice if and when there will be reductions in capital spending due to COVID. • GNWT needs to devise a process to measure Northern Indigenous participation in procurement and to set targets in order to increase this participation. • Mining remediation and reclamation have the opportunity to benefit all business sectors in the NWT.
2	GNWT's, and in particular Protect NWT's, communication and response times have been negatively impacted with employees working from home. Communication has been lacking and inconsistent about what businesses need to do to safely re-open and how to remain open safely. Application review times made under the Protect NWT have also been slow and cause delays for businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning to the office should be an opportunity for the GNWT to lead the way on getting back to work and showing the rest of the NWT how to do so safely and effectively. • When employees are in the offices, they are out of their houses, spending money in their community. • There is information missing for owner/operators without employees on how to re-open safely from WSCC. • Health Enforcement Officers may be well positioned to provide on-site business re-opening guidance as businesses need assistance with what is needed to re-open. • Given its response times and the inconsistency in responses, it appears that increased staffing to Protect NWT and 811 Hotline would produce clearer information about who can get an exemption and how.

3	The lack of rapid testing in the NWT and mandatory 14 day isolation is causing negative economic impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GNWT is paying a lot of money to have people self-isolate when that money could be going towards rapid testing, which would subsequently both aid the workforce and potentially promote more entry (tourism) into the territory from other Canadian residents. Businesses are experiencing issues with individual employees having to isolate because another member of the household is undergoing testing. That employee is not able to go to work until test results have been received.
4	Border restrictions and self-isolation periods are causing significant revenue declines for some sectors including tourism, aviation, and mining exploration and are hurting owner/operator's ability to work effectively and compete on contracts in other jurisdictions. The Border re-opening criteria is also unclear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow certain economic sectors/businesses exemptions from the self-isolation period and allow self-monitoring/other safety precautions in lieu. Ensure decision making by the GNWT is balanced and takes into consideration both health and economic impacts. More messaging about the economic impact of closed borders in the NWT should be made public. Individual plans for each NWT community to re-open to outside travelers should be considered, given proper community engagement. Clear information is needed on what number of COVID cases in the NWT would trigger what containment measures or returns to previous phases.
5	Indigenous communities and businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GNWT has not yet established the "sister" Councils to the BAC (i.e., the Indigenous Council and the Health and Social sector Council)