

News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Nunavut committed to supporting NWT wildfire evacuation efforts

Iqaluit, Nunavut (August 17, 2023) – The Government of Nunavut remains committed to supporting our neighbours and ensuring all Nunavut residents affected by wildfires in the Northwest Territories (NWT) are safe after last night’s decision by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to evacuate the City of Yellowknife by Friday at noon, local time.

“Our hearts are heavy in Nunavut today as we look to our neighbours in the Northwest Territories where wildfires are devastating their communities. We have connected personally with our friend and colleague, NWT Premier Caroline Cochrane, and our legislative colleagues in the Kitikmeot region,” said Premier P.J. Akeeagok.

“As the capital city of Yellowknife and surrounding communities work to evacuate some 20,000 residents, we also acknowledge the many communities throughout the NWT under evacuation orders and alerts. We know many families are displaced from their homes, including the relatives and loved ones of Nunavummiut. This tragedy is deeply felt.”

All Nunavut residents under the government's care are safe and have either left or are booked to leave Yellowknife by noon Friday. This includes those on medical and duty travel, and clients under the responsibility of Family Services and Justice.

As a pre-emptive measure, the Departments of Health and Community and Government Services (CGS) worked with Canadian North to procure a charter flight to transfer all medical travellers and escorts from Yellowknife to Edmonton. Late Wednesday night, all 85 medical travellers and escorts were accounted for and arrived safely in Edmonton.

These travellers spent the night at Larga Kitikmeot in Leduc, Alberta, and are either continuing their medical care there or are safely awaiting repatriation to their home communities.

“My heartfelt empathy extends to those affected by wildfires threatening communities in the Northwest Territories and to Nunavummiut journeying south to access medical care,” said Minister of Health John Main. “We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate this uncertainty and unforeseen challenges while prioritizing patient safety, well-being, and access to quality care.”

For Nunavummiut currently in the NWT, please visit the [Government of the Northwest Territories’ website](#) for support and instructions on how to evacuate.

Patients in need of urgent care are being prioritized. All Kitikmeot medevacs will be sent to Edmonton.

For questions and concerns regarding upcoming medical appointments affected by the evacuation of Yellowknife, please contact your local health centre. Individuals with questions regarding medical travel scheduled in Yellowknife may contact Kitikmeot Medical Travel toll-free at 1-844-886-8010 or, after hours, 983-4506 and 983-5196.

Considering the NWT’s role in connecting the Kitikmeot region with southern Canada, a GN inter-departmental committee is assessing ongoing repercussions and impacts as issues arise related to transportation and supply to Nunavut. The government has met with community leaders and will continue to provide updates and discuss any concerns.

“This tragic situation in the NWT is one more example of the close connection between our communities in the North and the importance of working together to protect our communities against ever changing threats,” said CGS Minister David Joanase. “The forest fires in the Northwest Territories are devastating and my department is fully committed to working with our counterparts in the Government of Northwest Territories and our communities here in Nunavut to respond to and recover from this unprecedented event.”

###

Media Contact:

Casey Lessard
Director, Communications
Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs
867-975-6004
clessard2@gov.nu.ca

ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ ᐱᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ www.gov.nu.ca.

News releases are available in Inuktitut, English, Inuinnaqtun and French on www.gov.nu.ca.

Tuhaqtitaujukhat hailihimajun Inuktitut, Qablunaatun, Inuinnaqtun Uviitullu uvani www.gov.nu.ca.

Les communiqués de presse sont disponibles en inuktitut, en anglais, en inuinnaqtun et en français au www.gov.nu.ca.