



June 12, 2024

HONOURABLE LUCY KUPTANA
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories

I am writing to confirm your mandate as Minister Responsible for Housing Northwest Territories and as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

As the Executive Council (Cabinet), of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), we are embarking on a collective journey that will lead the Territory through a period of transition and transformative change over the life of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Together, we will advance our shared vision of a Northwest Territories (NWT) that thrives in all aspects, promotes the use and advancement of our human and natural resources, establishes and maintains sustainable fiscal management, and advances cooperative governance with Indigenous governments.

Our collective success in achieving the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly (the Priorities), requires the will and commitment of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to work together in their respective roles for the benefit of the residents of the NWT. In the spirit of consensus government, I expect you to maintain constructive, open, respectful, and collaborative relationships with both your Cabinet colleagues and Regular Members. The Guiding Principles and Process Conventions set out the core principles for communication, transparency, accountability and inclusive decision-making essential to effective consensus government in the NWT. As a Minister, you are accountable to the Legislative Assembly for upholding these principles, for your leadership, for the performance of your responsibilities, and for decisions made by Cabinet.

The GNWT is only one of the governments in the NWT. Collaboration with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations is fundamental to delivering our Mandate, and the NWT has the potential to demonstrate to Canada and the world what collaborative governance between Indigenous and public governments can achieve.

As a Minister, you should advance reconciliation and good governance as you work to implement the Mandate through commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; working to advance, settle and implement Indigenous rights agreements; implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Calls to Justice; information-sharing and innovation through partnerships with Indigenous, federal, and community governments, non-governmental organizations and private industry; and honouring the GNWT's dedication to openness, transparency, and accountability.

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I expect Ministers to strengthen government-to-government relationships with Indigenous governments and advance issues of shared interest by jointly engaging with the federal government to increase funding to the NWT.

The Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly will guide our work through a challenging time. The GNWT must shift toward more collaborative, coordinated approaches to delivering programs and services, ensuring they are designed with a person-centred approach that prioritizes equity and ease of access for all residents. Departments will need to engage, collaborate, and communicate with each other across government in order to provide Cabinet with the best advice and most comprehensive options for consideration. Recognizing this need, I have not assigned symbolic client-based portfolios for Youth, Seniors, and Persons with Disabilities in this government. Instead, I expect all Ministers to direct their departments to work together to meet the needs of diverse client groups effectively and equitably within their department's existing establishment policies, and to find policy solutions that are person-centred by design and promote cohesive, efficient program and service delivery. The GNWT has identified Mandate Commitments aligned with each of the Priorities to realize this vision. I expect you, in collaboration with Cabinet colleagues, to use the appropriate Committee of Cabinet to advance Mandate commitments and develop coordinated proposals for Cabinet's consideration.

The GNWT has an amazing workforce, one which continuously strives to provide services and programs to the best of their ability to residents. As Ministers, we must provide public servants with the guidance and tools necessary for them to work with us in our commitment to serving the people of the NWT. I ask that you lead by example to show that collaboration is the key to success. Strengthening relationships and building new ways of working together will require innovation, creativity, adaptability, and humility across government and throughout the public service. We must conduct ourselves with professionalism and integrity, maintain confidentiality on all matters related to Cabinet and related discussions and proceedings, and never lose sight of our shared vision of an NWT where people are supported in the ways they wish to live, work, and grow.

The impacts of climate change demand immediate attention and should underpin responsible decision-making. Floods, wildfires, and permafrost degradation increasingly impact our operating context and are a source of strain financially, culturally, and emotionally. As a government, we must be responsive in the face of a changing environment and take action that instills public trust in our ability to support residents and meaningfully addresses the causes and effects of climate change.

We are faced with the challenge of providing the programs and services that residents expect and need while operating within a constrained fiscal reality. While this is a difficult task, it is not an impossible one. We have the opportunity to restore fiscal balance to the GNWT and set the Territory and its residents on a path for long term success through sound government spending. We will be guided by the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy to meet the challenges we face over the next four years, including unknown challenges that will inevitably arise, while also allocating government spending to appropriately address the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly. By ensuring our fiscal house is in order, we will provide certainty and security for residents now and into the future.

