



COMMUNITY

Manitoba  
Municipal and Northern Relations

# CONTACT

Summer 2024

The Northern Affairs Newsletter



# Emergency Preparedness

Building Community Resilience and Capacity

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# THIS ISSUE

**Welcome** to the resuming issue of the Community Contact Newsletter after publications paused in 2012. This newsletter is an important channel through which the department and communities share information that contributes to the advancement of sustainable Northern Affairs communities. Each quarter, this newsletter will cover a range of topics of interest and importance to community leaders and employees, department staff and our relevant partners who provide services to your communities.

This issue includes a message from the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations to community leadership and the recent graduates in northern communities. As summer unfolds with uncharacteristic effects of climate change, Manitobans must take decisive steps to build resilience and capacity. With that in mind, our feature story looks at the wildfires that affected communities and cottage areas this past spring and provides information on emergency preparedness, tips and best practices for communities' emergency plans.

We provide an overview of the community election process, in preparation for the scheduled community elections in the fall. Also featured is a recap of two successfully concluded workshops - the Northern Affairs Branch Annual Regional Workshop and the Community Administrative Officer's Workshop. We continue with a story from Bissett, on their first legacy board unveiling this past June.


Along with these articles, we provide readers with a few exciting department updates on increases to community funding, and other program area updates. As this is the first newsletter in a while, we will be re-introducing all our Northern Affairs Branch staff.


We hope you enjoy this issue, and please feel free to contact us with your comments, pictures, and article suggestions, or to request copies in a different format.


*We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewak, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations, the ancestral lands of the Inuit, and the homeland of the Red River Metis.*




## Alero Tenumah, Editor

 400-352 Donald Street,  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2H8

 204-914-9440

 Email:  
[Alero.Tenumah@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Alero.Tenumah@gov.mb.ca)

 Website:  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/newsletters.html>

# A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



I am pleased to see the resumption of the Northern Affairs Branch Community Contact newsletter. The newsletter is an important vehicle for communication with Northern Affairs communities, while also serving as a tool for information sharing with a wide variety of audiences. I trust that the information shared will provide valuable insights.

As a proud member and former Chief of Hollow Water First Nation, I am deeply honoured to serve as the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations and Minister of Indigenous Economic Development for the Province of Manitoba. I am excited to work in partnership with communities to explore new ways to advance Indigenous economic development, foster inclusive growth, and maintain essential municipal services.

I am continuously impressed by the Northern Affairs Branch team's achievements in supporting the delivery of essential municipal services in your communities. Though there is still so much work left to ensure we continue to advance the future of northern Manitobans, I want to commend and thank you for your dedicated service and meaningful contributions to your communities; our province is forever grateful. Together, we are making progress on reconciliation, and building better relationships that support healthy, safe, and sustainable Indigenous and Northern communities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 2024 graduates – the next generation of leaders. Now is a time to reflect on your achievements and celebrate with your families and friends. It is also a time to set new goals and plan your route for the future. I am pleased to join with all my government colleagues in wishing you success in times to come.

As the weather warms up, I hope you take some time to enjoy Manitoba's great outdoors. Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Sincerely,

**Ian Bushie, Minister**  
Municipal and Northern Relations



## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### Building Community Resilience and Capacity

**A**s people who live in northern and remote communities know, it is vital that communities and individuals be prepared for all types of emergencies. You never know when you may have to leave your community on short notice in the event of an emergency. In Northern Affairs communities, not only are the mayor and council responsible for the day-to-day administration of a community, they are also responsible for ensuring there is an up-to-date and effective community emergency plan in place. Effective emergency management planning includes the integration of specific hazard risk vulnerability assessments to ensure the safety of residents, lessen the loss of personal property and damage to critical infrastructure within the community.

