



16th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Government Operations

Report on Transition Matters

Chair: Mr. Kevin Menicoche

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

REPORT ON TRANSITION MATTERS

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS****REPORT ON TRANSITION MATTERS****INTRODUCTION**

Over the course of the 16th Assembly, the Standing Committee on Government Operations has conducted a number of reviews, and made a number of recommendations to Government. In many instances, the Government has agreed with our recommendations and made commitments which it has not yet fulfilled. The Committee is also anticipating Government responses to our most recent reports during the August 2011 sitting, which will be the final time that the Assembly meets before dissolution. The intent of this report on transition matters is to make the public, Members of the 17th Assembly, and our successor Committee aware of work in progress.

BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on Government Operations' mandate includes:

- consideration of the multi-year business plans and budgets, Bills, boards and agencies and departmental performance of the Departments of the Executive, Finance, Human Resources and the Financial Management Board Secretariat;
- review of official language issues;
- reviewing the reports of the statutory officers of the Legislative Assembly, including the Languages Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Equal Pay Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission;
- examination of the reports on the annual financial statements and public accounts of the Government of the Northwest Territories and the reports of the Auditor General; and
- consideration of any other matter referred by the House.

REVIEW OF THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT*

On May 28, 2009, the Committee provided its *Final Report on the Review of the Official Languages Act 2008-2009* entitled *Reality Check: Securing a Future for the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories*. The report, which was the

result of extensive research and public consultations, included 48 recommendations. The Government has since provided a response to the Committee's report, and released the *NWT Aboriginal Languages Plan: A Shared Responsibility* in October 2010. As the plan is intended to unfold over 10 years, many of the actions are in progress or have not yet begun. Further, the Committee's *Reality Check* report recommended changes to legislation which the Government has not yet brought forward.

REVIEWS OF REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The Committee reviewed the following reports of the Auditor General:

Report on the NWT Housing Corporation - Public Housing and Ownership Programs - 2008

Report on Contracting for Goods and Services in the NWT - 2009

Report on Education in the Northwest Territories - 2010

Report on the Northwest Territories Deh Cho Bridge Project - 2011

Report on Northwest Territories Health Programs and Services – 2011

The Committee continues to monitor the issues identified in the report on contracting for goods and services. Progress on the issues identified in the Public Housing and Ownership Programs report is being monitored by the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure and progress on the issues identified in the Education report is being monitored by the Standing Committee on Social Programs, as those committees' respective mandates include oversight of the NWT Housing Corporation and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The Committee anticipates that the Government's responses to its reports on the 2011 reports of the Auditor General will be tabled during the August 2011 sitting.

REVIEWS OF REPORTS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Over the course of the 16th Assembly, the Committee made a number of recommendations following its reviews of annual reports of the Languages Commissioner, Human Rights Commission and Information and Privacy Commissioner, and continues to monitor progress on the issues identified.

In May 2011, the Committee reported to the Legislative Assembly on the 2009-2010 annual reports of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission, and in both cases provided recommendations to Government. The Committee anticipates that the Government's responses to its reports will be tabled during the August 2011 sitting. In addition to its report, the Committee supported a formal motion of the House recommending that the

Government undertake a comprehensive review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and also expects a response to this motion during the August sitting.

DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES

The Committee conducted annual reviews of the business plans of and budgets of the departments of the Executive, Finance and Human Resources, and received updates on initiatives throughout the year. The following were programs and issues that the Committee followed especially closely:

Aboriginal Employment Initiatives

The Committee is concerned that the numbers of indigenous aboriginal persons in management positions have not increased over the past decade. The Department of Human Resources is currently in the process of undertaking aboriginal employment initiatives that we hope will move us beyond this plateau, but there will be a need to monitor the implementation and success of these initiatives into the future.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The Committee is pleased that the Government has made some steps toward reducing the administrative burden attached to funding to NGOs. However, there are still significant changes needed, in particular legislative amendments that will facilitate multi-year funding, and better interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration to simplify the process of dealing with Government for NGOs.

Timeliness of Public Accounts

The Committee has been concerned with the late tabling of the public accounts, and has asked the Minister of Finance to address this problem.

Recruitment and Retention

The Committee is concerned with delays and difficulties with filling some vacant public service positions and has urged the Department of Human Resources to focus on staff recruitment issues and to reduce recruitment times.

Bandwidth

Bandwidth is a critical component of our northern infrastructure and service delivery systems, given the high cost of transportation and remoteness of many of our communities. The Committee has urged the Department of Finance to

expedite access to more bandwidth in any way possible, and is pleased that the Government is proceeding with a Mackenzie Valley fiber optics link feasibility study.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Transition Matters. Members respectfully suggest that our successor committee consider requesting updates on the above matters from committee staff and Government, and wish them the utmost success in fulfilling their mandate.