In addition to ensuring that we are focusing our existing resources to have maximum impact, we must focus on economic development.

This focus includes bridging the significant infrastructure gap between our Territory and the rest of Canada, as the well-being of residents is directly impacted by the strength and resiliency of infrastructure in the NWT. You are responsible for interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration to help streamline regulatory processes and maximize the benefits of development for Northerners. By supporting the development of suitable and affordable housing, transportation networks, clean and reliable energy systems, and digital infrastructure, we will enhance our economic potential, improve quality of life for residents and communities, enhance opportunities for education, skill development and entrepreneurship, and lay the groundwork for future growth and sustainability.

The Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly recognize that individual, collective, and intergenerational trauma is behind many of the health and social challenges impacting NWT families and communities. Colonization and systemic racism are root causes of this trauma for Indigenous peoples and must be addressed to reduce and prevent mental wellness and social issues. Cultural safety, including easy and equitable access, must be at the center of policy and program design. Advancing cultural safety requires engaging in meaningful anti-racism work individually and systemically. You are responsible for leading by example in this respect. Indigenous leaders have expressed a strong desire for the GNWT to engage them as partners in addressing the mental wellness and social issues facing residents by removing barriers and supporting the design and delivery of culturally appropriate, person-centred programs. You are responsible for supporting this by ensuring interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation, which includes advancing Integrated Service Delivery, and fostering a culture of solutions-oriented collaboration.

Our role as Cabinet is pivotal in guiding our government to achieve a shared vision for the future of the NWT. Together we can build the foundation for a united, resilient, and prosperous Territory grounded in true partnership and collaborative governance. I trust that you will work tirelessly beside me in the challenging and rewarding task of leading the GNWT to realize the fullest potential and aspirations of the NWT and its peoples; today and for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a stylized, flowing script.

R.J. Simpson
Premier

Attachment

Minister Responsible for Housing Northwest Territories

As Minister Responsible for Housing Northwest Territories, you are responsible for directing Housing Northwest Territories to carry out its Mission as set out in the *Housing Northwest Territories Mission, Values and Vision* document, which includes increasing the wellbeing of individuals and communities by providing fair access to quality housing support for people most in need. To achieve these goals Housing NWT engages in a broad range of activities that you continue to be accountable for.

In addition to the Departmental goals, you will undertake the following to support the achievement of the Government's Mandate:

- Advance reconciliation and good governance by:
 - Engaging on a government-to-government basis to share information on housing, prioritize and partner on projects, and support the aspirations of each Indigenous Government for their housing assets, programs, plans, and projects in the short and longer term;
 - Using the NWT Housing Forum, established under the Council of Leaders, as a mechanism to discuss issues and priorities to support Indigenous Governments and the GNWT in approaching Canada together on housing priorities for the north; and,
 - Ensuring training is available to front line program staff within Housing NWT, and contracted housing providers, with a trauma-informed, anti-racist and cultural safety lens that is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice.
- Improve the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing options in the NWT by:
 - Delivering the CHB program to support private rental affordability and exploring opportunities to support the transition of Homeownership Entry Level Program (HELP) units to market rental units including the possible utilization of the CHB Program;
 - Developing housing needs analysis and assessments, including:
 - completing the Housing Needs Assessment to provide a good understanding of housing needs in each community and region;
 - developing an updated infrastructure deficit assessment for Housing NWT's owned residential assets to identify current and long-term capital investment needs;
 - developing, in partnership with Indigenous governments and municipalities, an in-depth housing needs analysis/assessment that examines current housing waiting lists, assessing demographic data, specific needs, and preferences of those on the list; and,
 - expanding the functionality of Housing NWT's Geographical Information System (GIS) to improve the availability of information for planning purposes and community engagement activities;
 - Working with Canada to seek an NWT-specific approach to CMHC funding and a new, sustainable funding approach to replace the 1997 Social Housing Agreement and address the declining funding for public housing operations under that agreement;
 - Making land available for housing development by:
 - demolishing Housing NWT owned surplus units that are beyond economic repair and removing derelict buildings;