Recent events like the wildfire in Flin Flon and Bakers Narrows area highlighted the need to be prepared with an all-hazards mindset. The wildfire damaged the fiber optic cables in the area, which resulted in widespread loss of digital communications that affected landlines, computers, ATMS, banks, Interac, grocery stores, P25 radios, fleetnet, etc. This created a communication “blackout” for over 48 hours.

The wildfire also created transportation issues; Highway 10 which was the main evacuation route for residents was closed. This event highlighted the critical need for better emergency planning that prepares for the loss of communications channels and access routes.

In the past, the focus has been on creating response plans that deal with the “typical” emergencies encountered in communities. This recent event has given us a new perspective. Although our first and foremost priority remains the safety of residents, we also want to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure so residents have services to return to.

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*“It is vital that communities and individuals be prepared for all types of emergencies!” - Kevin Popowich*

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The critical infrastructure that needs to be considered are communication channels, fuel, food, roads, water treatment plants, and power.

The department will start working with communities on a reassessment of their local community plan for dealing with the noted potential critical losses.

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## Building Community Resilience and Capacity Cont'd

Incidents such as wildfires, winter storms, windstorms, or floods pose a major threat to any of the above-listed critical infrastructure. Northern Affairs will be ensuring that our assessment and community's emergency plan incorporate the protection of critical infrastructure alongside resident safety. This will align with the department's objective to increase resiliency and preparedness in response to climate and environmental volatility.

### Evacuation



In case of an emergency, community members may be notified of the need to evacuate in a short time frame. During the recent

wildfires in Flin Flon, some residents were given two hours to prepare for evacuation, others were given 20 minutes to leave their homes and cottages. Within such a short timeframe, communities are unable to properly address the following questions below.

Therefore, the following questions should be part of the emergency plan to ensure a smooth transition from notice of evacuation to evacuation:

- Who decides when a community needs to be evacuated?
- Where will the residents go?
- Does your community have hosting agreements with other communities and if so, for how many people?
- Do host communities have facilities for residents with special medical needs?

- How far away is the host community in distance and travel time?
- Who will notify Manitoba Health of evacuees' special medical needs?
- What is the total population of the community to be evacuated?
- Does council need to declare a state of emergency?
- How many will travel out on their own and who needs transportation?

### Community Preparedness

The recent wildfire also highlighted the need for general community preparedness. Throughout the year, community leadership and/or cottage associations should be preparing residents for potential emergencies. [www.getprepared.gc.ca](http://www.getprepared.gc.ca) is a great link that can be shared with residents, it covers a lot of self-sufficiency tips and what a sample "72-hour kit" is comprised of.

In the event of an evacuation, residents should ensure the following are in their possession:

- Pets (if applicable)
- ID- preferably driver's license
- MB Health Card
- Medicine/prescriptions with refill instructions
- Home oxygen, walker, wheelchair, etc.
- Toiletries
- Supplies for infants, if applicable such as formula, diapers, etc.
- Change of clothing
- Cash (cards may not work if lines are damaged as occurred in the Flin Flon fires)
- Cell phone and charger

Contact Kevin Popowich  
Protective Services Consultant  
Phone: 204-648-7161  
Email: [Kevin.Popowich@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Kevin.Popowich@gov.mb.ca)  
NA Toll-Free Emergency Number:  
1-866-735-3111

# COMMUNITY ELECTION PROCESS

The upcoming regular election in Northern Affairs Communities (NACs) is legislated for: **Wednesday, October 23, 2024.**

**R**unning for a council position in a community election is an excellent way to get involved with your community and make a difference.

If you are interested in learning what the position entails, obtain a copy of the *Running for Council* guide from your council office or by visiting <https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/community-docs.html>. Regular terms are for four years. Terms are staggered, half of council is up this fall, with the remainder in 2026.

To qualify as a candidate, you must be:

- a Canadian citizen
- at least 18 years of age on the day of the election
- a voter of the community and not subject to any disqualification under The Northern Affairs Act or any other act



## Voters List

The senior election official (SEO) prepares and maintains a voters list, made up of all persons qualified to vote in a community election. Persons wishing to make revisions to the list about themselves may do so by contacting the SEO.

