

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Reacts to 2019-20 GNWT Budget

INUVIK, NT (February 13, 2019) – Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) sees both opportunity and gaps in the 2019-20 budget announced February 6 by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

IRC Chair and CEO Duane Ningaqsiq Smith said, “It is a good budget, but lacks some clarity and specifics to ensure vital services for our Region. And, we have continued concerns about needed services reaching remote ISR communities, when we are seeing areas of increased centralization to Yellowknife.”

Investment in highway maintenance is promising, but IRC would like to see the GNWT allocate these funds specifically to ensure the road is maintained all the way to Tuktoyaktuk. The Dempster Highway and Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway (ITH) are critical corridors for essential supplies: Inuvik’s fuel supply was cut off for 9 weeks during this year’s fall freeze-up, and the ITH will require maintenance as the new road surface continues to settle. And while money for economic diversification, especially tourism, is important with slow-down in the resource sector, IRC sees missed opportunity in promoting the newest feature of the NWT Tourism landscape- Tuktoyaktuk and the ITH. Residents of Tuktoyaktuk need funds to help capitalize on this tourist draw. No funds have been set aside for ITH enhancements in the 2019-20 GNWT budget.

Areas of priority within GNWT community wellness, including investment in more counsellors in the Beaufort Delta, as well as focus on rehabilitation service for children is positive, especially if it can build upon GNWT-IRC’s in-place programming with Early Childhood Intervention Pilot Project, and add to support services already being delivered by IRC Student and Family Support Workers. IRC had hoped to see funding for a long-term care facility for elders for the region; disappointingly, that was not announced. IRC is also concerned to see country food programming cut, or defunded, in the 2019-20 GNWT budget.

IRC does see opportunity in the funding expansion of school curriculum and teaching resources for Northern Studies, with more Northern Distance Learning, as a place where IRC’s recently launched IFA-101 E-learning can find a broader reach in educating the younger generation about this region, their history, and the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA).

And, while it is good to see ongoing funding of the Legal Aid Commission- once again, the far north has yet been left out of the GNWT’s funding considerations. The availability of legal services – let alone affordable legal service - in the remote communities of the NWT is scarce. The GNWT has centralized almost all of its legal services over the last 5 years, leaving a wide access to justice gap in the ISR. Without support and guidance from legal resources, people remain in vulnerable situations much longer than they should – sometimes with devastating consequences. Similarly, increases in Culture, Heritage, and Language funding have been concerningly centralized to positions only in Yellowknife.

IRC will continue to advocate for all communities in the ISR, as well as the region, in all areas of concern and priority, and across all levels of government.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Elizabeth Kolb **Communications Advisor**
Tel: (867) 777-7055 Email: comms@inuvialuit.com