

### **Cost-of-Living in the Northwest Territories**

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to highlight the work done by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to support the Government of the Northwest Territories' priority of lowering the cost-of-living for residents of the Northwest Territories. Progress towards our commitments in this area is essential if we are to improve our residents' quality of life, and attract more people to make their homes in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, Municipal and Community Affairs is assisting community governments to address energy management and improve energy efficiencies. Municipal and Community Affairs serves on the Arctic Energy Alliance Board and has developed a strong partnership with the organization in the area of community energy planning, energy audits, and representing the interests of community governments related to energy management.

The Northwest Territories Asset Management Strategy was released in May 2016. The Strategy works towards supporting communities to meet basic maintenance requirements in order to extend the useful life of their infrastructure. It also takes into account new building technologies that support improvements in energy efficiency as community governments respond and adapt to climate change. In early 2017, Municipal and Community Affairs will roll-out a pilot program to train and support community governments as they implement asset management software.

Through the Department's School of Community Government, community government elected officials and staff are able to access a variety of training related to governance responsibilities and administrative operations. Municipal and Community Affairs is currently reviewing all its course curricula in order to ensure that, where appropriate, content related to energy management, capital and asset management and funding of energy management initiatives is included. All of the various curricula will have been reviewed by the end of fiscal year 2019.

Municipal and Community Affairs is also completing research into the feasibility of enabling Northwest Territories community governments to set up revolving funds for energy efficiency measures. Municipal and Community Affairs has met with the City of Yellowknife to discuss this initiative and will be conducting further stakeholder engagement with other Northwest Territories municipalities in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the programs and support available through the Department, community governments are also able to access various federal funding programs to help with the development of community public infrastructure.

Since 2013, Municipal and Community Affairs has been working with community governments to access funding through the New Building Canada Plan. Under the umbrella of this Plan, the Government of the Northwest Territories has signed an updated Gas Tax Administrative Agreement and the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component, both of which provide funding to community government to support the development of public infrastructure at the community level.

The Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component will provide \$258 million towards Northwest Territories projects. Of that funding, \$38.7 million will go to community governments through the Small Communities Fund provided between 2014 and 2023.

In 2016, the federal government announced two additional funding programs:

- the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund which will provide \$51.7 million for water and wastewater infrastructure before March 2019; and
- the Public Transit Fund which will provide the City of Yellowknife with \$320,000 to support public transit before March 2018.

Our investments into energy efficiency and improved infrastructure for community government help to lower the capital and operational costs for community governments, thereby increasing the supports community governments can provide and ultimately increasing the quality of life for Northwest Territories residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.