

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Yellowknife Businesses Face Severe Labour Crisis Due to Immigration Challenges

The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce is urging immediate action as immigration barriers push businesses toward crisis. The situation is critical: a recent survey of Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce members revealed that based on survey projections, **50% of businesses** have employees with **work permits expiring in 2025 or 2026**. Impacting an estimated **717 workers**—representing approximately **4.97% of the workforce within Yellowknife**—could be affected by expiring permits this year. Additionally, the Yellowknife currently has an unemployment rate of just 4% leaving businesses with no available workforce to replace lost employees.

The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce is calling for the federal government take immediate action on immigration policy to address the severe labour shortages impacting businesses in the Northwest Territories.

### Urgent Immigration Challenges in the NWT

- **Increase Nominee Program Allocations** – The Northwest Territories Nominee Program (NTNP) is drastically undersized for labour market demands. Hundreds of applications were submitted when only 90 spots were made available, businesses unable to secure placements face severe staffing shortages, threatening their operations and economic contributions.
- **Extend Expiring Work Permits** – Businesses across the NWT are on the verge of crisis as critical employees face the loss of their work permits, leaving employers with a minimal workforce to replace them. With the territory at full employment, companies cannot afford to lose skilled workers without severe operational disruptions. Without immediate federal action to extend permits, businesses will be forced to cut services, reduce hours, or shut down entirely. A labour crisis of this scale also undermines Canada’s Arctic sovereignty by destabilizing the very businesses that sustain northern communities.



## A Call for Long-Term Solutions

The Chamber is requesting a sustainable immigration strategy that must include:

- **LMIA Exemption for the NWT** – Due to severe labour shortages, the Chamber is calling for an exemption from the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) process, similar to those granted in other workforce-challenged regions.
- **Pan-Territorial Immigration Strategy** – The North requires a regional immigration strategy tailored to its unique economic and demographic challenges. The Atlantic Immigration Program has proven successful in attracting and retaining workers in the maritime provinces. The federal government must commit to a similar targeted approach for the North, ensuring businesses can access the workforce they need to grow and sustain operations.

The Northwest Territories is strategically vital to Canada's future. If the federal government is serious about Arctic sovereignty, national security, and northern economic development, immigration policy must reflect these priorities. A regionally tailored immigration strategy, developed in partnership with territorial and local stakeholders, is essential to attracting and retaining skilled workers in the NWT.

For further information, please contact:

Matt Halliday  
Executive Director  
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce  
executivedirector@ykchamber.com  
867-920-4944

