

Progress on the Mandate Commitment
to Maximize Government Procurement Benefits

Mr. Speaker, when we started the 19th Legislative Assembly, Members put forward as one of its priorities ensuring that government procurement maximizes benefits for Northwest Territories' residents and businesses. We knew that procurement policies had not been meaningfully updated for several years, and we wanted to make sure we were getting as much value out of every dollar as we could.

In January 2021, I appointed an independent advisory panel to engage with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, elected leaders, the business community, stakeholders and residents on government procurement. In June 2021, the panel completed its engagement and provided a comprehensive report including 50 recommendations.

The panel's report, as well as our discussions since with Members of the Legislative Assembly, residents, businesses, and Indigenous governments, has informed work by the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Finance, and Executive and Indigenous Affairs to fulfill our mandate commitment.

The Report on the Review of GNWT Procurement Policies and Practices, including the Business Incentive Policy, P3 projects and the Northern Manufactured Products Policy. The report presents a carefully formulated plan for improving government procurement to maximize benefits for NWT residents and businesses. Additionally, the report includes data that demonstrates that the number of government contracts awarded to NWT businesses has increased over the past three years.

Mr. Speaker, government procurement and contracting is a major source of economic activity throughout the territory, and our residents and businesses should benefit from this as much as possible while balancing the need to ensure projects are undertaken in a timely and fiscally responsible manner.

One key tool to try and achieve that balance is by incentivizing contractors who commit to using local and NWT labour and buying NWT goods with a benefit in the form of an adjustment in the bidding process, which is why we have introduced a Vendor Performance Management policy that holds contractors accountable for these commitments. The policy provides the Government of the Northwest Territories with the tools needed to accurately assess, monitor, and enforce vendor performance consistently across all government departments and Housing NWT. This will first start with the monitoring and enforcement of obligations made under the Business Incentive Policy.

Mr. Speaker, we must also find and put into practice real, practical solutions and give Indigenous businesses support to maximize their opportunities for growth. We are working with Indigenous governments through the Modern Treaty and Self-Government Partners and the NWT Council of Leaders, so the Northwest Territories becomes a leading example of how to achieve economic growth amongst one of the fastest growing cohorts of business in Canada, that of Indigenous-led businesses.

With a unified set of modernized procurement objectives and principles, and a framework to monitor and enforce refreshed procurement tools, we are now set to capitalize on this stronger foundation. These ongoing efforts will help make government procurement more transparent and better able to maximize benefits for NWT companies, while ensuring a balance between value for public dollars and maintaining that as much public money as possible stays in the territory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.