

**THE HONOURABLE PAULIE CHINNA
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

Supporting Community Governments

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Frame Lake on March 29, 2021 regarding Supporting Community Governments.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) works with community governments to help ensure their capable, accountable, and self-directed operations. MACA monitors communities and offers a wide range of supports, from informal, targeted and cooperative to more formal, legislated and broad, including the more intensive step of the Department taking on the management of the community.

When a community government is experiencing financial or operational difficulties, it jeopardizes its ability to govern and deliver community based services. MACA does have tools to help analyze the origin and cause of these difficulties, and uses these tools to help facilitate a resolution based on the community's needs.

Depending on the severity of the financial, governance or operational challenges, MACA may implement any or all of the following:

- **Operational Review:** When a community first comes forward with concerns, MACA will conduct an information seeking exercise, typically with staff internal to the Department, to determine if and where any concerns of significance are presenting in the community government's operations. This is often the first step before further action is taken.
- **Co-management:** MACA may enter into a work plan with the community to address specific challenges. This is a mutually agreed upon work plan which is not provided for under legislation, but is instead used as an interim solution instead of immediately entering into a supervision or administration arrangement.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite No./Nu. 26-19(2)

- Supervision: MACA may place a community government under supervision. This involves the hiring of a Municipal Supervisor to work with Council and the Senior Administrative Officer to resolve issues. This tool is typically used where issues are of an operational or management nature.
- Administration: MACA removes Council, and possibly the Senior Administrative Officer (SAO), and appoints a Municipal Administrator to take control of all community operations. This tool is significant and typically signals substantial governance issues and an inability or unwillingness of the council to solve the issues. The Municipal Administrator's job is to stabilize operations and prepare for the eventual return of an elected Council.

Since 2016-2017, the following communities have entered into or concluded their co-management, supervision, or administration agreements with the Department. Due to the nature of these agreements, which are typically financial or governance-related, MACA is unable to share any specific details of each community's arrangement:

- Enterprise
- Fort Good Hope (K'asho Got'ine Community Charter)
- Fort Liard
- Fort Resolution
- Fort McPherson
- Norman Wells
- Paulatuk
- Tsiigehtchic.

Over the last five years, no staff, employed either by MACA or any other GNWT department, has been seconded or assigned to support a community during a vacancy of a Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) or Finance Officer position.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite No./Nu. 26-19(2)

Although there is no official secondment, the Department continues to support the person identified as the Acting SAO or finance officer on a daily basis and assists with community government matters as needed.

Additionally, the Department has the ability to provide some funding support to a community government if they are in need of procuring external financial services for short term contracts to help them with their financial processing activities. Further support is provided in these circumstances by MACA's community financial services section by supporting the analysis and review of financial information for council decision making.

When there is a vacant SAO position, the appropriate MACA regional office will reach out to the Council to offer their support in filling this critical position. When supporting the Council with this, the Northwest Territories Association of Communities (NWTAC) "Hiring your Senior Administrative Officer or Band Manager" toolkit is a resource often used by the Council to assist in their decision making processes.

The regional office will support the Council with creating the job advertisement, identifying where the job will be posted, developing screening criteria, developing interview questions and providing potential reference check questions. If desired, the Council may request that MACA staff sit on the interview committee which they may, however, the MACA staff member does not have any decision-making authority during the hiring process. The Finance Officer position is hired by the SAO, and they may request support from the Department throughout the hiring process.

The School of Community Government (SCG) offers learner-centred adult education in the form of its programs and services which are specifically tailored to community government employees who are looking for opportunities to build their skills and competencies while they work full time.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite

No./Nu. 26-19(2)

The SCG provides training opportunities and support in six areas of community government operations: Finance and Administration; Public Works; Recreation; Public Safety; Planning, Building and Development; and Governance.

Training and development opportunities are available online in both self-directed and instructor-led forms. The SCG, through these programs, provides support to community governments in areas of governance, strategic planning, human resource development, occupational certification programs, and a variety of courses.

In 2019-2020, the SCG hosted 19 learning events for Senior Administrative Officers accessed by approximately eight learners. These learning events were delivered on-line, video lecture, through self-directed courses, and webinars.

The SCG also hosted 13 learning events intended for Finance officers. These were delivered on-line and in class-room delivery style. Approximately 15 individuals participated.

As a result of COVID-19 and in-person restrictions, the SCG will continue to deliver the majority of courses in an online or virtual classroom environment for the immediate future.

Emergency First Responder (EMR) training can be delivered in person following approved COVID-19 protocols; however, the class size is significantly reduced.

In 2020-2021, there were no courses delivered through the classroom format; however, 13 on-line courses and seven webinars targeted towards SAOs were completed by community government staff. Five webinars for Finance officers were also delivered.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite

No./Nu. 26-19(2)

The SCG also administers the Advancing Local Government Administrators Program (ALGAP). ALGAP is aimed at recruiting, training, and retaining local government administrators (LGAs), and provides up to \$565,000 annually in funding assistance to eligible communities for new and existing senior administrative officers within the following three categories:

- Investing Locally (Category One): Community governments with a vacant LGA position;
- Succession Planning (Category Two): Community governments with an LGA on staff, but who plans to retire or leave the position within two years; and
- Skill Building and Occupational Certification (Category Three): Community governments with an active LGA who wants to pursue Occupational Certification or requires assistance for training to achieve specific skills.

The program has supported 30 Category One and Two applicants, and 26 Category Three applicants since its establishment in 2010. ALGAP participation in 2019-2020 included participants from Hay River, Gameti, Enterprise, Fort Providence, and Fort Simpson. Community Governments who are most recently graduating students from the program include Fort Providence and Hay River. ALGAP participation for 2020-2021 to date includes LGAs from Fort Simpson and Tulita.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite

No./Nu. 26-19(2)

Additionally, the SCG supports LGANT annually with a \$50,000 contribution agreement to be used for learning and training opportunities. In 2020-2021, the contribution covered the following expenses:

1. Partial Communications Coordinator Salary for Administrative Projects
2. Partial Executive Director Salary for Administrative Projects
3. Virtual Conference Costs:
 - Awards
 - Advertising/Promotional Materials
 - Speaker Costs
4. Strategic Planning Costs:
 - Facilitated Session
5. Rebrand Costs:
 - Promotional Items
6. Pool of Professionals Cost:
 - Advertising Campaign – Online, Newspapers, Magazines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.