September 14, 2026

Fred Pedersen, MLA, Chair
Committee of the Whole
Legislative Assembly
Iqaluit, NU X0A 3H0

Dear Chairperson,

During my appearance before the Committee of the Whole's review of the Department of Justice's 2026-27 Main Estimates, I committed to following up on a few items. Please find below my responses on those matters.

Follow up item 1: Coroner Positions

MLA Mike had asked how many coroner positions were filled.

There are two full-time coroner positions: the Chief Coroner and the Deputy Chief Coroner. Both positions are filled. The new Chief Coroner was hired following an open competition and was appointed in August 2026.

The Coroner's Office also oversees community coroners who provide local assistance to the Chief Coroner and Deputy Chief Coroner in performing duties under the *Coroners Act* on an as needed basis. These individuals are not GN employees. They are community members compensated for their time performing coroner duties as directed by the Chief Coroner. There are currently 11 community coroners located in Iqaluit (4), Whale Cove (1), Arctic Bay (1), Rankin Inlet (1), Cambridge Bay (2), and Arviat (2). Two community coroners were recently appointed in August 2026.

For communities currently without a coroner, the Chief Coroner receives assistance from local health staff and police officers pursuant to the delegation authority subsection 11(3) the *Coroners Act*.

The Coroner's Office and Department of Justice continue to raise awareness and support the recruitment of community coroners across Nunavut.

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Follow up item 2: Therapeutic Justice Program Protocol Agreement

MLA Kablutsiak asked about tabling the therapeutic justice program protocol agreement.

The therapeutic justice protocol agreement for Arviat was signed in 2021 by the GN departments of Justice and Health, the RCMP, Public Prosecution Service of Canada, the Legal Servies Board, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. A similar agreement is in place for the Cambridge Bay program.

The document is primarily operational in nature, outlining practical procedures such as how clients are referred to the program. Currently, there are no plans to table it in the Legislative Assembly; however, if MLAs would like to view the document we can provide a copy.

Finally, with the planned expansion of the program to Pond Inlet, the Community Justice division plans to engage with the signing partners about potential updates to the agreement(s) that could apply to all three communities.

Follow up item 3: Justice Committees

MLA Mike had questions about the status of community justice committee applications and appointments.

The Community Justice division has found the recruitment of community justice committee members challenging in recent years. The division is currently reviewing the program to identify ways to improve engagement and recruitment.

The most recent public call was issued in November-December 2025 and included a territory-wide interview on CBC. While these generated some inquiries, most recruitment occurs through local engagement and word-of-mouth in communities across the territory throughout the year. This outreach is usually done by the local community justice outreach worker or community justice specialist and leads to individuals being identified on an ongoing basis.

The Department is currently reviewing six applications for potential appointment. We anticipate appointing members starting in the fall 2026, with more to follow throughout 2027 as applications are received and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

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Follow up item 4: Regional Justices of the Peace

MLA Attagutaluk asked about the status of a 2024-25 priority regarding a regional justice of the peace program.

The Department of Justice is working with the Nunavut Court of Justice to enhance the delivery of the justice of the peace program. Although previous business plans identified the exploration of more regional development, the current focus is on sustainably staffing the three fulltime justice of the peace positions in Iqaluit (one is permanently filled, another on internal transfer) and recruiting local justices of the peace across Nunavut.

The Justice of the Peace Appointment and Remuneration Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Justice and operates independently of the Government of Nunavut, is responsible for reviewing and recommending justice of the peace appointments.

Follow up item 5: Justice of the Peace Program Funding

MLA Qammaniq inquired about an apparent increase in funding of $149,000 to the justice of the peace program.

The Court Services budget decreased by $149,000 between 2025-26 and 2026-27 due to the reprofiling and moving of one position (court interpreter) to establish the associate deputy minister position for the Department of Justice within the Directorate branch. This did not affect the justice of the peace program.

The increase in the justice of peace program budget is $38,000, increasing from $1.617 million in 2025-26 to $1.655 million in 2026-27, due to salary increases through the collective bargaining agreement. While the initial projected budget was $1.27 million, this was updated to $1.617 million through internal reallocation to address court library and chambers expenses.

Follow up item 6: Multi-Jurisdiction Registry Access Service

Finally, MLA Qammaniq asked about specific actions the department will take to implement the Multi-Jurisdiction Registry Access Service (MRAS) in Nunavut.

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In 2027-28, the Department of Justice's Legal Registries division will develop a work plan for joining the Multi-Jurisdiction Registry Access Service (MRAS). The plan will include a technical, legal, privacy, security, and operational assessment, a gap analysis, and implementation roadmap to modernize legal registry systems to allow our participation in MRAS.

Sincerely,

Hon. George Hickes
Minister of Justice

cc Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Christine Ellsworth, Deputy Minster

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