



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee  
Report 13-18(3): Report on the Review of Bill 31: Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Act**

**Background**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (SCOGO) presented their Committee Report "Report on the Review of Bill 31: Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Act" on February 26, 2019. The report contains three (3) recommendations for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) which address future cellular coverage in the NWT, support for local authorities to ensure successful implementation, and timing for the GNWT response to the recommendations.

The report also contains three (3) motions for amendments to the proposed legislation involving the cost recovery fee, clarification regarding the programming of 9-1-1 using a speed dial feature, and annual reporting.

**Recommendation 1**

SCOGO recommends that MACA work with the Department of Finance to develop a strategic approach designed to secure support and funding to expand cellular coverage in the Northwest Territories, as part of a national cellular network.

Committee recommends that this strategic approach identify current cellular coverage, along with funding needs and goals for future cellular coverage, and timelines associated with system improvements.

Committee further recommends that this strategic approach consider appropriate ways to involve of the Government of Canada, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and large cellular service providers such as Telus and Bell Canada in any system improvement efforts.

***GNWT Response***

MACA will work with GNWT Departments to explore opportunities for future expansion of cellular service along territorial highways. The GNWT has highlighted increased cellular service along major roads and highways as a priority to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

In June 2019, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) announced that NorthwTel will invest \$2 million dollars to expand cellphone service along highways and major roads in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The GNWT will also explore the CRTC's Broadband Fund, which provides \$750 million to support projects to build or upgrade infrastructure to provide fixed and mobile wireless broadband Internet service to underserved Canadians. The Broadband Fund is designed to complement existing and future private investments and public funding. Such will require engagement with cellular service providers occupying the field in the NWT.

Given the challenges in expanding cellular coverage, MACA will also educate residents on 9-1-1 areas of coverage and alternative means of contacting 9-1-1 operators, such as SPOT devices, satellite phones, and OnStar. As well, cellular service providers, such as Bell Mobility, maintain web-based network maps showing an approximate coverage area for all services provided in Canada, including the NWT. MACA will incorporate these tools into the 9-1-1 public awareness campaign.

## **Recommendation 2**

SCOGO recommends that MACA develop a detailed municipal implementation plan that sets out the information and supports needed by each local authority to ensure successful implementation of NWT-wide 9-1-1 service.

The Standing Committee further recommends that this implementation plan identify a realistic timeframe for discussion with local authorities and that the Department be prepared to adjust the go-live date to a later date, if necessary, to accommodate the consultation needs of local authorities.

## ***GNWT Response***

MACA is working closely with community governments to ensure good preparedness for the launch of 9-1-1. A detailed briefing will be provided to all thirty-three communities on the 9-1-1 operating model and implementation plan. Information will be provided about the planned approach for public awareness, and community governments will be asked to confirm contact information for existing emergency services administered by communities. MACA anticipates this approach will provide adequate information about supports needed by local authorities to help ensure successful implementation.

On June 4, 2019, the Minister of MACA confirmed a revised implementation timeline for 9-1-1 launch which was determined by working with the telephone companies. This additional time allows for the completion of work with community governments. 9-1-1 will now go live in November 2019, which should provide adequate opportunity to prepare community governments and residents.

**Recommendation 3**

SCOGO recommends that MACA provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

***GNWT Response***

Agreed.

**Motion 1**

That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after sub clause 4(4):

Sub clause 4(5) – [Limit on cost recovery fee amount]:

For a period of three years following the coming into force of this section, the cost recovery fee established under subsection (1) shall be no more than \$1.70 per month.

***GNWT Response***

Agreed.

**Motion 2**

That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after sub clause 7(2):

Sub clause 7(3) For greater certainty, subsection (1) does not prohibit a person from programming the number 9-1-1 on any speed dial feature of any communications device.

***GNWT Response***

Agreed.

**Motion 3**

That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after clause 11:

REPORTING

11.1.(1) For the purposes of this section, “Official Language” means a language referred to in section 4 of the Official Languages Act.

(2) The Minister shall, within 90 days following the end of each fiscal year, table a report of the NWT 9-1-1 service in the Legislative Assembly, which includes, for the preceding fiscal year,

- (a) the total number of 9-1-1 calls received, including the number of calls received
  - (i) in each Official Language of the Northwest Territories,
  - (ii) from each community or region of the Northwest Territories, and
  - (iii) in each month of the preceding fiscal year;
- (b) the total funds collected through imposition of the cost recovery fee;
- (c) a breakdown of the operational costs of the service; and
- (d) information regarding the performance of the service.

***GNWT Response***

Agreed.