

Your Yellowknife South Newsletter

summer edition 2020



If you have not tired of hearing how unprecedented the last few months of life has been then allow me to say what a humbling and inspiring time it has been to serve in government during a time of such unprecedented need and unprecedented change.

COVID-19 challenged us as a government, a community, in our businesses and in our homes. We have so far had only five cases in the NWT, all recovered, but I know that people from our community lost family and friends to this disease elsewhere in Canada. Although I am going to write more about the challenges created by COVID-19 as both opportunity and motivation for lasting collaboration and innovation, I have not forgotten that personal tragedies will remain part of this pandemic.

I continue to spend a lot of time thinking and talking about risk mitigation, risk management and crisis response. We went from what was initially an almost exclusively health-system emergency with a clearer set of risk-mitigation responses into an economic crisis and then, closely associated, a social crisis, too. As is becoming obvious, the response measures appropriate to the first crisis can negatively impact the other two. Finding a way to balance all of these risks and their different and sometimes seemingly contrasting responses will continue to be a challenge facing not only our government but governments across Canada and arguably the world.

For Yellowknife South the main concerns we have received include clarification on Public Health Order restrictions, business concerns arising from the pandemic or the restrictions, assisting with navigating the systems and programs available for individuals and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures and what it means for our children, as well acting as a liaison for those concerned about compliance with Public Health Orders but preferring to not contact Protect NWT. I will review a few highlights from these frequently asked topics.

Health Care

Besides delivering one of the highest per capita testing rates in Canada, our health care system lead a multitude of changes that will have lasting benefits for the NWT. Hospitals have received additional PPE, particularly the Biomedical Engineering team at Stanton Hospital who received and assembled six ICU Ventilators supplied through the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile. They also secured four Transport Ventilators, and have ordered three more ICU Ventilators.

The health authority implemented virtual care options to support care in remote communities, reduce the need to travel for care, and replace in-person appointments – where appropriate – with phone, telemedicine, or apps (such as WhatsApp or FaceTime). More information is available at www.nthssa.ca/virtual-care. Also, Yellowknife residents are now able to book their doctor appointments online or by email. More information on this is available at: www.nthssa.ca/online-booking.

The Emerging Wisely Plan was released on May 12th. It outlines the multiple phases and guidelines for residents and businesses to follow to ensure the health and safety of the people of the North while we await a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19. If you would like to read the full Emerging Wisely document, I have shared it in the Resource Section of my website.

Completing the Budget Session

With support from the WSCC, the Legislative Assembly was able to develop a safe plan to bring all MLAs back to complete the May/June sitting of our 2nd Session. This was an important opportunity for Ministers to speak to the activities of all Departments in response to the pandemic and beyond as well as an opportunity for MLAs to ask critical questions and ensure accountability. One of the most significant events was the passing of a unanimous budget, a rare achievement of collaboration and cooperation.

The Economy

Early on the GNWT announced Phase 1 of economic relief and recovery that is designed to reduce costs for residents and businesses. This was followed by a similar set of announcements within Phase 2.

There have been a variety of rolling announcements from across departments to eliminate fees and enhance access to financial supports. For example, the Department of Finance worked closely with the NWT based airlines to provide direct financial support to this key supply link industry; the Department of Lands has provided Land Lease Rent Relief for one year for those with leases with the GNWT prior to April 1, 2020.

The GNWT also worked closely with the Federal Government to provide financial supports tailored to the NWT. For example, the GNWT was able to make available the Federal Emergency Wage Subsidy to all businesses with employees earning less than \$18.00/hr acknowledging that they continued to offer their essential services throughout the pandemic. With the support of CANNOR, the Northern Business Relief Fund provided eligible northern businesses with a non-repayable grant to assist with the fixed costs to operate in the North (rent/mortgage, utilities, insurance, etc.).

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment also brought changes to their Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development program (SEED), that would allow businesses to apply for grants to cover the cost of the additional PPE that would be required for operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. ITI was also able to establish through their NWT Business Development and Investment Corporation (BDIC) offices relief to businesses who currently had loan payments with BDIC by providing deferred loan payments. BDIC established working capital loans with low interest rate (1.74%) for businesses in the NWT to assist them throughout the pandemic.

For those that work in the creative field, the GNWT provided special funding upon application through the NWT Film Commission and NWT Arts for businesses, artists, and arts organizations who were preparing to resume or re-define their professional activities due to COVID-19.

Education

The GNWT and the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment worked continually with Education Leaders and School Boards throughout the pandemic to develop plans and procedures that would allow our children to return to school safely. On July 7, the Reopening Schools Safely: Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year was released.

