

Residential and Recreational Public Land Lease Pricing Revisions

Mr. Speaker, cost of living challenges have been raised by Northwest Territories residents and Members of the Legislative Assembly in both the 18th and 19th Legislative Assemblies. One of those challenges is rent for residential and recreational public land leases, including those that support traditional harvesting activities. The lease rent minimum increase to \$840 annually for residential and recreational leases in the last Legislative Assembly, implemented over the last five years, has proven to be challenging for many residents given our current economic situation.

To help ease financial pressures and assist with cost-of-living challenges for lease holders, lease rent rates will be reduced for all residential and recreational leases. Lease rent minimums will be reduced for all residential lessees from \$840 to \$800 annually. We are also reducing the percentage of assessed value charged to residential lessees on Commissioner's land from 5% of assessed value to 2.5% of assessed land value.

Mr. Speaker, we will also reduce lease rents for recreational lessees. The Department of Environment and Climate Change will implement a three-tiered system for all recreational leases with rates reduced from a minimum of \$840, to fixed amounts of either \$600, \$400 or \$300 annually depending on access to the leased parcel. This approach will ensure that those with limited and seasonal access will pay less than those with year-round access.

Residential and recreational lessees will see these savings at their next rent review period. These changes will not only result in lower lease rates for all individuals but will also make rent more comparable between Commissioner's and Territorial land, until the *Public Land Act* comes into force and creates a single public land pricing regime.

Mr. Speaker, we also tabled a response to Motion 77-19(2) related to lease rents for Indigenous-owned cabins. Significant work and engagement are ongoing to develop a long-term approach which addresses concerns expressed by Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations regarding the management of rights-based cabins on public land.

Our government is committed to working with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to resolve this issue in a collaborative way that considers and respects Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

While this work is underway, the rent reductions being put into place will help reduce the financial burden for all residential and recreational lessees, including Indigenous leaseholders that have an asserted or established Aboriginal and Treaty right to harvest in that area. We will also be pausing collections on lease rent arrears and will consider forgiving arrears on a case-by-case basis for these Indigenous leaseholders.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change remains committed to working with Indigenous leadership to develop a long-term approach that meets the interests of Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and the Government of the Northwest Territories for right-based cabins on public land.

Mr. Speaker, today I have made important commitments to finish our work on collaboratively developing a policy-based approach for rights-based cabins with our Indigenous government partners, and to lowering the cost of living for residents. Reduced rents for residential and recreational leases will help address the cost of living for individuals with public land leases, including Indigenous land users.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.