



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee
Report 36-20(1): Report on the Review of Bill 29: *First Responders Workers'
Compensation Amendment Act***

Background

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Standing Committee) tabled its report on Bill 29: *First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act* in the Legislative Assembly on February 27, 2026. Bill 29 is a Private Member's Bill introduced by the MLA for Range Lake that proposes amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to establish presumptive coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for front-line and emergency-response workers and to expand presumptive coverage for firefighters to include all cancers and heart-related conditions. On March 6, 2026, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly ruled Bill 29 out of order on the basis that it involved the appropriation of public funds, which is not permitted under the Rules of the Legislative Assembly for a Private Member's Bill.

The Standing Committee made four recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The following is the GNWT response to the recommendations contained in Committee Report 36-20(1): Report on the Review of Bill 29: *First Responders Workers' Compensation Act*.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories improve its responsiveness to public and stakeholder requests for legislative reviews and amendments to ensure its legislation remains modern, reflective of the needs of residents, and aligned with other jurisdictions. Enhanced responsiveness would also reduce reliance on Private Member's Bills, which do not undergo the same comprehensive planning and development processes as government-sponsored legislation.

GNWT Response

The GNWT agrees with the intent of this recommendation. The GNWT maintains approximately 250 statutes in addition to a significant body of regulations. Each Assembly, the GNWT undertakes a prioritization exercise to focus finite departmental resources on the most pressing legislative needs, considering input from the public, stakeholders, and Regular Members. The legislative agenda also adapts over the course of each Assembly as new issues arise. As noted in the recommendation, Government-sponsored legislation often involves more comprehensive planning and development than Private Member's Bills, and the GNWT will continue to ensure that legislative work is advanced in a thorough and deliberate manner.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct detailed public and stakeholder engagement when proposing any future changes to regulations related to firefighter presumptive coverage.

GNWT Response

The Government of the Northwest Territories' commitment to stakeholder engagement is unwavering. Going forward we will continue to uphold this commitment in consideration of presumptive coverage for firefighters. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) is currently working on legislative initiative to amend the *Workers' Compensation Act* following the conclusion of Bill 29 and is leveraging what we have already learned from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and stakeholders to expedite the process.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake a review on providing presumptive workers' compensation coverage to wildland firefighters, similar to other jurisdictions in Canada, given that the Northwest Territories is experiencing more frequent and severe wildfires which may have a corresponding effect on the health of wildland firefighters.

GNWT Response

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC), as a separate initiative, will conduct a jurisdictional scan and analysis of expanding presumptive coverage to wildland firefighters. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to the health and safety of its wildland firefighters and has confirmed existing coverage under the *Workers' Compensation Act* for wildland firefighter injuries that arise out of, and during, the course of employment. This coverage is in place to protect workers regardless of presumptions.