- identifying Housing NWT owned lots that could be made available for other housing interests in communities; and,
 - working with ECC and MACA to take steps to facilitate availability of, and access to, land for housing construction by Housing NWT, Indigenous Governments and Development Corporations, Non-Government Organizations, and the private sector.
- Strengthen the economic foundation of the NWT, support the development of the private sector and community capacity, encourage a diversity of economic activity across sectors, and reduce the cost of doing business in the NWT by:
 - Piloting housing projects that combine modular and stick built construction;
 - Working with partner departments to reduce barriers to entrepreneurship for people living in public housing; and,
 - Working with ECC and MACA to take steps to make more land available and accessible for housing construction by any housing stakeholder.
- Strengthen preventative measures, public awareness and improve access to trauma-informed, culturally appropriate health care by:
 - Extending opportunities for front-line staff training to any housing provider, including shelter providers, Indigenous Governments, Local Housing Organizations (LHOs), and other Non-Government Organizations; and,
 - Supporting the retention of health and social services professionals by expanding market housing availability through partnerships.
- Prevent, interrupt and address the effects of trauma by:
 - Ensuring training is available to front line program staff within Housing NWT and to contracted housing providers to provide services with a trauma-informed, anti-racist and cultural safety lens;
 - Expanding the number of northern pathways program participants;
 - Supporting the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy and the inter-relationships between Housing NWT, LHOs, and their regional ISD units; and,
 - Piloting a transitional housing model for addictions recovery including appropriate supportive programming in partnership with HSS.
- Enhance the safety of residents and communities by:
 - Supporting NGOs, employers, LHOs, shelter and other supportive housing operators to have emergency plans and Business Continuity Plans to support operations and protecting vulnerable populations during emergencies;
 - Completing a risk analysis of climate change impacts on Housing NWT assets and preparing a mitigation strategy in collaboration with Department of Environment and Climate Change; and,
 - Increasing climate resiliency of public housing assets through design and construction by developing a Design Guidelines which would also support other developers and housing delivery agents.

- Promote the safety of residents and communities in the NWT by:
 - Working with LHOs to identify appropriate security measures, particularly in multi-unit buildings, to help protect individual tenants; and,
 - Increasing communication with public housing tenants on their rights and how to protect themselves when other tenants are not adhering to the terms of their tenancy agreements.

In addition to the Mandate objectives listed above, you are also accountable for:

- Reducing lease costs by increasing Housing NWT's portfolio of owned public housing units;
- Reducing the construction and procurement costs of new public housing units by undertaking innovative design and procurement methods;
- Working with partners, including Indigenous Governments, the federal government and community governments, to explore all opportunities to leverage additional housing investment for the NWT wherever possible;
- Positioning Housing NWT to serve as a policy and program related resource for Indigenous Governments and Organizations seeking to understand, apply for and utilize federal funding opportunities;
- Exploring ways in which Housing NWT and Local Housing Organizations governance structures can be adjusted to better meet the needs of residents;
- Ensuring that Housing NWT and Local Housing Organizations are active partners in GNWT-wide efforts to improve client experience and to integrate services with an immediate focus on homelessness;
- Fostering a culture of person-centered service delivery in Housing NWT Local Housing Organizations; and,
- Working with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and the Minister of Finance to ensure market housing is available for teachers in small communities where lack of housing has been identified as a barrier to teacher recruitment and retention.

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, you are responsible for supporting the Status of Women Council to carry out its Mission and Vision, in accordance with the *Status of Women Council Act*, by promoting the political, social and economic equality of all women in the Northwest Territories by:

- Providing a cross-government perspective on issues related to women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people;
- Acting as an advocate for women and 2SLGBTQIPA+ people within the NWT;
- Working collaboratively with the NWT Status of Women's Council and the NWT Native Women's Association to advance women in leadership;
- Promoting the participation of women in the political process at all levels;
- Advancing and implementing both the NWT and National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as advocating for change in GNWT processes and policies as it related to recommendations in the Final Report; and,
- Supporting cross-government work around Domestic Violence with the support of the Ministers of Health and Social Services, Justice, Education, Culture and Employment, and the Minister Responsible for Housing NWT.