



Process Guidelines for Committee on Small and Remote Communities

Purpose

Cabinet established the Committee on Small and Remote Communities (SRC Committee) in February 2025 to ensure that Executive Council (Cabinet) decisions and potentially other Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) actions and activities take into consideration the unique needs of small and remote Northwest Territories (NWT) communities. The Terms of Reference for the SRC Committee were approved in May 2025.

The SRC is comprised of two Cabinet members (the Honourable Lucy Kuptana, Co-Chair, and the Premier) and six Regular MLAs who represent ridings that include small and remote communities. MLA Sheryl Yakeleya (Dehcho) is the Co-Chair.

Process

1. The SRC Committee is intended to operate similarly to a Committee of Cabinet (COC), in that it would review, as applicable, select information regarding Cabinet items after they are reviewed by the relevant COC and referred to the SRC Committee, to ensure the perspectives of small and remote NWT communities are captured and addressed.

Identification of Items for Review by the SRC Committee

2. Existing COCs (including Governance and Indigenous Affairs; Energy, Economy and Climate Change; and Social Development) may refer relevant Decision Papers, Options Papers, Ministerial Initiatives, Discussion Papers and Information Items to the SRC for review. Legislative Proposals (LPs) should not be referred for review by the SRC Committee, as there is already a process in place for LPs that includes Standing Committee review.
3. Submissions pertaining to the following issues are not intended to be reviewed by the SRC Committee:
 - a. Negotiated contract requests;
 - b. Intergovernmental agreements;
 - c. Indigenous rights agreements;
 - d. Negotiation mandates;
 - e. Land withdrawals;
 - f. Board appointments;
 - g. Review and approval of proposed regulations;
 - h. Appointment and revocation of Deputy Ministers; and
 - i. Direct appointments.



4. The SRC Committee will focus on Cabinet items, rather than items intended for the Financial Management Board, although joint Cabinet-FMB items may also be referred.¹
5. It is not intended that all Cabinet items will be referred by the COC to the SRC Committee by default; there should be a clear connection between the content of the Cabinet item and the potential interests of small and remote communities. The SRC Committee will focus on items that have broad territory-wide implications, rather than those that are specific to a single region or community.
6. Depending on the quantity of Cabinet items being referred to the SRC Committee, the SRC Committee may choose to identify specific priorities it wishes to focus on, to limit the number of items being reviewed.
7. Deputy Ministers should initiate discussion with their Minister early in the process to determine if a proposed Cabinet item would be a good candidate for review by the SRC Committee.
8. As part of the discussion at the relevant Deputy Ministers Committee (DMC) / COC meeting, the Deputy Minister or Minister (as appropriate) should identify whether they would recommend referring the Cabinet item to the SRC Committee as part of the introduction of the item.
9. At the end of the COC meeting, the Chair will confirm with the COC members the list of Cabinet items that will be referred to the SRC Committee, if any.

Preparation for SRC Committee Meetings

10. SRC Committee Meetings will be scheduled in advance, and saved in SRC Committee members' calendars during the week after COC meetings are held. The short time between the COC meeting and the SRC Committee meeting is intended to avoid delaying the Cabinet items from going to the next Cabinet meeting, wherever possible.
11. Co-Chair Kuptana's office will be responsible for sending all meeting invitations, and liaising with Regular MLAs' offices to confirm attendance. Meetings will take place over Teams.
12. If there are no items referred from COCs during that week, the SRC Committee meeting will be cancelled, unless there are other agenda items the SRC Committee has identified.
13. If a Minister has a Cabinet item(s) on the agenda for a SRC Committee meeting, they should attend the meeting to speak to the item(s). Typically, only the Secretary to

¹ This document will refer to "Cabinet items", recognizing this may also include joint Cabinet-FMB items.



Cabinet, the Secretary to the FMB and support staff from the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs (EIA) may attend SRC Committee meetings. However, in certain instances, presentations may be provided as part of the meeting materials and/or presented by GNWT officials during SRC Committee meetings at the request of the Minister.

14. Cabinet Secretariat will develop the draft agenda for the SRC Committee meeting based on the items identified by each COC for referral to the SRC Committee during the previous week's meetings.
15. Based on the agenda, the Minister's office will provide Cabinet Secretariat with separate copies of any Cabinet submissions for the SRC Committee's review that include only the Problem, Principles, Background, Consultation and Engagement and Proposal Summary or Options sections for Decision Papers and Options Papers (unless there is a reason not to include this information), and only the Initiative, Background and Objective sections for Ministerial Initiatives. Information Items may be provided in full.

Departments may exercise discretion in determining which appendices for a submission should be provided to the SRC Committee. It is recommended that Macroeconomic Policy Framework Lens question responses be included. Communications Planning Briefs will not be included in the versions of Cabinet items provided to the SRC Committee.

16. Once the meeting materials are received, Cabinet Secretariat will assemble the meeting package and save it in an online workspace, and provide the link to Minister Kuptana's Office so it can be added to the meeting invite. Cabinet Secretariat will aim to provide the SRC Committee members with materials at least three working days in advance of the meeting, but this may not always be possible based on the scheduling of meetings.

Confidentiality

17. Members of the SRC Committee have agreed to a Confidentiality Policy that recognizes that they will be privy to confidential and/or politically sensitive information by virtue of serving on the committee. As a condition of membership, they have committed to undertake to keep in strict confidence any information and documentation that is provided to them while conducting the SRC Committee's business.
18. Departments should be mindful in writing their Cabinet items to ensure that SRC Committee members are provided with the necessary information to provide review and advice, while recognizing that in certain situations some departmental analysis and advice should only be seen by Cabinet. This is the reason for "paring down" submissions to remove the Factors and Recommended Decision sections.



Meeting Outcomes

19. Staff from the Department of EIA, including a Cabinet Policy Advisor, the Premier's Chief of Staff and Minister Kuptana's (the Co-Chair) Ministerial Special Advisor (MSA) will attend meetings of the SRC Committee to take notes.
20. Following the SRC Committee meeting, a set of high-level notes will be produced within two days of the meeting. Discussion points will not be attributed to specific SRC Committee members, but the notes will capture the general themes of the discussion. The SRC does not have the authority to issue direction or make any formal decisions, but it may make recommendations to Cabinet.
21. The notes will be approved by the Co-Chair and circulated to her Cabinet colleagues, copying EIA staff, including Cabinet Secretariat. Cabinet Secretariat will then share the specific notes from each item with the relevant Deputy Minister, the Director of Policy and the MSA from the responsible Department. Cabinet Secretariat will also aim to reflect the discussion points from the SRC Committee meeting in their assessments (pinks) where possible.
22. If the outcomes of the discussion are such that the Minister chooses not to proceed with the Cabinet item, or to make substantial changes, they can choose to delay or not to advance the item to Cabinet (or withdraw or replace it if it has already been submitted for the next Cabinet agenda).
23. If the Minister chooses to proceed to Cabinet with an item reviewed by the SRC Committee, they may wish to reference the outcomes of the discussion and any potential recommendations from the Committee in their speaking notes.
24. Cabinet will consider the feedback from the SRC Committee in their deliberations on the relevant Cabinet items.

Progress on Mandate Commitments

25. The Terms of Reference for the SRC Committee note that the committee will track progress and provide advice on Mandate commitments made by the GNWT to advance the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly, from the perspective of small and remote communities. The SRC Committee may establish processes to undertake this work more formally, or it may be accomplished through the review of Cabinet items aimed at advancing Mandate commitments.

Revisions

These guidelines will be reviewed on a regular basis and adjusted as required.