

Community Infrastructure Pilot Projects

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the significant progress being made by NWT community governments in planning and building the infrastructure they need to deliver quality programs and services within their communities.

Since 2007 when most NWT communities took on responsibility for the planning, design and construction of their community public infrastructure through the New Deal, we have seen impressive results. Community governments are provided with capital formula funding from the GNWT that they can use to bank, invest and leverage other sources of funding so that they can develop their capital plans and construct capital projects identified as a priority by their residents.

Municipal and Community Affairs piloted a series of infrastructure projects with interested community governments in order to establish best practices, gain insight into community project management needs, and identify areas where communities might benefit from additional support in implementing their new responsibilities.

Based on this pilot experience, it is clear that community governments are innovative and creative in their approaches, and are forming the partnerships and making the decisions needed to ensure that their capital projects are completed on time and on budget.

The Hamlet of Fort Liard, after waiting several years to have a maintenance garage constructed through the Government's capital plan, combined their Community Capacity

Building Fund allocation with funding from MACA's capital plan to implement three projects in one year in order to achieve economies of scale. The three buildings - a fire hall, maintenance garage and community office - were bundled into one project and were completed in one construction season. The buildings reflect the needs of the Hamlet and incorporate design elements that make them unique to Fort Liard.

The Hamlet of Fort McPherson has been another successful pilot. The community government pooled capital funding from various sources to construct a fire hall and community complex. The community complex houses the Hamlet offices and also includes the radio station and space for an elder's center and an area for youth – features that would not have been possible under the GNWT's capital planning process. The project was completed in 2008 and is a well used and respected asset in the community.

The Charter Community of Fort Good Hope also planned and implemented a community complex that suits the needs and priorities of residents. Under the Council's direction, a local project manager interviewed architects and consultants to see what each could offer the community in reflecting their needs. This unique approach ensured that community interests were first and foremost in the planning and design. The final product, which opened earlier this year, is a showpiece for the community and reflects Fort Good Hope's culture, heritage and values.

Finally Mr. Speaker, on September 21, 2009, an important milestone took place in Dettah when the Yellowknives Dene First Nation held the grand opening of the Chief Drygeese Government Building and Conference Centre. Using their community capital formula funding allocation, along with their own source revenues and borrowed funds, the Yellowknives planned new offices for the Band, meeting space for Council, and a magnificent community hall and meeting space that can be rented out.

Many hours were put in by the representatives from the Yellowknives who worked with MACA to navigate through GNWT funding policies, federal funding applications, and also with the banks and architectural and construction firms. As the only pilot project involving a Band government, this was a learning experience for everyone involved so that we could work through the details of band ownership of infrastructure. I want to commend the current and past leadership of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation for their willingness to partner with us on this pilot and for their vision and leadership from start to finish. The end result is worth it – the Yellowknives have a beautiful, one-of-a-kind, energy-efficient building that will benefit Dettah and the Band members for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the success of these projects are proof that the New Deal is working and that this enhanced control at the local level is contributing to the development of community capacity . MACA's continuing role is to support and mentor community governments to take on these responsibilities in a way that allows for the communities full growth and potential to be realized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.