## 2024 Election Calendar:

Preparation of Voters List - Week of Sept.16  
 Post Notice of Voters List/Personal Security Protection - Sept. 23  
 Post Notice of Nominations - Sept. 25  
 Nomination Period Begins - Oct. 2  
 Nomination Day - Oct. 9 (Subject to Change)  
 Nomination Period Ends - Oct. 9  
 Candidate Withdrawal - Oct. 10  
 Post Notice of Election - Oct. 11 or Acclamation  
 Advance Voting - Oct.16 (Subject to Change)  
 Election Day - Oct.23  
 Announce Results - Oct.24

To qualify to vote in an election, you must be a:

- Canadian citizen 18 years of age or older
- resident of the community and has been so for at least six months before election day.

No revisions can be made to the voters list following the close of nomination and the day of the election except for the purpose of adding voters at the time of voting or providing a sealed envelope ballot package.

# COMMUNITY ELECTIONS PROCESS CONT'D

## Nominations

Anyone pursuing a nomination must file nomination papers with the SEO at the date and time stated on the notice of nominations.

## Election Day

The voting place will be open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on election day. Any person whose name does not appear on the voters list must take an oath and establish proof of identity (by providing a government-issued document containing their name, civic address and photo or at least two other documents that provide evidence of their identity sufficient to the election official) prior to receiving a ballot.



## Advance Voting and Sealed Envelope Voting

If you know you will be unable to vote on election day, you may vote at the advance voting or arrange with the SEO to vote by sealed envelope ballot. A sealed envelope ballot is for voters who are unable to come to either an advance or regular voting because of a disability, are a caregiver to a person who is unable to leave home, expects to be absent from the community or some similar reason per the Community Councils Election regulation.

## After the Voting

At noon on the day after the election, the SEO publicly announces the election results at the community council office and the results posted.

## Election Officials

Election officials (appointed by council bylaw) are responsible for ensuring elections take place properly and efficiently. These are the key election officials:

- The SEO has overall responsibility for ensuring the community election process takes place according to legislation.
- The assistant SEO assists the SEO.
- The Voting Official appointed by the SEO, assists the SEO in duties at the voting place.
- The principal electoral officer (PEO) appointed by the MNR minister, has overall responsibility for the coordination of election matters.

## After the Election

Under The Northern Affairs Act, community councils consisting of elected councillors and a mayor, serve as the local governments in NACs. Community councils work closely with department staff and external organizations to provide services to their communities.

Contact the SEO for information on the community election process. Council office will have their contact information.

Contact Donna Sitko  
Principal Electoral Officer  
204-679-0678 or Fax: 204-677-6525  
Email: [Donna.Sitko@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Donna.Sitko@gov.mb.ca)  
Election Official's Handbook:  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/community-docs.html>

## COMMUNITY STORIES



### **BISSETT'S LEGACY BOARD UNVEILING** **JUNE 30, 2024- Submitted by Bissett**

On Sunday, June 30<sup>th</sup> the Bissett Community Council, Mayor Carla Nicholson-Spence, Deputy Mayor Doug McPherson, Council member Mark Wynne (Council member James Baldwin was unable to attend due to work commitments) and CAO Gail Wynne welcomed community residents and visitors alike to attend the unveiling of Bissett's first Legacy Board followed by a BBQ.

Everyone enjoyed the day while reminiscing as they looked at the pictures or perhaps hearing some history for the very first time and unbeknownst to them, once again making 'history'.

The Legacy Board project was funded by Celebrate Manitoba 150 and the Bissett Community Council. In kind services were provided by Sigfusson Northern Ltd who transported the board from Winnipeg to Bissett and 1911 Gold Corp/True North Gold Mine in Bissett who supplied equipment and operator Darcy to unload the board upon arrival in Bissett and most recently moved it to its current location.



