

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

**Ministerial Statement, Tom Evans
March 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 February 18, our Inuit Business Registry has 272 certified businesses. We have two new businesses listed under “Fisheries” and “Retail”.

Regarding procurement, two (2) packages were received from Vale with our Division nominating ten (10) Inuit businesses and one (1) QBE nomination.

The Business Development Committee (or BDC) met with Innu Nation and Innu Development Limited Partnership (IDL) on February 17 to discuss a recent failed QBE and the need to clarify the open book negotiation process and Inuit benefits, related to Voisey’s Bay IBA implementation. We are drafting a letter for the President’s office, and will collaborate with the Innu Nation, to request a formal meeting to address these issues.

The 2026-27 training schedule will be promoted in April 2026.

Community Development

We have two funding programs: the Community Economic Development Fund (CEDP) and FFA. We are consulting with NG departments on two applications from the RICG for traditional craft producers and a floating dock application. Review to be finalized in March.

The new Community Capacity Program, which provide stable funding and support for CDO positions at the ICGs, has been approved by NEC on February 11. The program will run for 5 years valued at \$1,500,000 cost shared between the Divisions of Economic Development and Tourism. We are prepping job descriptions and workplans to be sent for feedback from ICGs prior to the program launch on April 1, 2026.

We have secured \$988,012 under the Northern Isolated Communities Fund (NICI) program. This project will buy new or upgrade existing Community Freezers in each Nunatsiavut community. We are preparing to submit a second proposal by March 6th valued at \$784,988 for greenhouse upgrades, industrial vacuum sealers and purchase of

community freezer stock (char, cod). The NICI program was expanded on February 19. Once further funding details are provided, we will submit a third proposal to the program for this additional funding by Summer 2026.

Policy & Data Collection

We are finalizing contract details to 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 to get beneficiary feedback.

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

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. No response received to date.

The 2023 Economic Profile series is complete. These have been publicly released on February 26 on social media and the NG website. The profiles were completed in partnership with MUN's Regional Analytics Lab (RanLab) and are the first of their kind for Nunatsiavut specific economic snapshots in NL. The profiles provide data on industry, transportation, public service, income, employment, education, labor force, age, sex, governance, remoteness and local businesses. The 2025 series will be completed by our Divisional staff in 2027.

The Division has secured \$150,000 from ITC, through Indigenous Services Canada funding, to develop our Labour Database. We are currently confirming the contractor process and will begin the 10-month development period in late March.

Self-Employment Benefits Program

We are providing EI-type benefits to one (1) client starting a legal services business and completed benefits for one (1) client who started construction business. The program is open for applications.

Business Financial Support

The new Business Grant Program has completed a second round of revisions. We are preparing the program for required GovNL consultation under LILCA provision 7.8.7. Once provincial feedback received and incorporated, the program will be sent to NEC for approval.