

## ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

### QUESTION 347-18(2): 911 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICES

October 18, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, I spoke with some developments on 911 services and a decision by Cabinet to further delay real progress. The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs checked into the Anderson v. Bell court decision as a possible avenue for funding and found a dead end. Can the Minister tell this House what specific inquiries were made and the results? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of MACA actually did meet with Northwestel. We were asking them if we could utilize some of the funding for 911. We found out that that wasn't an option. The money that was brought down through the court case was offered back to people who had paid for it and, anyone who didn't want to pay for it, that the monies was provided to the Stanton Territorial Hospital Foundation. So that was the avenues that we had taken regarding working with Northwestel on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I'd like to thank the Minister for that response. The Minister also indicated that the lack of 911 service has been brought to attention of the federal government as a possible area of investment. What specific action has been taken, and will the Minister commit to keep this House informed of any further developments in a timely manner?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes, we have met with the federal government, a couple of times actually, and we've been asking them to consider our request for 911 under public safety and under future investments in infrastructure funding. We have really put forward the case that 911 is an issue within the territories. We've told them about our difficulties with the limited population and the cost, so they're well aware of that. We will continue to advocate to the federal government for infrastructure money to implement that, and, as soon as I hear any more, I will commit to bringing it forward.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the answer from the Minister, but I hope we don't have to wait for the feds to pony up before we can actually get this important service. We should be doing it ourselves. Back in June the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs committed to look into whether Northwestel could change its current recorded message when someone dials 911 to at least give the right information about what numbers to call. The response tabled by the Minister last week failed to address this commitment. Can the Minister tell this House what, if anything, has been done with Northwestel to change the recorded message to contain the right or at least better information?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes, we have met with Northwestel in asking them to change the recorded message. Northwestel is not willing at this time to change it. They say it's due to technical and liability concerns. They've also talked that it would require a technical upgrade and they're concerned that it may jeopardize the current message should a new approach prove not successful. However, we are still working with Northwestel regarding cellular service providers, and we're trying to figure out if we can actually redirect callers that call into cell service to the existing emergency numbers that we have.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the efforts on the part of the Minister, but we still don't have 911 service. Lastly, I expressed some frustration and concern that Cabinet has

been hamstrung by the \$150-million reduction target, and Cabinet has used this as a reason for not proceeding with 911 services. How can the Minister and her Cabinet colleagues justify such a position and not find additional revenues or reductions elsewhere in the budget to support critical 911 services. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes, Cabinet is concerned about it. We had looked at a few things. The money that we had looked at taking reductions in the first two years. We had hoped that we'd be able to invest more money into the final part of our terms; we're still hopeful for that. We're not sure what will happen. We are hopeful for federal monies as well to support that. There are other options. I have requested a meeting with the Standing Committee on Governance, I believe. Let me just check. I'm hoping that offer is still on the table. I'm really hoping that the committee will meet with me to go over the various options that we have and to provide some input into how we could move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.