



Bill 74 – Forestry Act
NWT Association of Communities
Comments to the
Standing Committee on
Economic Development & the Environment
July 7, 2023

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The NWT Association of Communities, would like to thank the Standing Committee on Economic Development and the Environment for providing us with the opportunity to comment on Bill 74 – The Forest Act.

The NWT Association of Communities

The NWTAC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that represents the interests of 100% of NWT communities.

The NWT Association of Communities was formed in 1966 to represent the interests of community governments in the Northwest Territories. It provides a forum and unified voice for the aspirations of its members.

Our Vision:

“Working together to achieve all that our communities want to be”

Our Mission:

“To work together to serve our communities by addressing common issues, delivering programs and exchanging information. We are the unified voice for communities on municipal goals determined by our members.”

Once again, the first we have heard of an act update is at the consultation phase being completed by the standing committee. This is far too late in process! Not providing comment until after 2nd reading greatly reduces the chance of eliciting change.

While our comments are not intended to overstep the authority of the land and water boards or any Indigenous governments or the Territorial Government, community governments have an important role to play with respect to Forestry Management within and adjacent to Community Boundaries.

We are very proud of our joint application with the Forestry Division to secure \$20M to construct all required Fire Breaks in the 29 communities that have a wildfire risk. It takes the time frame that it would have taken to construct the breaks at current funding levels of 83 years down to 8 years. We look forward to starting this construction next year. We hope that no impediments to this work are included in either the Act or the subsequent regulations.

All 29 communities with wildfire risk in the NWT have had a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) developed. Our Firebreak Program is based on these

plans. Having these CWPP's completed left this project shovel ready. The Forestry Division deserves considerable credit for the preparation of these CWPP's

Beyond the construction of these Wildfire Breaks there will still be many initiatives that will need to be completed in communities such as for example: Fire Smarting, equipment for wildfire fighting in communities, dry hydrants adjacent to appropriate water bodies, policies to transition to Fire Resistant Building Materials among others.

These approaches become even more critical as the Wildfire risk increases due to climate change.

Our commentary on the proposed Forestry Act include:

- We found little reference to the responsibility and authority of community governments within and adjacent to municipal boundaries
- In scanning the document we found only 11 references to community or communities and 2 references to municipalities
- Consultation or at the very least notice should be provided for any licenses or permits, harvesting agreements, forest ecosystem management plans, fire prevention and suppression plans and associated

activities that occur within or adjacent to community boundaries.

- There should be some sort of acknowledgement of complying with various types of community bylaws, including but not limited to, General Plans and Zoning By-laws, fire prevention by-laws, tree harvesting by-laws, soil protection by-laws, open air burning by-laws among others.
- We were not clear as to any sort of appeal process and notification of decisions to the public. Will there be some sort of public registry?
- The responsibility of the community governments for the initial response to incidents as well as primary emergency management needs to be acknowledged.
- Community Governments have been constructing and maintaining firebreaks based on the above referenced Community Wildfire Protection Plans. This role needs to be acknowledged.

We would be pleased to assist with the development of the associated regulations to ensure the interests of community governments are protected.

In closing, we want to once again reiterate that we appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and the Environment on Bill 74 – the Forest Act.

**MY COMMUNITY
MATTERS**