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Honourable Caitlin Cleveland
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment
Government of the Northwest Territories
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

April 2, 2026

Re: Urgent Request for GNWT Participation in Temporary Foreign Worker Program Measures

Dear Minister Cleveland,

We are writing to express strong support for the Government of Canada's recently announced measures to support rural and remote employers through targeted adjustments to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program[1], which could begin as early as April 1, 2026, with implementation possible within two weeks of a positive request from a province or territory. We encourage the Government of the Northwest Territories to engage with federal partners to ensure the territory is included.

Current labour market conditions in Yellowknife warrant immediate action. Latest labour force data from Statistics Canada indicates unemployment in Yellowknife is 3.5%[2], reflecting a persistently tight labour market operating below levels typically associated with balance. Employers are competing over a limited and insufficient labour pool, resulting in upward wage pressure, constrained hiring, and reduced productivity. Many essential services, including grocery stores, food distribution, fuel services, and hospitality and tourism, rely on a functioning workforce and are currently dependent on immigration programs to close persistent labour gaps.

The federal program, as announced on March 13, 2026, is designed as a targeted, time-limited measure under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to provide short-term relief to rural and remote employers facing acute labour constraints. The Chamber supports this approach, as it provides targeted, short-term relief while maintaining discipline against labour oversupply and allows for reassessment based on real labour market data.

Given the clear and demonstrated labour shortage, the Chamber strongly encourages the GNWT to submit a request to the federal government in the immediate term to enable participation in this program. With implementation possible within two weeks of a positive request, timely action will be critical to ensure employers in the Northwest Territories can benefit. In the absence of a credible near-term alternative to address workforce constraints, this program represents an immediate and necessary step.

In parallel, we note that the Chamber participated in public engagement processes related to territorial immigration programming, which were intended to inform updated strategic policy and program direction. A report or plan was anticipated in 2025-26. We would appreciate an update on the status of this work and how it aligns with current workforce planning priorities.

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This also forms part of a broader strategic discussion on workforce planning in relation to upcoming major projects, including ensuring northern businesses are positioned to participate, support delivery, and generate lasting economic benefits for the Northwest Territories.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with the GNWT and federal partners to support a coordinated workforce strategy that aligns with upcoming economic activity. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further; however, given the urgency, we encourage the GNWT to take immediate steps to engage federal partners and enable this measure to be applied in the Northwest Territories.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry
President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Sources:

[1] Government of Canada, *Government of Canada taking action to support rural employers under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program*: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2026/03/government-of-canada-taking-action-to-support-rural-employers-under-the-temporary-foreign-worker-program.html

[2] Statistics Canada, *Regional unemployment rates used by the Employment Insurance program, three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted (Table 14-10-0354-01):* *https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410035401*