

Yellowknife Centre Newsletter

Snow King Festival is Back

The Snow King's Winter Festival kicks off March 1 for its 27th year. I am glad to be able to support the staging of this fabulous spring event with a \$500 contribution to festival costs. His Majesty King Tony Foliot greeted me last year for a personal reading of his poetry down at the Festival site. Let's get out and enjoy.

2022-2023 Operating Budget Released

Finance Minister Caroline Wawzonek delivered a status quo budget for the next fiscal year, with no cuts and no new taxes. The budget proposes spending of a little more than \$2 billion on operations.

Revenues of \$2.3 billion will produce a budget surplus of \$131 million to be invested in the capital plan.

The Budget proposes a spending increase of two per cent over the current fiscal year: \$86 million to enhance existing programs, \$9 million to advance the government's mandate, and \$2 million in amortization. Some of this increased spending is offset by a reduction of \$54 million in costs of programs that are ending.

There are no new taxes but the previously announced increase in the carbon tax takes effect on July 1, 2022, equivalent to an increase of 2.4 cents per litre of gasoline. Increased revenue from carbon pricing will be returned to NWT residents and businesses including an increase to the Cost of Living Offset to \$260 per adult and \$300 per child.

Go to the Department of Finance [website](#) for the full set of budget documents.

COVID Update

On February 28, I presented an [update on easing public health restrictions](#) as we move toward lifting the public health emergency on April 1st.

The NWT Health and Social Services Authority has produced a listing of *Mental Health and Community Wellness Supports During COVID-19*. The guide provides contact information for addiction supports, shelters, 24/7 crisis supports, on-line and

telephone services, and for counselling and group wellness opportunities. Download the listing [here](#). If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911.

Labour and delivery services for all NWT residents have resumed at Stanton Territorial Hospital. Any NWT resident who is due to deliver a child can now expect to deliver their baby in the NWT. I want to recognize the staff at Stanton who have worked diligently throughout this reduction to continue providing services, while planning to resume them, and the casual and agency staff who have come to fill shifts to add capacity.

Leisure travel into the NWT is resuming March 1. Anyone will be able to travel into the NWT with an approved Self-Isolation Plan (SIP) regardless of vaccination status. A SIP will be required for all travellers and will determine requirements upon entry after travel, such as self-isolation if necessary. Leisure travellers are advised to apply 7-10 days prior to their travel.

Changes to the public service vaccine mandate have been announced:

- Starting on March 1, 2022, proof of vaccination, testing, and enhanced PPE will only be required for employees and contractors who:
 - work with vulnerable members of the Public in the healthcare, education, and corrections sectors
 - work at a federally regulated worksite; or
 - other worksites where there are other vaccination policies or requirements.
- Employees who work directly with vulnerable sectors include teachers, correctional officers, and all healthcare professionals.
- Federally regulated industries and workplaces where there are other vaccination policies or requirements include air transportation, banks, and most federal Crown corporations.
- All other employees will no longer be required undergo regular testing and follow enhanced PPE use, effective March 1, 2022.
- All GNWT employees will still be required to wear masks in all common areas of GNWT office buildings and worksites. The masking requirement will remain in place until further notice.
- If you are uncertain about how these changes impact you, please speak with your supervisor. You can the [GNWT website](#) for more information.

The GNWT is making changes to current Public Health Orders that will ease restrictions in the Northwest Territories. As of March 1, 2022, travel requirements for self-isolation will be reduced, indoor and outdoor gathering restrictions will end, as well as the Proof of Vaccine (PVC) Program for businesses, which will enable businesses to increase capacity for patrons. See [full details](#) on the GNWT website.

The GNWT is extending supports for small and medium businesses affected by the pandemic. The Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) program will assist with costs such as rent, utilities, and bookkeeping. Businesses can get up to \$5,000 to offset losses from cancelled bookings and closures, retroactive to January 7, 2022. The program runs until March 31, 2022 or until funding is spent. See [more information](#) and contact the [ITI office](#) to apply.

Richard Edjericon has been sworn in as the new Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, following a February 8 by-election. The swearing-in took place in the Legislative Assembly chamber February 21 and was presided over by Commissioner Margaret Thom and Clerk Tim Mercer.

Career and Education Advisor Program

The Education, Culture and Employment department has expanded its Career and Education Advisor (CEA) program. The program provides specialized education and career advice to Grade 9–12 students and school-aged youth. CEAs connect students with people who are doing work that interests them, and with learning opportunities they can participate in while still in school. They also provide practical support, including how to write resumes and cover letters and how to complete applications for work, post-secondary programs, Student Financial Assistance, bursaries, grants or scholarships.

To learn more about the program, students should contact your local school principal, or get in touch with a CEA at cea@gov.nt.ca.

Waste Reduction/Recycling Support for Small Groups

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) is accepting applications for the Waste Reduction and Recycling Initiative. Funding is available for schools, non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals as well as municipalities and Indigenous governments.

Projects that reduce waste, reuse materials and products and recycle materials are eligible for funding. Funding guidelines, an application form and project plan and budget templates are on the [GNWT website](#). The deadline for applications is April 4, 2022.

AVENS Fundraising a Success

AVENS—A Community for Seniors *Operation Care on Call* fundraising event has raised its target of \$250,000 in just four months. The project replaces Avens' 30-year-old nurse call bell system. The modernized system enhances patient safety by enabling residents to alert staff remotely when they need assistance.

The Chair of AVENS Fundraising Committee, Bronwyn Watters announced the successful fundraising by saying “Thanks once again to the generosity of many people, companies and government, AVENS can proceed to install this new call bell system to further enhance the quality of care and provide greater security and peace of mind for residents.”

Consultation Opportunities Invite You

There are a number of public consultations underway that invite your input:

- **2022-2025 Energy Action Plan:** The 2030 Energy Strategy consultation will help set the GNWT’s long-term approach to supporting secure, affordable, and sustainable energy in the NWT. The 2022-2025 Energy Action Plan will build on current projects and actions, continue successful programs, and include new activities. Visit the [Energy Strategy website](#) for more information.
- **Income Assistance Review:** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is inviting comments in its Income Assistance Program Review. The department is reviewing the program to improve its design and services. A public survey is now available [online](#). Paper copies of the survey are available at the North Slave ECE Service Centre, for clients only. NGOs and other stakeholders must complete the survey online. Deadline for comments is March 11.
- **Francophone Community Satisfaction Survey:** The GNWT is surveying clients to help improve the GNWT’s offer and delivery of French language services. Participation in the survey is anonymous and responses remain confidential. Take the survey [here](#). The survey closes February 28, 2022.
- **Resource Royalties Review:** The GNWT has released a discussion paper to guide consultations on the royalty regime and *Mineral Resources Act* Regulations. The *Review of Royalty Regulations in the NWT* provides background on how royalties are administered and determined, and presents options for the review of new regulations. Visit the [ITI website](#) to have your say on the NWT’s resource royalty regime

Legislative Assembly Members gathered on Pink Shirt Day February 23 to declare their support for efforts to confront bullying. The annual event calls upon us all to join in saying that bullying is not acceptable and we all have a role in stopping it.



Meet Julie!

Message Julie!

no | PO Box 1320, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9 Canada

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