



March 17, 2023

JACKIE JACOBSON
MLA, NUNAKPUT**Oral Question 1423-19(2): Nunakput Court Travel**

This letter is in response to the Oral Question you raised on March 02, 2023 regarding court travel in the Nunakput region.

The Department of Justice provides administrative support to the Courts to ensure that they can fulfill their role in a fair, transparent, and independent manner. It is important to note that the Courts have inherent jurisdiction to control their proceedings, which includes determining location and timing of hearings. The Department makes the necessary logistical arrangements (travel, accommodation, etc.) in support of those hearings in accordance with Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) policies.

Generally, court parties will stay in communities overnight where adequate facilities exist and where hearings are scheduled for multiple days. Court parties on circuits in Nunakput range from 8 to 12 travelers, depending on whether interpreters are required and how many lawyers are assigned by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada and Legal Aid. This is in addition to the judge and court staff.

Aircraft for court circuits are tendered by GNWT Procurement Shared Services and awarded according to GNWT policy. During the tender, the intended schedule is included. This means any companies bidding are aware of the need and can plan accordingly with respect to offering the charter and maintaining their scheduled routes. Court charters are sometimes required to hold in the community. This is to prevent an unreasonable delay if the aircraft were to be recalled from another location at the conclusion of court. In smaller communities there is a risk of being stranded without sufficient lodging on short notice in the event of poor weather.

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I have shared your remarks made during session with the judiciary and have asked officials to work with the Courts to ensure efficiencies and use of local resources wherever possible. Due to the challenges described above, it is not always possible to increase efficiencies and local resource use while meeting the independently-set schedule of the Court.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R.J. Simpson
Minister, Justice

c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Minister, Justice