

Government of  
Northwest Territories

June 26, 2023

CAITLIN CLEVELAND  
MLA, KAM LAKE**Oral Question 1333-19(2) Interoperability of Government of the Northwest Territories Systems**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Questions you raised on February 9, 2023, regarding the Interoperability of Government of Northwest Territories Systems.

*1. Why has the GNWT overspent its computer hardware and software budget for every year during the 19th Assembly and how does the GNWT intend to more accurately budget its digital infrastructure spending?*

Response:

Computer Hardware/Software is a specific account that often does not have a budget assigned explicitly. Typically, departments will have a Purchased Services or Contract Services budget, which get used for IT items, but the expenditures will be recorded under Computer Hardware/Software, thus showing an overspend in that account.

A separate item is budgeting for IT projects - which can be quite complex, and can often have large swings due to several reasons, including availability of contractors, delays in getting projects off the ground, changes to meet the needs of the department/program, procurement delays, the type of items needed (e.g. professional services or computer hardware/software) etc.

The Department of Finance is instituting a practice of regular review and reporting on computer hardware and software costs to the Informatics Policy Council of Deputy Ministers, which will increase visibility into these expenditures, government wide.

*2. Given the great need for interoperability to properly service NWT residents, does the GNWT intend to create an interoperability framework?*

Response:

The Government Chief Information Officer (CIO) has approved the development of an Enterprise Architecture (EA) framework that will provide guidance for the implementation of technology solutions for departments.

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One of the components of the framework is guidance for interoperability, which will bring together principles, policies, guidelines and provide direction for building and integrating solutions across departments.

The framework will serve as the foundation for enabling GNWT systems to work together to reduce silos, enable more integrated systems and information for service delivery, and reduce digital infrastructure redundancies.

The Department of Finance expects the EA framework to be finalized in 2023/24. In the interim, the GNWT continues to use existing principles, policies, guidelines, and industry best practices when building or integrating technology solutions for public services.

*3. How [will] this framework help reduce silos and how will it be ensured that departments are coordinating in their software and hardware purchases?*

Response:

As part of the creation of the Office of the CIO branch (previously ISSS), Business Partners were created to be the strategic liaison between GNWT departments and the Information and Technology sector.

The Business Partners have Digital Care Committee meetings with each of their departments to discuss technology needs and prioritization of initiatives. This information is then brought forward to an intake process for technology requests, for further prioritization across government.

Infrastructure acquisition planning is coordinated by the Office of the CIO as part of annual capital planning, as well as through the intake of smaller tactical requests. Governance committees, including a cross-section of Assistant Deputy Ministers, as well as a committee of all Deputy Ministers, guide, review and direct the process and funding decisions.

Reviews are also conducted during procurement, to ensure compliance with standards.

*4. Right now there is a lot of silos happening, there's a lot of fragmented digital systems, there's a lot of purchasing that's happening individually within departments, and so I'm wondering if they're doing kind of their own capture of inventory of systems throughout the government and evaluating how to bring those together?*

Response:

The Office of the CIO is participating in the Government Renewal Processes for its programs and services and is always looking for opportunities to reduce duplication and redundancy of IT/digital systems and infrastructure.

While Government Renewal does not have a current project underway focused on the interoperability of GNWT digital infrastructure, consideration around information technology needs and integration across departments is part of the overall government renewal process and staff are working with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to improve the integration from a GNWT-wide perspective.

Please feel free to reach out to my office should you have any further questions or require any additional clarification.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Wawzonek', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Wawzonek  
Minister of Finance

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs