

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 meet 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.