The document outlined the approach that schools will be taking to continue education during the upcoming school year while prioritizing the health, mental health, safety and well-being of all students, staff, and communities.

All schools are planning to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year with a focus of providing as much in-person education as possible. Schools will be in direct contact with parents prior to the start of the school year once their plans have been approved by the Chief Public Health Officer. As of July 8, all schools had their plans in for approval.

The Child and Youth Care Counsellors (CYCC), where they currently exist, continued to support children and youth throughout the pandemic, and because these positions are year round they have continued into the summer and into the fall whether schools are open or not.

The hiring of the CYCCs for the schools in Yellowknife is currently underway and the goal is to have these positions filled by the beginning of the school year.

To read the full Reopening Schools Safely: Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year plan, please visit my website in the 'Resource' section.

Bills and Legislation

For those interested in seeing the Bills and Legislation currently before the house, or those that have passed recently, most pertaining to the budget, please visit the Bills and Legislation section of the Legislative Assembly website. <https://www.ntassembly.ca/documents-proceedings/bills>



Minister & Member Statements

- June 12, 2020 - 2020-21 Ministerial Policing Priorities
- June 11, 2020 - Justice During and Beyond COVID-19
- June 1, 2020 - Mental Illness
- May 27, 2020 - Setting the Stage for Finalizing Budget 2020
- March 12, 2020 - Northwest Territories Policing Priorities
- March 5, 2020 - International Women's Day
- February 28, 2020 - Payment of Invoices
- February 13, 2020 - Notice of Budget Address
- February 10, 2020 - Student and Youth Employment Initiatives
- December 12, 2020 - Opening of the New Fort Smith Correctional Complex - Women's Unit
- December 11, 2020 - Economic Update

*to read the full text of my Statements you can find them on my website under the News Banner - Member & Minister Statements

Getting in touch:

Our lines of communication are always open, to listen, support, and collaborate on your ideas for a prosperous and healthy NWT.



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Protect NWT Contact information:

For general information about COVID-19. Available 8AM to 8PM, 7 days a week:

8-1-1 covid@gov.nt.ca

For questions on public health orders, enforcement, travel restrictions, and self-isolation. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

1-833-378-8297 protectnwt@gov.nt.ca

COVID Timeline of Events:

July 16 - Administrative amendments to the Public Health Orders, streamlining the process for workers and companies.

July 7 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency was extended, and the State of Emergency cancelled.

June 23 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until July 8, 2020.

June 12 - The GNWT entered Phase 2: Next Steps of the "Emerging Wisely" Plan.

June 9 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until June 23, 2020.

May 26 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until June 9, 2020.

May 13 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until May 26, 2020.

May 12 - The GNWT released its path forward to emerging safely and wisely from the current COVID-19 public health restrictions - known as the "Emerging Wisely" Plan. Emerging Wisely provides a five-part plan taking the territory from the containment measures in-place today through four phases of eased measures.

April 28 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until May 12, 2020.

April 27 - The CHPO introduced amendments and replaced the March 21, 2020 Public Health Order. This amendment added new requirements for NWT residents, non-residents, and several categories of workers coming into the Northwest Territories.

April 21 - Office of the CHPO clarified services for long-haul truckers supporting NWT supply chains.

April 20 - The Government of Canada announced new measures requiring all passengers to have a non-medical mask or face covering to cover their mouth and nose during travel.

April 17 - The Service NWT COVID Support Line (811) went live providing residents' one phone number to reach services related to COVID-19.

April 16 - The Minister of Finance announced changes to the Liquor Regulations to put limits on the amount of liquor that can be sold daily to individual customers.

April 15 - The Territorial Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency extended until April 28, 2020.

April 10 and 11 - The Chief Public Health Officer issued two new public health Orders directed at Mineral and Petroleum Industry and an order banning all gatherings and formally closing Certain Businesses.

April 7 - Premier Caroline Cochrane assumed the MACA portfolio and announced the formation of the NWT Compliance and Enforcement Taskforce.

March 30 - The CPHO authorized the removal of border security measures at Smith Landing effective immediately. The ice road access to Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan will remain permanently closed.

March 24 - Minister of MACA declared a Territorial State of Emergency.

March 24 - NWT Education Leaders closed schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

March 22 - The CPHO issued a public health advisory stating that all gatherings regardless of size or number should be cancelled immediately.

March 21 - The CPHO restricted all travel within the NWT by non-residents to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There are limited exceptions.

March 18 - The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) declared a public health emergency.

March 16 - Legislative Assembly recesses of winter sitting to allow cabinet and the territorial public service to focus its efforts on preparing for and responding to the spread of COVID-19