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PRESS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

WITH MAJOR PROJECTS COMING, FIRST NATIONS MUST COME FIRST

[OCTOBER 29, 2026, YELLOWKNIFE, DENENDEH] – With billions in major projects coming to Denendeh, the Dene Nation is calling on the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to put Dene First Nations first in line for contracts, so as much money as possible flows directly to Dene businesses and communities. In March, Canada announced a plan backed by more than $40 billion to defend and build the North. The Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor and the Taltson Hydro Expansion have been referred to the federal Major Projects Office. Much of this work will take place on Dene lands.

Yet in July, the GNWT abandoned the Indigenous procurement policy it had worked on since 2021, adopting only a definition of an Indigenous business for reporting. Yukon and Nunavut already have such policies. In the NWT, Dene businesses get no Indigenous preference on GNWT contracts, even on projects the GNWT leads.

“These projects will be built on Dene lands, and First Nations must be first in line to build them,” said Dene National Chief George Mackenzie. “Every contract won by a Dene business means jobs for our young people and wealth for future generations. If Dene First Nations do not come first, the money flows south.”
The Dene Nation is calling on the GNWT to:

- **Act now:** Adopt an Indigenous procurement policy before major project contracts are awarded.
- **Put Dene First Nations first:** Give Dene businesses first access and real bid advantages.
- **Keep the wealth at home:** Set public targets for contract dollars going to First Nations businesses.

Mahsi,

George Mackenzie,
Dene National Chief, Regional Chief AFN-NT Region

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