

**Department of Education and Economic Development
Economic Development Division**

**Ministerial Statement, Tom Evans
January 2026**

As a reminder, our annual plan for the Division focuses on business development, community development, policy, data collection and offering supports.

Business Development

As of January 9, our Inuit Business Registry has 270 certified businesses. We have three businesses listed under “Industrial & Commercial”, “Retail” and “Logistics & Expedition and “Tourism”. Two new business applications are under review.

Regarding procurement, seven (7) packages were received from Vale with our Division nominating eighteen (18) Inuit businesses and one (1) QBE nominations.

There are a total of 15 business clients: 11 in startup, 4 in growth.

The Business Development Committee (or BDC) met for our Q4 meeting on January 14 (virtually, as weather prevented travel to Rigolet). We continue to address business concerns, specifically the open book negotiation process and Inuit benefits, related to Voisey’s Bay IBA implementation. We have formally expanded the internal NG BDC team to include the IBA Coordinator, Trent Pottle, to assist in follow up, information sharing and expanded expertise related to the IBA.

We are exploring training for 2026 including expanded instructor options and incubator models. A training schedule will be promoted for 2026-2027 fiscal year as of April 2026.

On January 16, we met with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Hydro Quebec and NL Hydro, along with Nunatsiavut Group of Companies (NGC), Inuit Development Limited Partnership (IDLP) and Innu Nation representatives to discuss funding options to prepare for the Gull Island development. A proposal is being drafted for the ISC Strategic Partnerships Initiative (SPI) program to help prepare the Innu and Inuit workforce and businesses to take advantage of this opportunity. Proposal submission expected for February 13, 2026.

Community Development

We have two funding programs: the Community Economic Development Fund (CEDP) and FFA. We have approved \$18,000 to the MICG for their Arena Assistant Position.

The new Community Capacity Program has completed a 2nd round of updates, and was sent to Legal/Finance Review on December 18. It will be presented to NEC once approved.

A consultant, BurnaCove Consulting, has been hired to prepare NG's proposal to the \$1.73m Northern Isolated Communities Fund (NICI) program. We anticipate submitting a proposal to ACOA as of February 2026.

Policy & Data Collection

We will finalize the draft updates of our Compliance Policies and Procedures in February. The procedures dictate how our Inuit Business Registry is managed. We will prepare a public engagement campaign was drafting complete to get beneficiary feedback.

Under NG's Recruitment and Retention initiative, the Labour Market Assessment RFP is expected to be released before end of January.

As of January 13, we have submitted a request to meet with Lin Paddock, new provincial minister of Jobs and Growth and Minister of Rural Development.

Self-Employment Benefits Program

This program provides EI-type benefits for 6-months to new business startups. We currently have two clients, in the construction and legal services sector, accessing benefits and one application under review. The program is open for applications.

Business Financial Support

The new Business Grant Program has received the second round of revisions from Legal on December 8. Updating is ongoing and will be submitted by January 23. Once complete, this program will complete the required GovNL consultation under LILCA provision 7.8.7. Once provincial feedback received and incorporated, the program will be sent to NEC for approval.