

2017 Town of Norman Wells Municipal Inspection

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 7, 2017, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) provided written notice to His Worship Mayor Nathan Watson and the Council of the Town of Norman Wells ('Council') of MACA's intent to undertake a municipal inspection of the Town of Norman Wells as per subsection 153(2) of the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*. The decision to undertake the municipal inspection came after numerous complaints were raised with MACA regional staff, including alleged improprieties, conflicts of interest, breaches of confidentiality, and failure to follow legislation and council procedures.

The municipal inspection was conducted by Mr. John Hazenberg of Seventh Generation Incorporated. The inspection included the review of Town bylaws, policies, council meeting minutes, financial and administrative records and correspondence for the period of January 1, 2015 to July 31, 2017. The inspection also included interviews with all members of Council; all managing staff members and office staff of the Town; former councilors and mayors; as well as community leaders, residents and business operators. The information gathered was then examined to determine if the actions and conduct of Council and administration were compliant with municipal legislation and the Town's own bylaws and policies.

The inspection report submitted by the municipal inspector on September 14, 2017 included the following key findings:

- There is evidence that Council did not comply with certain provisions of the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*. Examples include: the manner in which private ("in-camera") meetings were held and documented; the method used to finalize the 2017 operating budget; and the way that special meetings were called.



- There is evidence that Council did not comply with its own Council Procedures Bylaw (Bylaw 14-13). This bylaw provides guidelines for holding regular meetings of Council Committees; the creation of Committees of Council; and the provision of Committee meeting reports to Council.
- There have been allegations of real or perceived conflicts of interest on the part of individual members of Council who may have failed to comply with the Council Policy Statement (Resolution 11-42) to protect the good name of the Council and to advance the public interest.

The municipal inspection concluded that the relationships amongst individual council members and between Council and Town administration has deteriorated to a point that it is causing operational difficulties, and external action is required to resolve the fundamental relationship issues within the municipal corporation.

The Deputy Minister of MACA will be meeting with Council on Tuesday October 17th and will hold a public meeting on Wednesday October 18th to convey the decision of the Minister with regards to next steps for the Municipal Council of the Town of Norman Wells.



R(18)xxxx

Municipal Administrator Appointed in Norman Wells

YELLOWKNIFE (October 18, 2017) – The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) has determined that the Municipal Corporation of the Town of Norman Wells (‘the Town’) is experiencing operational difficulties.

Under the authority provided through section 155(1) of the *Cities, Towns and Villages Act*, SNWT 2003, c22, the Minister has dissolved the Town Council and appointed a Municipal Administrator effective October 18, 2017 and appointed Eleanor Young, Deputy Minister of MACA as Administrator for the Town.

MACA will continue to provide support to the community government through the various programs and services offered by the department. The Administrator will be focused on developing new and amending existing council bylaws to ensure clarity of authorities, operations and procedures for future elected Councils. Providing this direct support is an important step towards the Government of the Northwest Territories’ goal of building stronger relationships with community governments and stakeholders; as outlined in the 18th Assembly’s Mandate.

Quotes

“Supporting the development of strong community governments is a priority for MACA. Appointing a Municipal Administrator in Norman Wells is a critical step in helping the community government to address significant operational difficulties.”

- **Caroline Cochrane** - Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs

Quick Facts

- On July 4, 2017 the Minister of MACA appointed John Hazenberg of Seventh Generation Inc. to complete a municipal inspection of the Town of Norman Wells. The purpose of the inspection was to confirm whether or not the local government had complied with all legislated requirements in the conduct of its business.

- The Inspector's Report indicated that the community government was experiencing operational difficulties, and recommended that the Minister appoint a Municipal Administrator.
- After lengthy engagement with the Mayor and Council, and after reviewing the Report of the Municipal Inspector, the Minister has issued an order appointing a Municipal Administrator.
- As of the effective date of the order, the Town Council is dissolved. The Municipal Administrator will assume all of the responsibilities and authorities of the Council, including finding ways to engage the public in decisions, and providing direction and supervision to the SAO.
- This is an exceptional step and taken only when deemed necessary by the Minister. Municipal Administration has only been used in two cases since the NWT/Nunavut in 1999 and in one of those cases it was at the request of Council.

