

THE HONOURABLE JULIE GREEN
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Physician Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Hay River South on March 2, 2023, regarding Physician Recruitment and Retention.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is currently funded for 72.5 Full Time Equivalent physician positions and Hay River Health and Social Services Authority is funded for seven. Within Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, the regional physician staffing levels change frequently based on need and availability. A challenging national health human resources landscape means the use of locum physicians across the Northwest Territories, including Hay River, has increased and is likely to continue at higher rates. Currently, there is no funding policy set by the Department of Health and Social Services that stipulates per capita or other formula for allocation of physician Full Time Equivalent funding. The current allocation is based on historical practice and funding levels.

There is no policy stipulating minimum physician allocation.

The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority conducts its own employee-satisfaction survey every two years. The most recent Hay River Health and Social Services Authority employee satisfaction questionnaire was completed in 2021. The employee satisfaction questionnaire did not include specific questions related to lack of physicians and its impact on staff satisfaction in the workplace.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite

No./Nu. 60-19(2)

To address staff shortages, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority has worked in collaboration with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, Tłı̄ch̄o Community Services Agency, and the Department of Health and Social Services to develop the NWT Health and Social Services System Human Resources Plan, which was released last summer. As part of the implementation of the plan, officials are looking at factors that contribute to talent acquisition, hiring and retention challenges through exit surveys and/or interviews with physicians and nurses to see where improvements can be made.

Hay River has retained all their physician funding and only reimburses Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority for direct costs related to physician services provided. The agreement between Hay River Health and Social Services Authority and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority for the provision of physician services is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the Authorities and can be terminated by either party at any time, in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority has noted that it will continue to collaborate with the other Health and Social Services Authorities in the recruitment of physicians, as they have noticed that in the past it has been very challenging, and counterproductive when competing with larger centres in the NWT and the rest of Canada. Historically, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority has noticed that working together in their recruitment efforts has yielded better results.

Return to Written Question Retour à la Question écrite

No./Nu. 60-19(2)

The Department of Health and Social Services has not undertaken a formal assessment to determine if Hay River and area residents would be better served if the Hay River Authority was amalgamated into Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. To date, the feasibility of amalgamating Hay River Health and Social Services Authority into Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has not been considered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.