The Legacy Board was designed and constructed at R.B. Russell Vocational High School through the Welding Technology program. Mike Johnston who is the program director assigned the project to two students, Dajon Beaulieu and Larry Roulette, and with the publication "Bissett 100 Years of Gold" by Wilda Ward in hand the students were given virtually free range on design and ultimately creating this incredible Legacy Board. The rust component was built into the design to create the historical ambiance as it sits proudly in the community. The 16" x 16" picture boards were produced by Northern Lights Memorials in Beausejour. Over 300 were produced and as you can well imagine not a small feat but we made it happen! Thanks largely in part to the many contributors, publications and history keepers!

It is the intention of council, as funds allow, to place at least 2 more Legacy Boards in different locations throughout the community. Bissett's history depicted in pictures. Since the first discovery of gold here on the shores of Rice Lake in 1911 by Duncan Twohearts and significantly the first gold finds in Manitoba, ultimately resulted in the first claim being staked and a town being born!

Bissett has certainly had its share of ups and downs over the past 113 years and we stand proud of our story, the tales of our history and the stories yet to be told that will remain a part of Bissett for hundreds of years to come!



## REGIONAL WORKSHOP

2024

This past May, the Northern Affairs Branch, hosted a Regional Workshop at the Holiday Inn Airport West in Winnipeg on May 14-16. This was the second year hosting a successful joint workshop. In attendance were approximately 80 participants representing communities from the Northern and North Central Regions. Thanks to all the communities who participated.

The workshop kicked off with opening remarks from Assistant Deputy Minister Kevin McPike and Executive Director Paul Doolan.

Day one and two covered topics on Wildfire and Emergency Planning, Crown Land Sales, Good Governance and Infrastructure Priorities and Planning, a discussion on Managing Your Employees by GovFox, who also presented on how to conduct effective meetings.

The final day wrapped up with presentations on Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI),

Communications, Taxation Options and Funding Delivery, Fire Program and Community Safety Officer Review and Northern Manitoba Community Consultation Board Update (NMCCB) and the Newsletter resumption.

The event was rounded out by closing remarks from Regional Directors Tracy Grexton (Northern) and Stew Sabiston (North Central).



## CAO WORKSHOP

2024

This past March, the Northern Affairs Branch, hosted a Community Administrative Officer (CAO) workshop at the Holiday Inn Airport West in Winnipeg on March 6 and 7. The workshop had CAOs representing communities from both Northern and North Central Regions.

The first day included an Emergency Planning and Preparedness tabletop exercise. This was followed by presentations on Crown Lands Sales, Good Governance, and funding delivery and taxation.

The second day consisted of the following presentations: Water and Wastewater Compliance, Capital Planning, Communication Engagement, Municipal Development Consultant Discussion and the NMCCB.



*CAOs in Attendance at CAO workshop*

This workshop was deemed a success and the CAOs expressed interest in the workshop becoming an annual event. Due to the inclement weather, several CAOs couldn't make it to the event. The department is hard at work planning another workshop for Fall 2024. We hope to see all CAOs there!

## NORTHERN AFFAIRS UPDATES



### 2024 Department Funding to Communities

The department is pleased to announce that all Northern Affairs Communities will see an increase of 2% in their 2024 Municipal Operating Grant. Additional funding has been identified for roads, water reservoir cleaning, raw water cell cleaning, lagoon desludging, computer refresh, and minor infrastructure deficiencies. The first O&M funding releases have been processed and we are working with the communities to prepare for the

second O&M funding release scheduled for early July.

Additionally, the department is also preparing to roll out a Climate Change Preparedness Fund and a Fire Equipment Fund to support emergency preparedness and fire response initiatives in communities. These funding increases reflect our government's commitment to supporting healthy, safe, and sustainable Northern Affairs communities. Further details regarding the distribution of funds have been communicated through a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister to the communities in June. Northern Affairs is also reviewing our current funding delivery model to improve and simplify this process.



