

## **The Disaster Assistance Policy**

The Disaster Assistance Policy (DAP) is a Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) policy approved by and issued under the authority of Cabinet, which may provide financial assistance to community governments, small businesses, and residents of the Northwest Territories who have suffered damage as a result of a widespread natural disaster such as a flood or other severe weather event.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) administers the Policy on behalf of the GNWT. Most recently the DAP was applied to the 2021 flooding that affected Jean Marie River; Fort Simpson; Fort Good Hope; and Little Buffalo River (because it is within Fort Resolution municipal boundaries).

## **Changes to the DAP**

The GNWT has updated DAP to better support residents after a disaster, address gaps and inefficiencies that became apparent during the 2021 flood season, and to better align with Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangement (DFAA).

MACA has established a Ministerial Disaster Assistance Funding Policy to better guide the administration of financial assistance.

Generally, the proposed amendments are intended to achieve the following:

- simplify and improve the efficiency of the delivery of disaster assistance;
- modernize and clarify definitions and terminology; and
- maximize the amount of reimbursement the GNWT receives from Canada under federal DFAA.

The changes that will have the most impact to community governments, small businesses, and residents include:

- Expands eligibility for small businesses to include self-employed commercial hunters, fishers, trappers, and other harvesters of natural resources; non-profit organizations; and persons providing rental accommodations. This change is consistent with the DFAA eligibility and recognizes that some non-profits provide essential services.
- Sets a minimum amount of damage that must have occurred for community governments (5% of Operations and Maintenance budget), small businesses (\$5,000), and residents (\$1,000) before disaster assistance is provided. This change emphasizes that DAP is intended to help with costs and not meant to replace insurance coverage.

- Provides the ability for advance payments of up to 50% of the preliminary assessment of the total claim value. This change allows for assistance to be provided sooner and ensures that we do not overpay residents beyond their final claim amounts.
- Increases maximum assistance from 80% to 90% of the assigned value of damage. This change is comparable with what other jurisdictions provide and is in line with DFAA eligibility.
- Increases maximum assistance from \$100,000 to \$240,000 for residents and small businesses and does not set a maximum for community governments. This change reflects what is provided in other jurisdictions and takes a conservative average of the limits provided for private sector maximums across provinces and territories.
- Removed the Disaster Assistance Committee functions from DAP and placed the authority of these functions with the Minister (i.e., establishing policies and guidelines for eligible expenses). This change is consistent with other jurisdictions.
- The cost of repairing or replacing a home if it was built in an area after it was known or designated as being disaster-prone (e.g., flood zone) are not eligible, however, if mitigation measures have taken place, or a flood level exceeded historic high-water mark, the cost may be eligible. This is consistent with the DFAA and other jurisdictions.
- Limits the number of times disaster assistance can be provided to a single property to 3 total times, dependent on mitigation factors. This change reflects that the DFAA allows for assistance to be provided to a structure located in a disaster-prone area.
- Those eligible for assistance are required to register in order for their claim to be processed. This change will help make the application process for claims more efficient.

### **Eligible and Ineligible Expenses**

To be eligible for assistance, damages or losses must be assessed and verified as being caused by the disaster. Assessment and verification will be carried out by a third party recognized by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Eligible and non-eligible expenses are outlined in the Ministerial Disaster Assistance Funding Policy. Program Guidelines have been developed to provide eligible applicants with examples of the types of expenses that fall within each category.

### **Pathfinders**

Backgrounder – Government of the Northwest Territories Disaster Assistance Policy Amendments

GNWT Pathfinders can guide applicants through the application process and assist with understanding the DAP. Please email [flood@gov.nt.ca](mailto:flood@gov.nt.ca) or call (867) 767-9161 ext 21031 to connect with a Pathfinder.