

THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE COCHRANE
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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Supporting Governance in Northwest Territories Communities

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is committed to supporting the development of strong community governments that are responsive and responsible to residents through effective local governance. As part of that, it has been important for the Department to adapt its materials to reflect different types of community governments in the Northwest Territories which exercise their authorities under municipal legislation, the *Indian Act* or new self-government agreements.

With the Department's commitment to strong local governance in mind, we have worked hard to develop capacity building tools that are responsive and target areas specific to local governance interest and support the general concept of good governance.

One recent example of this is the decision to work with the NWT Association of Communities to coordinate our resources and tools related to local government elections together into an online portal.

Mr. Speaker, this partnership initiative will make comprehensive information on the subject of community government elections available to the general through an online portal. This portal will give residents access to guidelines, training materials, election forms and multimedia resources all designed to educate and inform the public about the local government elections process. This information will be particularly useful to those who are considering running for office, or who would like to act as a returning officer. We

expect to be able to launch this online portal in advance of the upcoming community elections scheduled for December.

Mr. Speaker, this joint portal is only the most recent in a long history of cooperation on governance initiatives with the NWT Association of Communities. Later today I will table a letter acknowledging the value of this partnership. It is important that we continue to develop tools and resources that support self-reliant communities and are able to educate residents about the role of local elected officials. These tools also help ensure transparency and accountability for the administration of local elections.

In addition to this exciting new initiative, the Department continues to deliver governance training designed to further develop the skills and knowledge of elected officials. Governance training has been developed by the School of Community Government and it is delivered through workshops that can be tailored to the specific needs of individual communities. Governance training helps Mayors, Chiefs and Councilors improve their understanding of their roles and responsibilities and enhances their ability to make sound decisions in the interest of their communities and to the benefit of their residents.

Community Governments can request training workshops such as 'Roles and Responsibilities', 'Conflict, Codes & Legal Responsibilities', 'Financial Awareness' and 'Planning – Directions for Success' through the School. The training is offered in person to individual councilors who want to brush up on their skills, or to whole councils who want to learn together in a team environment. This year, in an attempt to make course material even more accessible, some of the School's governance training has also been adapted for distance delivery.

The Department also tailors courses and workshops to meet the individual needs and interests of community governments. We are constantly seeking feedback on what we need to incorporate and/or do differently. Through this responsive approach to training delivery, the School has developed and delivered custom, value-added activities such as pre-election workshops, Youth Governance Awareness or facilitating the development of a strategic plan.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister I strongly believe in the development of strong, self-reliant communities and I am very pleased with the work that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has done to ensure that community governments in the Northwest Territories receive the support, advice and guidance they require to best serve their residents. I am particularly pleased of how the Department continues to adapt its materials to support the new forms of government that are being created in the Northwest Territories and be responsive to whatever the needs of the local communities are. I look forward to seeing how Northwest Territories residents will benefit from some of the new initiatives on our horizon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.