

THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE COCHRANE
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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Municipal and Community Affairs's Legislative Agenda

Mr. Speaker, part of my role as the Minister Responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs is to ensure that we have a modern, responsive and made-in-the-north legislative framework. This is no small task, as Municipal and Community Affairs administers 19 statutes in areas that range from property assessment to emergency management to local elections.

The department is currently working on several major legislative initiatives that were identified in the 18th Legislative Assembly's mandate, or that have been directed by the Financial Management Board.

Mr. Speaker, the department is in the process of developing a draft bill to replace the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. This new statute, to be introduced in 2018, will modernize the emergency management framework in the Northwest Territories and will be complemented by an updated Northwest Territories Emergency Plan.

The *Fire Prevention Act* relates to the investigation and reporting of fires, regulates fire hazards, and allows for the adoption of standards for the prevention and extinguishment of fires. It was passed in the mid-1950s and has never been thoroughly reviewed. Significant review and amendment is required in order to ensure that a new Act reflects our modern operating environment and will serve residents into the future. The department has now completed a first round of stakeholder engagement on this very technical piece of legislation. As we identify solutions to some of the issues raised, additional stakeholder engagement will continue through 2018.

Mr. Speaker, in response to both the mandate, and at the direct request of the City of Yellowknife, we have taken the last several months to engage with stakeholders on amendments to the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* that would permit the six tax-based municipalities to:

- provide loans, tied to property taxes, for resident-driven energy efficiency measures, using a modified local improvement charge process; and
- establish municipal hotel levies through the creation of local bylaws.

The feedback we received during this process will help us to propose and develop amendments to the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act* that will respond to the needs of individual communities. Should there be broad support for these proposals, I anticipate bringing forward amendments for consideration in 2018.

In the near future, I plan to introduce an amended *Western Canada Lottery Act* which will provide a framework to support the transition of the operation and administration of the Western Canada Lottery Program inside the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I also intend to introduce legislation in 2018 which will provide for the operation and administration of a 9-1-1 program in the Northwest Territories.

In addition to these mandated legislative initiatives, I have also asked the department to reach out to our primary stakeholders, to identify their most pressing areas of concern. In the fall and winter of 2017 and 2018, we will engage directly with administrative and elected officials in all community governments, in a regionally-based engagement process, to determine what community governments see as the legislative priorities for the department. Through this process, we will gain a better understanding of where we should focus our efforts in the next Legislative Assembly. I am committed to developing a legislative framework which reflects our modern environment and meets the needs of residents.

As you can see, the department has responded to an ambitious legislative agenda, and I am pleased with the progress made to date. I look forward to the opportunity to work with my fellow Members to review and answer questions about each of these initiatives as they come forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.