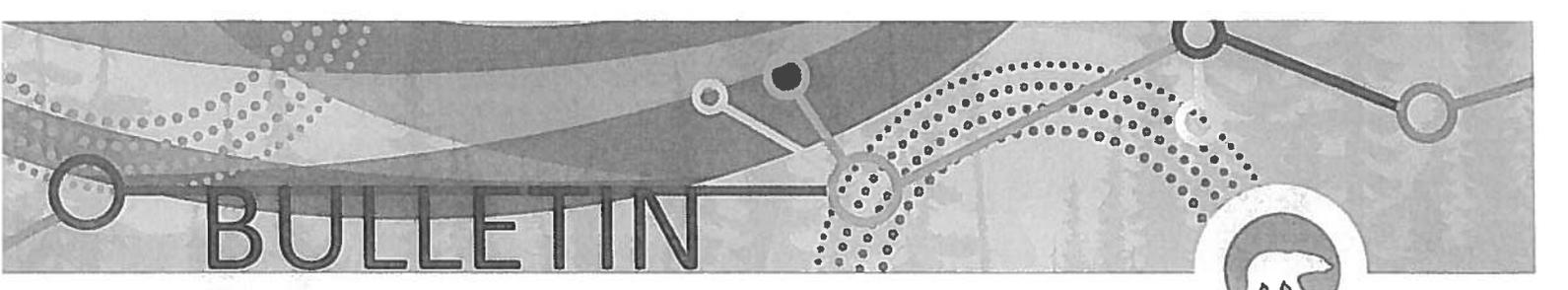
Related Links

- MACA website:
<http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/>

Media Contacts

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BULLETIN

Norman Wells Municipal Administration

An Introduction to Municipal Administration

The Town of Norman Wells will be under Administration as of October 18, 2017. This means that the Town Council has been dissolved and a Municipal Administrator has been appointed by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) to handle the Town's business.

This bulletin aims to help residents get a better idea of the reasons why the Administrator was put in place and what types of duties they are responsible for.

Appointment of Administrator

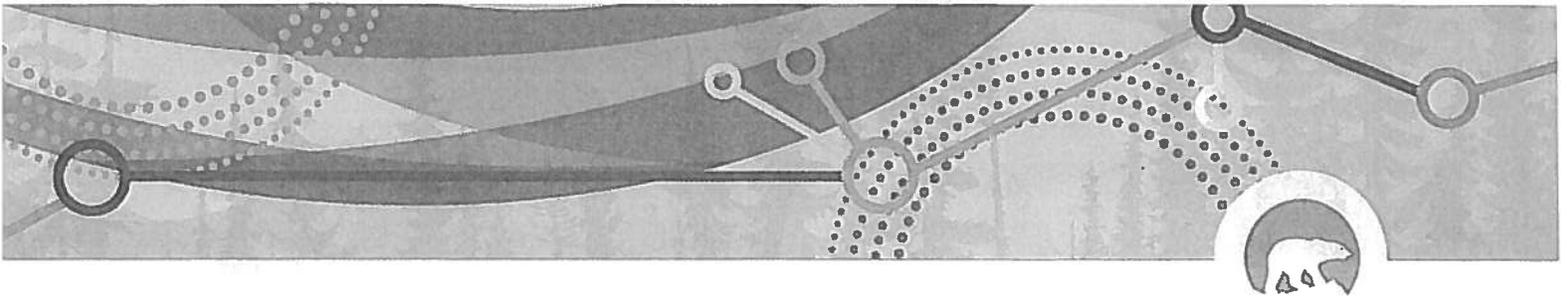
Putting a community under Administration is not a decision that is taken lightly. One of the main goals of the Government of the Northwest Territories is effective and efficient government, at all levels in the territory. The Department of MACA is responsible for supporting community governments in their efforts to develop vibrant communities for residents, and this includes helping in difficult times.

Ideally, all community governments would run like well-oiled machines, taking care of the responsibilities and services that are traditionally provided by municipalities without any hiccups. But sometimes communities need a bit more help than the regular support MACA provides. This is where a Municipal Administrator comes in.

In Norman Wells' case a municipal inspection identified a number of areas where the community government was experiencing operational difficulties. As a result, the Minister of MACA has stepped in and appointed an Administrator to help the community address and resolve the issues they are facing.

In Norman Wells, the Minister of MACA has appointed Eleanor Young as interim Municipal Administrator effective October 18, 2017.

In order for the Administrator to do the job they are appointed to do, they need to assume all of the responsibilities of Town Council. As a result, the previous Town Council has been dissolved.



Goals of the Administrator

The Municipal Administrator will have a number of goals and objectives primarily focused on developing new and amending existing council bylaws to ensure clarity of authority, operations and procedures for future elected Councils.

The Municipal Administrator will also be responsible for completed a comprehensive performance review of the Senior Administrative Officer.

What's Next for Norman Wells?

The end goal in this situation is to return a democratically elected Town Council to Norman Wells. It is expected to take at least a year to accomplish all of the work identified for the Municipal Administrator. Given this timeline, the Minister expects that the regularly scheduled elections will take place in October 2018, and a new Mayor and Council will be elected at that time.

After that election happens, MACA will continue to work with the community government to transition back to regular business and provide support as it is required.

Further Communication

So, now you know the basics of why a Municipal Administrator has been appointed and what they are responsible for. If you have further questions or concerns please contact:

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