



March 27, 2023

HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTH

Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories

I am writing to confirm your mandate as Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and Minister Responsible for Youth. In addition to your formal portfolios, you will also Chair the Child and Family Committee-of-Cabinet.

Consensus government in the Northwest Territories (NWT) depends on a collective commitment by all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to work together, within their respective roles, openly and cooperatively. As Premier, I have committed to improving and enhancing the relationship among Cabinet and Regular Members (Members). I expect all Ministers to make effective and regular dialogue with Members an ongoing priority and to work closely and respectfully with Standing Committees at every appropriate opportunity.

Cabinet must work as a cohesive team given the collective nature of Cabinet decision making, recognizing that many of the issues we will be tackling do not exist in silos. Ministers should use the appropriate Committee-of-Cabinet to advance commitments and develop coordinated proposals for Cabinet's consideration. We must conduct ourselves with professionalism, integrity and maintain confidentiality on all matters related to Cabinet and Cabinet related meetings, discussions, and proceedings.

In your capacity as Chair of the Child and Family Committee-of-Cabinet, you will ensure cooperation between Ministers and departments on key policy initiatives relating to children, youth, seniors, education, and the overall health and wellness of all residents.

As Cabinet Ministers, we have the collective responsibility to advance the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly by implementing the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, tabled on February 7, 2020.

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In addition to carrying out all the duties associated with the portfolios you hold and meeting the provisions of your Departments' Establishment Policies, you are accountable for fulfilling the specific Mandate commitments listed in the attachment to this letter and for tracking and reporting on your progress.

As a Cabinet, we have agreed that our decisions will reflect the Guiding Principles we tabled on December 10, 2019. These principles should guide us and our departments in both our assessment of issues and our decision-making. We must lead with courage and compassion in the best interests of the people of the NWT.

A productive partnership between Indigenous governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is fundamental to the success of our Mandate and the future prosperity of our Territory. The decisions we make as Cabinet should always reflect our commitment to reconciliation and the affirmation and advancement of Indigenous rights and self-determination. I expect every Minister to foster constructive and respectful government-to-government relationships with our Indigenous partners and to seek ways to advance reconciliation, recognize and affirm Aboriginal rights, and support expanded program and service delivery by Indigenous governments.

Successfully achieving our Mandate commitments will also require a close working partnership with community and municipal governments across the Territory. Ministers must also build effective working relationships with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to foster the strategic government-to-government relationships required to fulfill our shared goals and to leverage support for Northern priorities.

The people of the NWT want accountable government that is open, transparent, and reflective of their interests, in keeping with the principles of our Open Government Policy. I expect the fulfillment of every Minister's mandate to be carried out in meaningful dialogue with all residents and stakeholders, including GNWT staff, the broad business community, and investors. You must also uphold the principles of open, transparent, and evidence-based decisions, solution-oriented service delivery and effective public awareness of government operations and decision-making.

Economic uncertainty, increasing impacts and awareness of climate change and complex social needs create significant challenges for the GNWT. While decisive action is required, our fiscal situation calls for prudent, publicly accountable financial management. Difficult decisions will be required on the part of all elected leaders to meet the best interests of residents, while ensuring fiscal balance and maintaining future resources. This requires careful financial decision making to support meaningful and effective investments in jobs, in people and in communities across the NWT.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed not only the NWT, but the entire world. Cabinet and departments reacted quickly to put essential supports in place. Work will need to continue to support NWT residents and businesses as the NWT faces potential future waves of the pandemic, but also moves towards social and economic recovery. Ministers will need to work collaboratively with MLAs and each other to determine how best to provide supports while being mindful of the need to fulfill the GNWT's mandate.

We also must acknowledge the reality that the NWT is not immune to systemic racism and systemic discrimination. Unconscious bias and discrimination hinder our ability to fully embrace the vibrant diversity of the NWT, advance our collective priorities, and achieve inclusion and cooperation. It is critical to address the ongoing legacies of colonialism and the devastating impacts it has had on Indigenous people's culture, language, education, and health. As Minister, I expect you to support the GNWT in its efforts to build a Territory where all persons, including Indigenous people and people of all racial backgrounds, have an equal opportunity to succeed, as well as advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice.

As Minister you must exercise utmost compliance with the *Conflict-of-Interest Act*, the *Financial Administration Act*, the Respectful Workplace Policy and all other policies and procedures of the Financial Management Board and of Executive Council (Cabinet). The role of Minister demands the highest ethical standards and bears the closest scrutiny. Your actions will be the basis on which this Government is measured for its ethical and respectful conduct, professionalism, and impartiality.

Your Deputy Ministers are responsible for assisting you to fulfill the responsibilities of your portfolios and the specific Mandate objectives for which you are accountable. You can rely on your Deputy Ministers and other skilled public servants as key sources of advice on process and policy and to bring forward comprehensive options for your consideration. You are, however, responsible for providing clear direction to your Deputy, including your expectations for interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration.

Our Cabinet brings together diverse backgrounds, fresh perspectives, and a shared dedication to the people of the NWT. I am certain that, working together with our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly and our Indigenous and other government partners, we will develop innovative solutions to the complex and long-standing issues Northerners face, ensuring a bright future for the NWT well beyond our own four-year terms.

I am honoured and excited to be working with you to achieve this.