### Communication and Service Guidelines

Good, two-way communication is key to healthy relationships. Northern Affairs recognizes that great communication increases the efficiency in receiving municipal services and other supports.

Northern Affairs has started to gather community feedback on ways to improve communication. This has included engagement sessions at the CAO and Regional workshops in March and May, and a survey which has been conducted in person and circulated via email on June 19, 2024. After the surveys are collected, Northern Affairs will draft communications and service guidelines based on community feedback and share what we heard with you. We look forward to bringing you changes to better our communication. Thank you for your participation and enthusiasm! If you did not receive a copy of that survey, please contact Manager of Municipal Support Services at [Jessica.Drakul@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Jessica.Drakul@gov.mb.ca) or [NAB.General@gov.mb.ca](mailto:NAB.General@gov.mb.ca).



### Orange Shirt Day Fund

Northern Affairs communities are eligible to apply for the recently announced Orange Shirt Day Fund. This fund encourages Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manitobans to reflect on the impacts of the Indian residential school system through activities and initiatives that advance truth and reconciliation. Proposals submitted to the fund should contribute to ensuring the legacy and impacts of the residential school system are not forgotten or downplayed. The application deadline is Aug. 1, 2024. Application forms and further information can be found at [Province of Manitoba | inr - Orange Shirt Day Fund \(gov.mb.ca\)](https://www.gov.mb.ca/inr/orange-shirt-day-fund)

# NORTHERN AFFAIRS UPDATES

## CSO Program Review



The Community Safety Officer (CSO) Program has been in operation within select Northern Affairs communities since 2015, and the time has come for a review. The Northern Affairs Branch is looking to understand if the CSO program meets community's wants, needs, and expectations of a crime prevention program. By engaging with our community partners, we hope to build an understanding of the program's strengths, weaknesses, and how communities would like the program to develop moving forward. This review will also be an opportunity to share with community councils how Manitoba Justice has enhanced the program under *The Police*

*Service Amendment Act* in 2024. By sharing an overview of the new program, we hope to gather feedback on whether the changes Manitoba Justice has implemented would work in your community. The program review begins in summer 2024, with a recommended course of action to be shared with communities by fall, 2024. We look forward to hearing from your community on this topic! For further information contact Chris Riedle, Protective Services Consultant at [Chris.Riedle@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Chris.Riedle@gov.mb.ca)

## Fire Program Review



Northern Affairs is undertaking a review of the Fire Program offered within communities to review the current status of all fire departments, in comparison to their recorded designation. It will also look at how public education and fire prevention programs are delivered in communities; the strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement for the program; and community thoughts and feedback. This review will assist Northern Affairs in developing a recommended path forward

on how to update policy, training, delivery, and funding of fire services. The program review begins in the fall of 2024, with a draft recommended course of action to be shared with communities for feedback by spring 2025. We look forward to hearing from your community on this topic! For further information contact Chris Riedle, Protective Services Consultant at [Chris.Riedle@gov.mb.ca](mailto:Chris.Riedle@gov.mb.ca)

## REMINDERS

**August 6 @ 1:30pm**  
Community Townhall (Teams Call)

**August 20 - 21**  
NACC Annual General Meeting

### Municipal Calendar:

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/pubs/na\\_manual/financial/appendix\\_f2-a.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/pubs/na_manual/financial/appendix_f2-a.pdf)

