

**THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE COCHRANE
PREMIER**

**NO.: 361-19(2)
DATE: May 29, 2023**

**Advancing Treaty, Land, Resources, and
Self-Government Agreements with Indigenous Governments**

Mr. Speaker, settling and implementing treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements is a key priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories within the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Advancing agreements with Indigenous government partners supports reconciliation by moving us closer to recognizing and affirming Aboriginal and treaty rights and empowering program and service delivery by Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, reaching agreement on matters of such profound importance to Indigenous peoples and to the whole of the Northwest Territories and Canada takes time due to a number of challenging issues faced by all parties involved in negotiations.

Given these challenges, I am pleased to let you know today that we are making meaningful progress in our efforts to settle treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements. Over the past four months, the GNWT, Canada, and three Indigenous governments have initialed milestone agreements signaling our shared commitment to move forward.

We have initialed a draft Reconciliation and Process Agreement with Canada and the Kátl'odeeche First Nation, a Draft Agreement in Principle with Canada and the Akaitcho First Nations and a draft Final Self-Government Agreement with Canada and the Tłegóhłı Got'ıne Government of Norman Wells.

The GNWT has a legal duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous governments and organizations whenever it considers carrying out a government action that has the potential to adversely affect asserted or established Aboriginal or treaty rights. Consultation is necessary to ensure that Indigenous peoples have an opportunity to provide input and have their concerns addressed before decisions are made that may impact their rights and interests.

With the signing of these draft agreements, the GNWT and Canada have initiated consultation with other potentially affected Indigenous parties and have invited them to conduct internal reviews of the draft agreements.

Following consultation and internal reviews, negotiators for the parties will address any issues that arise during consultation or internal reviews before finalizing the agreements.

I would like to express my gratitude to all of those involved at each table for their hard work and dedication to advancing these agreements, making it possible for each party to get to this point in their respective processes.

The initialing of these agreements reflects our government's commitment to strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments and demonstrates our sincere interest in meaningful partnerships.

Mr. Speaker another example of the GNWT's commitment to strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments and cultivating meaningful partnerships is our collaboration with the Intergovernmental Council. Together we have worked hard on developing and implementing the IGC Legislative Development Protocol, which has guided the last two years of unprecedented, collaborative work on land and resource legislative initiatives.

We have also worked closely with Indigenous governments to establish the NWT Council of Leaders and Modern Treaties to build collaborative tables to discuss shared issues such as health, housing, and the economy.

The work at the Council of Leaders to draft the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, which is currently being considered by this Legislative Assembly, is something that I am particularly proud of during my time as Premier.

It is also important to mention that to promote transparency and support the negotiation tables, this government published our Negotiating Principles and Interests and Negotiating Mandates Summary. The negotiations mandates are key to informing the GNWT's participation in the negotiations of Aboriginal Rights Agreements as they set out the interests guiding the negotiators in concluding agreements.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of how this government has changed its approach to work more collaboratively with Indigenous partners, to listen to their concerns, and to be flexible and accommodating as we work to advance negotiations. In this regard, I believe we have set a positive example for others to follow throughout Canada.

I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm this government's commitment to work toward settling and implementing treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements.

Just as important, this government will continue to develop the relationships we have built with Indigenous governments. This collaborative approach advances reconciliation, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and treaty rights, supports program and service delivery by Indigenous governments, and sets the stage for further economic development in the Northwest Territories.

Máhsi, Mr. Speaker.