Caroline Cochrane
Premier

Attachment

Minister of Environment and Climate Change

As Minister of Environment and Climate Change, you are responsible for promoting and supporting the sustainable use and development of natural resources and to protect, conserve, and enhance the Northwest Territories' (NWT) environment for the social, cultural, and economic benefit of all residents. You are also responsible for managing, administering, and planning for the sustainable use of public land in the NWT in a fair and transparent manner that reflects the interests of the people of the NWT. To achieve these goals your Department 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:

- Lead, in collaboration with the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, and with additional support from all Ministers, the efforts of our government to strengthen the government's leadership and authority on climate change by:
 - Improving coordination and communication around climate change; and
 - Working with national and international organizations to advocate for the consideration of the unique NWT and northern perspectives on climate change impacts, adaptation, and mitigation.
- Lead, in collaboration with the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and the Minister of Finance the efforts of our government to ensure climate change impacts are specifically considered when making governmental decisions by:
 - Integrating climate change considerations in GNWT decision-making processes.
- Support the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to lead our government's efforts to increase regional decision-making authority by:
 - Ensuring that Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) decision-making reflects the full understanding of communities and regions.
- Support the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs in efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by:
 - Identifying, prioritizing, and strengthening key actions to further implement UNDRIP.

- Support the Ministers of Education, Culture and Employment; and Industry, Tourism, and Investment; and Housing NWT in efforts to increase employment in small communities by:
 - Increasing seasonal, part-time, and full-time employment in small communities; and
 - Working in collaboration with Indigenous governments to support new employment including opportunities associated with established and candidate Territorial Protected Areas.
- Along with the Minister of Health and Social Services, support efforts to increase food security through locally produced, harvested and affordable food by:
 - Supporting the development of the food industry; and
 - Leading efforts to increase country food harvesting.
- Support the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs in efforts to reduce the municipal funding gap by:
 - Developing a process guide for the transfer of lands within municipal boundaries.

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

- Supporting the conservation and recovery of caribou in the NWT by:
 - Working collaboratively with co-management partners to support the recovery of barren-ground caribou, including the Bathurst and Bluenose-East barren-ground Caribou herds; and
 - Completing five regional boreal caribou range plans to meet obligations under the federal *Species at Risk Act* to protect critical habitat;
- Advancing conservation network planning and implementation in the Northwest Territories by:
 - Releasing a new Five-year action plan focused on the management of territorial protected areas, the advancement of decision-making on identified candidate areas and conservation network planning;

- Advance the territorial vision of land and resource management in accordance with the Land Use and Sustainability Framework, and our legislative, regulatory, and policy systems by:
 - Developing and proposing a new Forest Act by combining the *Forest Management Act* and the *Forest Protection Act*;
 - Developing and proposing amendments to the *Waters Act*, the *Environmental Protection Act*, and the *Waste Reduction and Recovery Act*; and
 - Developing and proposing various regulations under the *Protected Areas Act*, the *Wildlife Act*, the *Waters Act*, and the new Forest Act.
- Advancing the use of traditional knowledge in GNWT decision-making by:
 - Coordinating implementation of the GNWT's Traditional Knowledge Policy and leading the development of a Traditional Knowledge Action Plan.
 - Promoting water stewardship and decision-making in the NWT by:

Releasing a new five-year NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Action Plan for 2021-2025;

 - Negotiating and implementing transboundary water management agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions;
 - Monitoring aquatic ecosystems to track and measure changes to water quality, quantity, rates of flows and biology over time at locations across the NWT; and
 - Advising, regulating, and enforcing water licences in the NWT.
- Promoting environmental stewardship and management in the NWT by:
 - Managing contaminated sites that are the responsibility of the GNWT;
 - Participating as the co-proponent with the Government of Canada on the Giant
 - Releasing the 2020 Environmental Audit and implementing recommendations, as appropriate; and
 - Releasing a new five-year NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Action Plan.

- Amending existing and developing the necessary regulations to bring the *Public Land Act* into force within the next three years;
- Working with the Minister of Justice to effectively address unauthorized occupancy;
- Working with the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the GNWT Land Lease-Only Policy; and
- Continuing to address the transfer of equity leases to fee simple in all regions in a way that is transparent, consistent, and considerate of the views of Indigenous governments.

Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

As Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, you are responsible for the development and maintenance of community governments, responsive and responsible to the residents, with sufficient legal authority and resources to carryout community responsibilities, to provide their public programs and services essential to good community life and to deal effectively with other governments and organizations. You are also responsible for protecting the interests of consumers. To achieve these goals your Department 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:

- Lead our government's efforts to reduce the municipal funding gap by:
 - Reducing the funding gap by \$5 million through increased GNWT funding; Refining the current funding model to ensure continued fairness and transparency; and
 - Providing communities new opportunities to raise additional revenue and reduce or stabilize the cost of delivering core programs and services.
- Support the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to lead our government's efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by:
 - Identifying, prioritizing and strengthening key actions to further implement UNDRIP.
- Support the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to lead efforts to strengthen our government's leadership and authority on climate change.
- Support the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to lead our government's efforts to increase regional decision-making authority by:
 - Ensuring that GNWT decision-making reflects the full understanding of communities and regions.

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

- Implement the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Framework;
- Create and initiate an implementation plan for the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as it applies to community governments;
- Lead the establishment of a territorial Youth Council;
- Reorganize and streamline the Sport, Recreation and Youth reporting relationships; and,
- Develop a five-year NWT Youth Strategy.

Responsibility for Emergency Management Operations (EMO) related to the COVID-19 pandemic will remain with Premier Cochrane through a delegation under the *Emergency Management Act*. All other non-COVID EMO operations will remain with the Minister of MACA.

Minister Responsible for Youth

As Minister Responsible for Youth, you are responsible for providing a cross governmental perspective on issues related to youth; and acting as an advocate within the GNWT for children and youth.