

2020 Northwest Territories Environmental Audit

Mr. Speaker, we have a strong and effective regulatory system in the Northwest Territories that relies on Indigenous, territorial and federal governments working together to make wise decisions about the use of our land and water. This system is always evolving to serve the people of this territory better.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a mandate to support the sustainable use of natural resources. Every five years, an independent auditor is appointed to conduct an Environmental Audit, as required under legislation and land claim agreements.

The 2020 Northwest Territories Environmental Audit is the second audit commissioned by the Government of the Northwest Territories since Devolution. It was conducted by a team of independent consultants and guided by a steering committee of Indigenous, territorial and federal government representatives. The auditors focused on how environmental trends were used to make decisions, the effectiveness of cumulative impact monitoring, how the regulatory system is working, and the response to recommendations from the previous Audit.

The 2020 Audit found the environmental regulatory system in the Northwest Territories has continued to improve since the last Audit in 2015. There were no new significant issues identified in the 2020 Audit, and there was progress across most regulatory components.

Certain recommendations of the Audit were already recognized as priorities of this government, supported by the mandate priorities to settle and implement treaty, land, resources and self-government agreements and increase regional decision-making authority and employment in small communities. The Audit recognized the Government of the Northwest Territories for making progress on climate change policy and action planning, as well as working with Indigenous governments and organizations to make new

laws and improve existing laws related to land, water and resource management since Devolution.

Mr. Speaker, while there has been progress over the last five years, there is still work to do. The Audit found there are improvements to be made in the areas of community well-being, land use planning, finalizing land claims and engaging communities. In total, the 2020 Environmental Audit provided 40 recommendations directed at decision-makers.

All responses to those recommendations are included in the 2020 Audit Technical Report. The Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to implementing our responses to the Audit recommendations and continuing to improve our environmental management in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the 2020 Environmental Audit is an important tool the government and its partners can use to improve our resource management systems, while meeting our obligations under land claim agreements and Devolution.

Later today, I will be tabling the Audit and look forward to working with all responsible parties over the next five years to follow through on the recommendations in the Audit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.