



October 29, 2020

MS. KATRINA NOKLEBY
MLA, GREAT SLAVE

Oral Question 356-19(2): 9-1-1 Actual Operation Costs

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on October 16, 2020, regarding the Northwest Territories (NWT) 9-1-1 program actual operation costs and supports for 9-1-1 program dispatchers.

As mentioned in the House, the NWT 9-1-1 and the COVID-19 8-1-1 services are two different services provided separately through their respective departments to serve different purposes; namely, emergency response and territorial support, resources and information for COVID-19. I am unable to speak to the specifics of the 8-1-1 service, as it remains under the authority of the Premier and the new COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat.

The NWT 9-1-1 program is a new program that began territorial-wide operations in November 2019. The costs of the program are included in the NWT 9-1-1 Annual Report, which will be tabled in the House during the fall 2020 Session. The NWT 9-1-1 Annual Report covers the period from when the program began operations on November 04, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

I can confirm that the Annual Report for this period details the total actual expenses for NWT 9-1-1 as \$1.7 million. This is over the budgeted amount of \$1.417 million. Costs included many one-time expenses related to fit-up costs of the Emergency Communications Centre, the transitioning of staff and resources to the centre, the integration of computer aided dispatch systems, the additions of medical and fire protocol systems, and telecommunications and radio equipment.

The call answer levy is set out within the *NWT 9-1-1 Act* at \$1.70 for the first three years of program operation and as such, no changes to this levy will take place prior to fiscal year 2022-2023 and without approval of this Legislature.

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The NWT 9-1-1 budget and staffing was approved based on the best information available, estimated call volumes and other program factors. For this reason, a program review and evaluation are planned after one year of operational activity, to ensure that actual operational costs and program realities identified will inform go-forward planning.

In the meantime, Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) is managing operational stressors as they arise. MACA, for instance, has added additional relief and term staff to the program and will continue to make staffing adjustments as the operational reality requires.

In terms of staff support related to stress and burnout, the NWT 9-1-1 program has a Telecommunicator Acute/Chronic Stress Management Program that includes a variety of staff supports including:

- Stress management training;
- Quiet rooms and fitness machines to alleviate stress;
- Online and phone therapy available;
- Peer to Peer support through Alberta Critical Incident Network;
- One on one counseling following critical calls; and
- Support from the medical professionals for intervention on particularly traumatic calls.

9-1-1 operators and their families can also access Health and Wellness supports available to all Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) employees. Information on these supports and resources are regularly circulated to all employees and can be found on MyHR. The MyHR Emotional and Mental Health Resources page includes some resources that are particularly suited, including:

- AbilitiCBT - program to help address anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and community members, information overload and stress management.
- Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) - connect you with resources to assist with emotional concerns such as stress and anxiety, as well as financial and family matters and other issues that may occur during this time; and
- LifeSpeak - total well-being platform where GNWT employees and their families can access expert information and videos on a wide range of topics.

As I committed in the House, I will continue to present information related to the operations of NWT 9-1-1, not only to the Premier but to all my colleagues.

Thank you for your interest on this important topic.

Sincerely,



Paulie Chinna
Minister
Municipal and Community Affairs

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Coordinator
Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Deputy Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs