



REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT: Office of the SAO

DATE: May 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Department of Defence Familiarization Tour

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HAY RIVER approves the Department of Defence Familiarization Tour Briefing Note and endorses the execution of the report's identified Takeaways and Next Steps by the Economic Development Committee

BACKGROUND:

In recognition of the significant economic opportunities expected to arise from the Government of Canada's focus on Arctic sovereignty, the Town of Hay River has taken deliberate steps to increase its engagement with Department of National Defence (DND) investments in the Northwest Territories. These efforts align with the Community Economic Development Strategy and the Town's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan.

On March 22-24th, the HREDC sent a delegation to Yellowknife. The purpose of the trip was to enhance understanding of Defence planning initiatives and to engage directly with key stakeholders. In addition to the public session, a series of meetings and networking opportunities were arranged with organizations and departments involved in DND activities and other Arctic sovereignty major projects across the NWT.

A briefing note of the delegation's trip to Yellowknife is attached. It includes several takeaways and next steps that are recommended for undertaking to potential increase economic opportunity in the community. These activities are supported by existing operating budgets assigned to implementing the Community Economic Development Strategy.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION, BYLAWS, STUDIES, PLANS:

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

No increase to operational budgets.

ALTERNATIVES TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

Do not proceed with identified next steps.

ATTACHMENTS:

Briefing Note: DND Familiarization Tour



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Submitted by:

Reviewed by:

Glenn Smith
Senior Administrative Officer
May 8, 2026



Briefing Note: DND Familiarization Tour

Hay River Economic Development Committee

Prepared by: Glenn Smith, SAO

Date: May 5, 2026

Background and Purpose

In recognition of the significant economic opportunities expected to arise from the Government of Canada's focus on Arctic sovereignty, the Town of Hay River has taken deliberate steps to increase its engagement with Department of National Defence (DND) investments in the Northwest Territories. These efforts align with the Community Economic Development Strategy and the Town's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan.

On March 19, 2026, the Hay River Economic Development Committee (HREDC) convened a meeting with Hay River MLAs to discuss opportunities related to these emerging investments. One of the takeaways from the meeting was that the HREDC should attend DND's scheduled public engagement session in Yellowknife.

On March 22-24th, the HREDC sent a delegation to Yellowknife. The purpose of the trip was to enhance understanding of Defence planning initiatives and to engage directly with key stakeholders. In addition to the public session, a series of meetings and networking opportunities were arranged with organizations and departments involved in DND activities and other Arctic sovereignty major projects across the NWT.

Objectives

Three specific objectives were identified for the HREDC's travel to Yellowknife:

1. Gain a comprehensive understanding of current and planned DND projects;
2. Build relationships with key stakeholders and potential partners;
3. Promote Hay River's economic value proposition and capacity to support DND initiatives.

Participants

- Wally Schuman – Chair, HREDC
- Keith Dohey – Deputy Mayor
- Glenn Smith – Senior Administrative Officer

Meeting and Event Schedule

The delegation participated in a full two-day schedule of formal meetings, complemented by informal networking opportunities.

Wednesday, April 22



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- Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and DND / Infrastructure and Environment representatives
- Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT); Industry, Tourism and Investment
 - Melissa Cyr, Assistant Deputy Minister

Thursday, April 23

- GNWT; Executive and Indigenous Affairs
 - Tracy St. Denis, Assistant Deputy Minister
- Det'on Cho Corporation and Tlicho Investment Corporation
 - Mark Lewis, President and CEO
 - Paul Gruner, CEO
- City of Yellowknife
 - Ben Hendriksen, Mayor
 - Stephen Van Dine, City Manager
- DND Public Meeting

Key Highlights

1. Acquired detailed insight into NORAD Modernization and Continental Defence Infrastructure plans including the FOLs (Inuvik and Yellowknife) and Northern Operational Support Hubs (NOSH) project scope, timelines, and procurement processes
2. Effectively communicated Hay River's value proposition to the DND NORAD project team and key government and industry stakeholders
3. Established direct points of contact with key DND NORAD personnel
4. Strengthened relationships with the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and identified potential partnership opportunities
5. Reinforced the importance of GNWT investment in the revitalization of rail and marine transportation systems
6. Received formal recognition at the DND public meeting by Mayor Hendriksen for HREDC/Town of Hay River engagement



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Takeaways and Next Steps

1. Finalize the Hay River Arctic Defence & Sovereignty Investment Economic Development Roadmap to guide local Town related activities
2. Develop “flat sheet” marketing materials promoting Hay River industry for DND and prime and subcontractor benefit
3. Initiate follow-up discussions with DND regarding potential Hay River operating location opportunities (e.g., logistics node)
4. Advance lobbying to revitalize local transportation assets (eg. Rail, marine, highway, airport) in preparation for DND related demand
5. Explore funding opportunities through the Arctic Infrastructure Fund for improvements to transportation related assets.
6. Explore potential access to the Capital Access Program for dual use infrastructure benefits
7. Support the revitalization of the Hay River Chamber of Commerce to effectively market and support business to business opportunities
8. Brief key local businesses on emerging DND and major projects opportunities
9. Engage with prime contractors involved in DND projects to market and support potential DND project bids
10. Attend the Inuvik Arctic Expo to continue to develop DND project knowledge, network, and market Hay River opportunities
11. Collaborate with the Yellowknife Chamber on a Hay River familiarization tour

Reference Materials

1. DND Public Meeting – Recorded: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHhEUzcOzkw>
 - a. Presentation Deck: <https://events.yellowknife.ca/meetings/Detail/2026-04-20-1205-Special-Governance-and-Priorities-Committee/4d402639-9fa5-4baf-b38c-b42f012dca76>
2. DND/CAF Infrastructure in the North – Presentation Deck



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DND Public Meeting