**September 3 @ 1:30pm**  
Community Townhall (Teams Call)

**September 8 - 10**  
MMA Annual Conference/Tradeshow

# NORTHERN AFFAIRS STAFF PROFILE

Assistant Deputy Minister's Office			
Assistant Deputy Minister	Kevin McPike	Kevin.McPike@gov.mb.ca	204-794-4023
Executive Assistant to ADM	Velline Afuang	Velline.Afuang@gov.mb.ca	204-945-4926
Executive Director's Office			
Executive Director	Paul Doolan	Paul.Doolan@gov.mb.ca	204-232-4316
Regional Administrator	Antonella Buccini	Antonella.Buccini@gov.mb.ca	204-572-0418
Administrative Assistant	Chantel Sanderson	Chantel.Sanderson@gov.mb.ca	204-945-1313
Capital Planning Manager	Shannon Greer	Shannon.Greer@gov.mb.ca	204-945-7573
Senior Engineer	Kim Philip	Kim.Philip@gov.mb.ca	204-232-0022
Manager (MSS) Municipal Support Services	Jessica Drakul	Jessica.Drakul@gov.mb.ca	204-801-9543
Senior Policy Analyst (MSS)	Donna Sitko	Donna.Sitko@gov.mb.ca	204-679-0678
Senior Policy Analyst (MSS)	Alero Tenumah	Alero.Tenumah@gov.mb.ca	204-914-9440
Cottage Program Manager (CAMP) Cottage Admin. Modernization Program	Ayorinde Job	Ayorinde.Job@gov.mb.ca	204-599-9112
Senior Policy Analyst (CAMP)	Karon Chester	Karon.Chester@gov.mb.ca	204-430-2489
North Central Region			
Director	Stew Sabiston	Stewart.Sabiston@gov.mb.ca	204-918-6339
Administrative Assistant	Joanne Ziehlke	Joanne.Ziehlke@gov.mb.ca	204-621-7615
Municipal Development Consultant	Robert Barbeau	Robert.Barbeau@gov.mb.ca	204-648-3249
Municipal Development Consultant	Bonny Dumas	Bonny.Dumas@gov.mb.ca	204-621-7002
Municipal Development Consultant	Alvin Murdock	Alvin.Murdock@gov.mb.ca	204-679-6579
Technical & Public Works Consultant	Shannon Ganter	Shannon.Ganter@gov.mb.ca	204-621-7831
Technical & Public Works Consultant	Devin Jagassar	Devin.Jagassar@gov.mb.ca	204-648-7459
Technical & Public Works Consultant	Darren Nicklin	Darren.Nicklin@gov.mb.ca	204-621-7737
Workplace Safety & Health Consultant	Jaime Bertrand	Jaime.Bertrand@gov.mb.ca	204-572-0747
Protective Services Consultant	Kevin Popowich	Kevin.Popowich@gov.mb.ca	204-648-7161
Environmental Services Consultant	Morley Nagle	Morley.Nagle@gov.mb.ca	204-572-5970
Northern Region			
Director	Tracy Grexton	Tracy.Grexton@gov.mb.ca	204-620-3381
Administrative Assistant	Babatunde Adewole	Babatunde.Adewole@gov.mb.ca	204-679-5357
Municipal Development Consultant	Shashwat Paliwal	Shashwat.Paliwal@gov.mb.ca	431-354-8362
Municipal Development Consultant	Candace Hofferd	Candace.Hofferd@gov.mb.ca	204-679-2033
Municipal Development Consultant	Ulf Kristiansson	Ulf.Kristiansson@gov.mb.ca	204-670-4241
Technical & Public Works Consultant	Chris McTaggart	Christopher.McTaggart@gov.mb.ca	431-354-1080
Technical & Public Works Consultant	Dillon Shingler	Dillon.Shingler@gov.mb.ca	204-648-7510
Workplace Safety & Health Consultant	Ron Bruneau	Ron.Bruneau@gov.mb.ca	204-679-0222
Protective Services Consultant	Chris Riedle	Christopher.Riedle@gov.mb.ca	431-374-2553
Environmental Services Consultant	John Musyoka	John.Musyoka@gov.mb.ca	204-915-5051
<p><b>General Enquiries</b>  <a href="mailto:NAB.General@gov.mb.ca">NAB.General@gov.mb.ca</a>                      Northern Affairs 24hr Emergency Toll-free Number: 1-866-735-3111</p>			