

**Preparations for H1N1**

Mr. Speaker, we are all well aware that the H1N1 virus has appeared throughout the Northwest Territories and that the second wave of this virus is impacting many of our people. In addition to the excellent primary health and clinical response efforts being undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Services, a lot of work is underway across the GNWT to support prevention and to respond to the potential impacts of this illness on service delivery.

Municipal and Community Affairs is playing a key role in both coordinating the efforts of the Territorial Emergency Response Committee and in supporting community governments in being prepared to maintain essential services in the face of temporary increased absenteeism.

The Territorial Emergency Response Committee, or TERC, is the primary planning and response forum for emergency preparedness in the NWT. Through TERC, MACA works with other departments, governments and agencies to identify their essential services, coordinate effectively and prepare contingency arrangements on how best to mitigate potential gaps in service delivery if adversely affected by a H1N1 outbreak. Mr. Speaker, TERC members have been proactively working to take actions within their

respective areas of responsibility and are working together on NWT-wide prevention and response initiatives. For example Education, Culture and Employment is working with all schools to develop operational plans. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is communicating with major suppliers of essential goods and services to determine if emergency plans and contingency arrangements are in place and if not, how TERC can assist. The Department of Public Works and Services, as well as the Department of Transportation, is working to ensure that key contractors dealing with issues such as fuel supply delivery and road maintenance have business continuity plans in place.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is working with Local Housing Organizations to ensure that public housing maintenance continues and that other business continuity needs are addressed. Other Departments such as Environment and Natural Resources, Justice, and Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, are working to finalize and implement their departmental contingency plans, while the Department of Human Resources is preparing GNWT staff to deal with issues affecting employees in the workplace. In addition, the Department of Executive is coordinating overall messaging to residents across the NWT.

Given the current need to prepare for potential impacts of H1N1 on core services, TERC has been meeting biweekly since August and is preparing to be able to maintain the provision of essential services across the NWT. TERC has also engaged with the

five Regional Emergency Response Committees, which are also meeting regularly, to confirm resources at the regional level and the status of community government essential services plans.

As well as chairing the Regional Emergency Response Committees, MACA Regional Superintendents are supporting community governments in identifying local essential services, the resources required to deliver these services, and gaps in capacity that may arise with a H1N1 outbreak. This knowledge will assist community governments in developing responsive H1N1 contingency plans. As of mid-October, 28 out of 33 communities have completed considerable work on their essential services plans.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that H1N1 is impacting the Northwest Territories, but by placing an emphasis on prevention and planning, I am confident that the GNWT and its territorial emergency planning partners, including community governments, will be positioned to respond to this second wave of H1N1 successfully without serious interruption of key services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.