

SUPPORTING MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Speaker, I would like to update the Members on the progress we have made with our mandate commitment to reduce the municipal funding gap by \$5 million in the life of this government.

We recognize the important role that community governments play in our economy and the provision of core programs and services. Community governments are essential partners in delivering programs and services to meet the need of NWT residents, and they require adequate resources for this important work.

I am pleased to confirm that we are making progress on this mandate commitment. In this fiscal year we added \$2.6 million to community funding and will continue to seek additional increases in future budgets.

Mr. Speaker, this additional community government funding is welcome news to our community governments. Since its beginning, MACA has worked with the NWT Association of Communities and its members on the funding strategy. As part of that ongoing engagement, we are determining how best to allocate the \$2.6 million.

The GNWT is matching the federal investment in Safe Restart Funding for municipalities. This winter, we will be rolling out approximately \$4.7 million to help our communities put in place appropriate precautions to manage public spaces and critical services and safely restart operations.

Reducing the municipal funding gap is not just about additional funding. It is also about supporting communities to provide new opportunities to raise additional revenues, and to reduce or stabilize the cost of delivering core services.

Mr. Speaker, three key initiatives the department is advancing to support community governments in these areas are:

1. MACA is working with other GNWT departments on a process guide on how to transfer land with municipal boundaries and I expect to share the draft this winter. This guide will set the path for providing community governments to acquire ownership and manage land currently held by the GNWT within their boundaries. Community governments will have the ability to take over management functions and enforcement, and, if desired, sell land which offers an opportunity for own source revenue.
2. The department is supporting communities to find efficiencies in their program delivery. Assisting communities to put in place a responsive plan through the asset management system will improve maintenance and lower the costs of equipment failures and emergency repairs. This will allow community leaders to have access to improved information when making investment decisions and be able to maximize their available resources.
3. The NWT Waste Resource Management Strategy has a strong focus for community governments. MACA will be working with communities to eliminate hazardous waste stockpiles within their solid waste sites. Resources and support that we have for community governments in solid waste management are being adapted. Through better management, better operations of their solid waste sites will not only improve environmental stewardship but can significantly increase the lifespan of community sites and defer the need for costly investment.

Mr. Speaker, some community governments face significant pressures to deliver quality programs and services. We see that, we get it. Through our increased investment and support for land management and facility management, we are working hard to help communities manage these challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.