



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to
Motion 61-20(1): Remuneration of Essential Staff During an Evacuation**

Motion

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Sahtu, that the Legislative Assembly recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories reimburse AVENS \$400,000 which is the portion of costs incurred from their assistance to the Government during the 2023 wildfire evacuation and is not covered by the federal Disaster Assistance Fund;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories in its response to the 2023 Wildfire Emergency Response After-Action Review, provide guidelines on how to address remuneration of essential staff during an evacuation particularly for non-governmental organizations providing contract services to the Government of the Northwest Territories;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion in 120 days.

GNWT Response

AVENS submitted two claims for reimbursement of costs associated with the 2023 wildfire evacuation. These claims were submitted to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, who administers the GNWT Disaster Assistance Policy and the Disaster Assistance Funding Policy and coordinates with the federal government's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements. Executive Council approves the application of the GNWT Disaster Assistance Policy.

One of AVENS' claims met the eligibility criteria and was reimbursed in the amount of \$989,308. This claim covered costs related to overtime, accommodations, cleaning, contract nursing, food, per diems, laundry, security, transportation, and other supplies and services.

The second claim was seeking reimbursement of costs for lieu time totaling \$501,296. It is important to note that the total amount of the initial claim submitted by AVENS on April 10, 2024, was for \$400,839 and did not include documentation of costs. When AVENS provided the documentation to substantiate the claim, they also revised the amount from four hundred thousand dollars to just over five hundred thousand dollars. This claim was determined to be ineligible for reimbursement under the terms of the Disaster Assistance Policy and the federal government's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangement and was therefore denied. The lieu time payout provided by AVENS to their staff did not meet the eligibility requirements for assistance as it was used as an incentive to encourage staff to work regular shifts which staff were fully compensated for.

As previously communicated to AVENS, the GNWT will not cover costs associated with lieu time and will therefore not reimburse this claim, nor provide the \$400,000 referenced in the Motion.

The Motion also requests that the GNWT provide, as part of its response to the 2023 Wildfire Emergency Response After-Action Review, guidelines on how to address remuneration for contracted, non-governmental organizations' essential staff. The GNWT does not intend to include guidelines in this area however, the GNWT acknowledges that the needs of vulnerable community members must be part of fulsome emergency preparation and planning to ensure a seamless and supportive response effort.

Based on the lessons learned from the 2023 fire season, the GNWT has begun working with community governments, NGOs and key service partners to encourage and support planning for vulnerable populations during emergencies and evacuations to ensure a seamless and supportive response effort. This includes work to clarify roles and responsibilities and support to develop updated business continuity plans and Community Emergency Plans.