

Repeal of the *Settlements Act*

Mr. Speaker, later today at the appropriate time, I will be giving Notice of Motion for 1st Reading of An Act to Repeal the *Settlements Act*.

The political development of the Northwest Territories has been dramatic since the establishment of a responsible territorial government in 1967. One of the critical elements to our development has been the empowerment of communities to run their own affairs, based on local resources, priorities and conditions. As many Members of this Assembly know from their personal experience, the opportunity to be elected to sit on a community council has provided many of us with the foundation and the knowledge to be able to sit here today. The development of our communities has also contributed greatly to the quality of life we all enjoy today.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the GNWT supported unincorporated settlement councils that acted as advisors to the Settlement Managers. These early councils were well received and councils wanted to pursue more real and meaningful control over their community affairs. While many of these councils became Hamlets, there were some communities that wanted to gain more experience and authority without taking on the full responsibility for community government that accompanies Hamlet status.

For these communities, the GNWT put in place the *Settlements Act*. Through this *Act*, communities were able to be incorporated and could take on more responsibility and learn the business of government.

Over time, communities built on their experience as settlements and have now all moved to other forms of community government. In recent years, Colville Lake has transitioned to a Designated First Nations Authority and the other two incorporated settlements, Enterprise and Fort Resolution, have attained Hamlet status. There are now no longer any settlement communities in the Northwest Territories.

The pace of change over the last 40 years has been quite rapid. Residents and leaders of all communities are to be commended for the work and effort they continue to devote to ensuring that their governance structure evolves based on local needs and priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the outcomes envisioned decades ago when the *Settlements Act* was first put in place have now been accomplished. We can all celebrate the achievement of the long-term goal of the empowerment of the former settlement communities. The *Settlements Act* was a useful and important tool for community development, but it has now served its purpose and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will be advancing a bill to rescind this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.