

**Procurement Review**

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that as we focus this sitting on the government's budget, including how GNWT spending impacts the NWT economy and the role it can play in our economic recovery efforts, we are also beginning a territory-wide conversation about our government's procurement practices and policies. Procurement is a significant tool that can positively increase the benefits of government spending on the private sector and, as a result, on the economy as a whole.

Ensuring that government procurement and contracting maximizes benefits to residents and businesses is a priority established by the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. Building on that, one of our government's guiding principles is to ensure that the expenditure of public funds supports Northern businesses and maximizes economic benefits to Northerners. This is consistent with our long-standing commitment to support NWT businesses and grow a strong, diversified economy.

The conversation that has formally begun around procurement is part of the effort to achieve this priority and advance this guiding principle.

It is important to remember that the concerns and needs that led to this priority and, similarly, to the political recognition that it is time for new recommendations to improve procurement practices, came from the territory's Indigenous governments and organizations, the business community and the public at large. Rightfully so, as the last comprehensive review was over a decade ago. The people of the NWT know,

and have made clear, that we have an opportunity for positive and long-lasting change and we need to work together to achieve it.

At a time in our history when it is clearly needed, we are prepared to reset or re-imagine our government's approach to buying and contracting the goods and services it needs to deliver its mandate. To that end, we have accelerated our mandate commitment to strengthen GNWT procurement policies and practices.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in previous sittings about the procurement review. I want to use this opportunity to provide an update. Recently I announced the start of the process to get this very important work done with the release of a discussion paper, dedicated section of the ITI website and the introduction of our review panel.

We have put a review panel in place that I am confident will remain open minded, objective, creative and responsive; and who I have personally asked to do so. The panel will hear from a variety of stakeholders and residents. From panel interviews, to written submissions, targeted-engagement opportunities and an online discussion platform, we are working to ensure that everyone has a means and opportunity to share their thoughts and perspectives. We want the panel to hear real experiences with government procurement: both positive and otherwise. This should include specific examples of when the system did or did not work and collect innovative ideas, for making our procurement process better. The panel will also meet with officials from Indigenous governments, about GNWT procurement generally, and ideas for a possible Indigenous procurement strategy and ways to best achieve the economic goals of modern Treaties. I will continue to reach out to Indigenous leaders as well for ongoing government to government discussions about GNWT procurement.

We need everybody with an interest in this discussion to seek out the information and opportunities that are available to provide their input.

Mr. Speaker, our use of a public review process reflects our confidence that the ideas and guidance needed on this important matter can be found in the leadership, experience and creativity that exist within the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, we want to continue to help stimulate economic growth and encourage entrepreneurship and local competition. Our review of public procurement is one part of work that must be done to support a resilient, more diverse economy. I encourage everyone in our territory to contribute to this process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.