



SEP 26 2016

MR. R. J. SIMPSON
MLA, HAY RIVER NORTH

Oral Question 179 - 18(2): Highway Rescue Services

During the June 7, 2016 sitting of the Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) committed to doing his part to advance the highway rescue services initiative. Much work has been done in this area over the past several years, which I first wish to expand on.

Since the introduction of ground ambulance and highway rescue services funding in 2007, communities have been funded \$1.63 million to support community-based ground ambulance and highway rescue services. Hay River in particular has received approximately \$380,000. Funding is also available through annual community public infrastructure funding, and maintenance of equipment and infrastructure can be funded through annual operations and maintenance funding.

Other progress achieved during the 17th Legislative Assembly includes:

- Community-based first responder training to improve the capacity of staff and volunteers;
- A comprehensive web-based toolkit to help communities recruit and retain volunteer first responders;
- A web-based Multi-Agency Rescue Coordination System to promote and support coordination of emergency response efforts on Northwest Territories (NWT) highways;
- A *Safe NWT Highway Travel Strategy* to encourage and support safe travel on NWT highways; and

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- Implementation of procedures for the safe transport of injured or sick individuals from remote locations.

In light of the current fiscal environment and priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly, a discussion of the appropriate direction for this work must take place so that Members, community governments, and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) all share a common understanding and vision. At this time, the GNWT has neither the fiscal capacity nor the appropriate legislative framework to providing ground ambulance and highway rescue services across the NWT. Further, the 18th Legislative Assembly has identified community fire protection and civil emergency response as the Department's two key areas of focus during the remaining three years of this Assembly.

Shortly, I will schedule a briefing for the Standing Committee on Government Operations to help establish a common understanding of the current environment and challenges in this area. We will also discuss options and opportunities to help address immediate concerns regarding cost recovery and administrative oversight. I have a real interest in maximizing the efficiency of the current system before contemplating future GNWT investments in this area.

I look forward to a constructive dialogue in the near future.


Caroline Cochrane
Minister of Municipal and
Community Affairs

c. Mr. Tim Mercer
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. David Hastings
Legislative Coordinator
Department of Executive