

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

**QUESTION 399-18(2)
DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS CAPACITY**

October 27, 2016

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. I know the Minister is new to this department but I have this general question: does the Minister believe the department is adequately staffed to fulfil its mandate especially when it comes to supporting communities and providing essential services? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As the Member has stated I am fairly new to the portfolio. My assumption is yes, we are adequately staffed. I have had no indication from my management team that there are any issues; however, we will be looking into it to ensure that we're using our services based on the audit appropriately.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. If staffing is not the issue, can the Minister tell us what stands in the way of the department fulfilling its mandate?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: There's a number of factors that actually stand in the way of - it's not that we don't fulfil our mandate it's maybe we're not progressing and maybe not doing as much paperwork as we need to, so there are some issues. Municipal and Community Affairs is based on -- years ago we changed it into what's called a "New Deal" and that is really about community development. It's about empowering the communities to acknowledge what their strengths are and their needs are; which is something I really support. So we do try to provide training and support to them.

One of the other challenges that we have is that out of the 33 communities, nine of those communities are actually designated authorities, which means that we can provide the funding to them; we can be there to assist them as they want, but being designated authorities they do not fall within our jurisdiction and so they actually are federal and it's only if they ask for help that we can actually engage services with them.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Auditor General identified the problem within MACA itself, not within the communities. I'm aware of the New Deal program but it seems to me that it is, in fact, a paperwork problem; it's providing oversight and looking at reports and validating them and so on. So what kind of resources does the Minister need to bring the department up-to-speed on implementing the New Deal?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has actually come a long way in a short time. The department has really focussed on water quality which is important to our residents as well. So we actually did really well in our audit around water quality so I am quite proud of that. We do have issues in other areas, but until we've actually sat down -- we were just presented the report yesterday, so until we've actually sat down and done a thorough analysis of all of the recommendations, we won't be able to look at any restructuring until we have looked at it thoroughly and see where we need to go next.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my last question for the Minister is whether a zero-based review might help the department to better understand how its current resources are allocated and where the gaps are. Can the Minister commit to undertaking zero-based review of her department? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Our first step actually is to do a thorough analysis of the audit and look at the recommendations that are in that. The other thing that we are doing actually, and just implementing currently, again is we are asking all of our staff within the Municipal and Community Affairs for suggestions on ways to improve, and that includes the recommendations within the audit. So until that work is done then I can't commit to doing a zero-based review.