



June 5, 2024

MLA Sheryl Yakeleya  
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### **Oral Question 163-20(1): Supports available for residents of Enterprise**

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on May 23, 2024, in the House regarding supports available for residents of Enterprise.

I offer the following in fulfillment of the commitments related to providing a detailed list of supports that the department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) provided to Enterprise residents and availability of additional federal programs:

#### **GNWT Supports Provided**

##### Valuables

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) engaged Team Rubicon to sift through all impacted properties to search for valuables before any hazardous materials or debris were removed. Residents were appreciative of this effort, as a number of highly sentimental valuables were recovered and returned to their owners.

##### Hazardous Materials

MACA arranged for the removal of hazardous materials that presented life-safety risks, such as asbestos, from insured and uninsured homes and businesses if the owner provided consent. There were 25 lots that were identified as needing asbestos mitigation and/or hydrocarbon soil remediation. This work commenced in October 2023 and has now been completed, with the hazardous materials being disposed of at the Clean Harbors Waste Management facility in Ryley, Alberta.

##### Debris Clean-up

MACA has engaged contractors to remove debris and ash from all uninsured residential sites in Enterprise. This includes removal of concrete and metal debris, as well as hazardous trees. Final debris and ash removal started in May 2024. Samples of the materials were determined to be too contaminated to be disposed of at any landfills in the Northwest Territories and are being transported to High Level, Alberta. The wood from the trees was left in the community at the request of the Hamlet. A final round of sampling will be conducted to verify that fire debris and fire related contaminants were properly removed. It is MACA's intent to leave uninsured lots free from identified fire impacts and restored to preexisting topographical condition for the owners to rebuild at their discretion.

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### Environmental Reviews

MACA arranged for environmental reviews of impacted primary residences and buildings, as well as evaluating the overall environmental risks to affected communities. Where they were conducted on identified lots, the initial environmental reviews were provided to home and businesses owners, and the overall environmental review was provided to the community government. Further environmental testing will be undertaken after the debris clean-up has been completed on all uninsured primary residential lots and other locations throughout the community, and reports will be provided to property owners.

### Temporary Accommodations

MACA has been providing temporary accommodations supports to uninsured homeowners impacted by the wildfire since the evacuation order was lifted in September and will continue to provide these supports until August 31, 2024. These homeowners are either being housed temporarily in commercial accommodations in Hay River (cabin or apartment-style hotels) or provided a displacement allowance if they chose to find their own accommodations.

MACA also provided temporary accommodations or a displacement allowance from mid-August to November 30, 2023, to tenants who lost their rental accommodations and were without insurance. This approach is consistent with Government of the Northwest Territories support provided in previous disaster events and allowed tenants the time necessary to make their own arrangements for future accommodations.

### Evacuee Income Disruption Support Program

The Department of Finance developed this program to offer one-time targeted financial relief to ease the financial burdens faced by evacuees who suffered a loss of employment income due to extended evacuation periods. It was available to residents 17 years old and older whose employment had been affected by an evacuation lasting more than seven days (onetime payment of \$750).

### Evacuation Travel Support Program

The Department of Finance announced this program on August 25, 2023, to assist NWT residents who, by order, evacuated their home community because of the 2023 wildfires. Eligible individuals who evacuated by vehicle were provided with a one-time direct deposit of \$750 per vehicle evacuated to a southern jurisdiction, or \$400 per vehicle evacuated within the NWT.

### Boundary Survey Verification

MACA has arranged for a contractor to undertake a review of lot property boundary markings, which is a recommended step after a fire where survey monuments or other property boundary markings may have been destroyed.

### **Federal Programs**

The GNWT's Disaster Assistance Policy (DAP), which is aligned with the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA), was applied to the 2023 Wildfires. Since the DAP has been applied, the GNWT has been working closely with the federal government and advocating for disaster assistance for uninsured residents and businesses who were impacted by the 2023 wildfires to help with rebuilding.

Specifically, the GNWT engaged directly with Public Safety Canada (PSC), the Privy Council Office (PCO), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on the availability of federal programs to assist uninsured home and business owners impacted by the 2023 wildfires with financial assistance to rebuild. The GNWT also asked that those departments engage other federal departments and agencies, such as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), to explore other federal programs that could assist with recovery.

Unfortunately, the federal government has advised the GNWT that while availability of insurance is a factor in assessing eligibility under the federal DFAA, affordability of insurance is not a factor in assessing eligibility. This means that uninsured homes and businesses in Enterprise are not eligible for financial assistance to help with rebuilding, as fire insurance was available and the GNWT DAP aligns with the DFAA. If residents or businesses are able to provide documentation to show that insurance was sought but not available to them, then they may be eligible for assistance under the DAP. Residents or businesses who are able to obtain information from their insurance company confirming that insurance would not have been provided to them prior to the 2023 wildfire should be encouraged to contact MACA.

Additionally, the PCO and PSC have also advised the GNWT that they have explored options across the federal government and confirmed that there are no other federal programs available to assist with rebuilding uninsured homes and businesses in Enterprise.

For other supports that may have been provided directly to Enterprise (i.e. through the Red Cross, non-profit organizations, private businesses or individuals), please reach out to the Hamlet directly. In the meantime, I trust this information shows that both the GNWT has exhausted all avenues with the federal government to seek additional financial support for Enterprise. If you are aware of other options that we have not explored, I am open to hearing what those are and having further discussions with you.

Thank you.



Vince McKay  
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

c: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly  
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning