

Business Advisory Council Update to GNWT Executive Council

June 14, 2020

RE: Regular update and recommendations from the NWT Business Advisory Council (BAC)

To: Minister Nokleyby

On behalf of the Business Advisory Council (BAC), we would like to express our appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations to the Minister of ITI, Honorable Katrina Nokley as well as the Executive Council. We feel that listening to all sectors will help us re-open the Northwest Territories economy while paying close attention to potential risk to health and safety.

The BAC is pleased to provide you with the first official update and recommendations. We have currently had an official kickoff meeting which took place on June 5th. We have had 2 meetings since that time on June 8th and 11th.

Progress:

To date we have accomplished the following:

- Initial meeting where introductions were made for all participants. Opening address was provided by Minister Nokley and the two chairs. Key information was reviewed including: Terms of reference, confidentiality and intent of the council.
- Key administrations in place which includes: Standing agenda, minutes, action registry, risk identification, and key messaging.
- Initial press release drafted and released
- Initial recommendations reviewed and agreed upon (found below)

Process:

Going forward the BAC will be meeting on a weekly basis (frequency will be reviewed in the future):

- Day of the week: Thursday
- Time: 2:00 PM
- Duration: 2 hours (scheduled)

Questions:

We have several questions that we are seeking clarity to for our next meetings scheduled on June 18th at 2:00 PM:

1. Who can declare a State of Emergency?
2. What is the criteria to extend a State of Emergency?
3. Who has the authority to close the border?
4. What is the status of rapid testing for the NWT?
5. Is there a difference between the labs at the mines and in-town labs?
6. Can we get clear information on the exemption process and how it works?
7. Can we get a list of personnel or occupations that currently have exemptions, and could it be made public?
8. Where does the BAC process connect with the government process and where does our timeline connect with Emerging Strongly so that we can manage our process accordingly?
9. Can we get clarification on the timeline for GNWT employees to return to offices and can it be expedited? What are the issues slowing it down?
10. What is the established number of cases that will decide what phase of the plan we are in or that we move to?

Initial recommendations:

Several recommendations have been reviewed. Below are the first 4 areas that have been identified with recommendations and justifications:

#	Recommendation	Justification
1	GNWT employees should return to work as quickly as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to show the Territory how it can be done safely • We have not had any active cases for 6 weeks • GNWT workers are able to stimulate the economy in the center's they are employed (downtown cores) • Ensure service levels and timely responses • Provide additional confidence to businesses in the ability of the economy to bounce back
2	Increase communication and resources to businesses on reopening plan. Reallocate resources to focus on providing on-site assistance and direction vs. enforcement and threats of fines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been identified that communication from the GNWT has been delayed and inconsistent. This creates confusion and a culture of fear for the business community. • Businesses feel nervous and unsure of what they need to do to be able to reopen safely.
3	Open the borders through a regional plan that focuses on the needs and capacities of the individual communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is extreme to message that borders will not be opened until a vaccine is developed and distributed. This can be years away if ever. • Each community has unique needs and different challenges to move forward. We recommend exploring a plan that is more specific to each community and to provide empowerment and support to each community to progress at their own pace. We strongly recommend that these communities are engaged in the process. • Short term, we would like to see a focus on exemptions on self-isolation for certain sectors/businesses as these restrictions have almost eliminated Indigenous and northern business from competing with southern markets and are putting them at risk of bankruptcy while southern operators are given exemptions and dollars move out of the NWT. • Focus on the 4 communities (Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik) which have medical facilities (as deemed as isolation centers).
4	Release of economic data to public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would request that the data on economic impact in the NWT due to Covid-19 be released to the public to ensure that we have all the information to make balanced decisions.

Our next scheduled meeting will be on June 18th from 2:00 – 4:00 PM. We are hoping that you can join us at the end of the meeting (3:30 PM) and provide us with answers to the questions above along with an update to the initial 4 recommendations.

We are available to meet in advance and can be reached at:

Jenni Bruce
jbruce@rentmidwest.com

Paul Gruner
paul@detoncho.com

We look forward to continuing to work with yourself and the Executive Council on the economic recovery plan for NWT.

Thank you,

Jenni Bruce

Jenni Bruce
NWT Chamber of Commerce

Paul Gruner

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Det'on Cho Management LP