



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to
Motion 35-20(1): Emergency Plan Support for Municipalities and Community Governments**

Motion 35-20(1):

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs offer the Emergency Management Organizations assistance to draft all emergency plans for every Northwest Territories community in need of assistance over the next two years, to ensure all plans are reasonably and consistently done;

AND FURTHER, that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs provide financial support to all applicable governments, to allow them to fine-tune and complete their specific community emergency plan reflective of their specific community needs, inventorying of assets and assessment of their partners and supports;

AND FURTHERMORE, once a community plan is prepared, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs posts each community emergency plan on the Municipal and Community Affairs website, to ensure they are publicly accessible for transparency;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs acquire the resources for each community, to ensure all plans are reviewed and practiced from time to time, based on reasonable industry standards, which will demonstrate leadership and confidence in these safety plans for all Northwest Territories residents;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

GNWT Response

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), authority and responsibility for local emergency management rests with community governments. The *Emergency Management Act* (Act) requires community governments to prepare, adopt, and maintain emergency plans and programs, including reviewing their emergency plans annually. This is best practice across Canada, and allows for greater consideration of geographic, cultural and other differences between communities.

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The Act also provides power and authorities to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the Head of the EMO related to working with community governments to develop emergency plans, review and recommend modifications of local emergency plans and programs, and to provide advice and assistance to local authorities in the development, implementation and maintenance of emergency programs and plans. The Minister also has the authority under the Act to require a community government to modify their plan if it does not meet the requirements of the Act.

Community governments are not expected to develop Community Emergency Plans on their own. The Act requires that community governments establish and maintain a Local Emergency Management Organization (LEMO) to develop and implement local emergency plans and to establish other measures related to emergency management. MACA encourages community governments to include key partners in their LEMOs, including local Indigenous governments, critical infrastructure providers, non-profit organizations, and other entities, such as businesses who may have a role in an emergency preparedness and response. There is tremendous value in the discussions and relationship building that happens among LEMO members during the development of community emergency plans. LEMO members bring local knowledge of historical events, community resources and cultural sensitivity to these discussions.

In addition to promoting inclusive and effective LEMOs, MACA provides community governments and LEMOs with emergency management information, resources, and standardized templates necessary to form a good understanding of emergency management practices and the NWT emergency management system, build local emergency management capacity, and meet the legislated requirements for community governments to develop and review emergency plans annually. While some community governments may choose to take a self-directed approach, MACA provides a Community Emergency Plan template and other tools, including a video series, to support consistency in community emergency planning.

Throughout the year, MACA regional staff reach out to all community governments to offer support with the development, updating and/or validation of community emergency plans via Community Emergency Planning Workshops and Tabletop Exercise Workshops.

MACA has developed the Community Emergency Planning Workshop to assist community governments and their LEMOs to better understand the emergency management system in the NWT and to develop or update their community emergency plan. It also ensures community leaders develop a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities during emergency events. Most importantly, it prepares the community government to respond to emergency situations. At the end of the workshop MACA provides the community government with a draft Community Emergency Plan based on information discussed in the workshop and a letter outlining next steps towards finalization and approval.

Tabletop Exercise Workshops are a discussion-based, low-stress way for community governments to review, update and improve their emergency plan and response capacity. Tabletop exercises simulate an emergency in which members of the LEMO perform the tasks that would be expected of them in a real emergency. Through these workshops, attendees are able to validate the emergency plan, identify gaps, and plan for the resources needed. MACA is given an opportunity to review community emergency plans, and feedback is provided back to the community government.

The value of both workshops lies in the discussions that occur and the relationships that are cultivated among the LEMO members during the development of the plan and the exercise of validating it.

Once approved, community governments have authority to determine how their Community Emergency Plans will be shared. MACA encourages community governments to share key aspects of their plans with their residents; however, posting the plans publicly needs to be a decision of each community government, as owner of those plans, and they will need to take into consideration whether the posting any portions of the plans exposes personal or business information.

In addition to the supports MACA provides as noted above, MACA provides \$54 million annually in Operations and Maintenance Funding to support community government programs and services, including emergency planning, and \$34.9 million annually in Community Public Infrastructure Funding that can be used to construct fire breaks or purchase public assets that support emergency response. This funding is not limited to a specific purpose or project to allow community governments the greatest flexibility when making decisions on spending.

The Emergency Management Division's annual budget for planning, preparedness and operations is fully exhausted by the public alerting system contract, the annual BeReady communications campaign, and maintaining the 24/7 emergency line. The Emergency Management Division does not have the resources to provide additional preparedness funding to community governments.

The GNWT has and will continue to advocate with other provinces and territories for a federal preparedness funding program.