

**Mental Health and Engagement
on Addictions Recovery and the NWT Alcohol Strategy**

Mr. Speaker, this Legislative Assembly has identified increasing the number and variety of culturally-respectful, community based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare, as one of its priorities. The Department of Health and Social Services is improving services to individuals with addictions and I am committed to achieving this mandate commitment.

In the Northwest Territories, mental health and addictions are a pressing concern for all of us. While there are supports and services already in place and available, we know we need to further strengthen our system to help those who are struggling most. This is particularly true when it comes to addictions recovery supports.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to ensure quality addictions recovery services meet the needs of our residents, but in order to understand best what these individuals need, we need to hear from them. Hearing from individuals who have personally experienced, or had a family member experience, addictions will best inform our approach. The GNWT knows that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to mental health and addictions, and it's important that residents are provided options as they move towards recovery.

Our first step towards gathering this information and better understanding these needs will be to conduct an Addictions Recovery Survey which will

focus on hearing from people about programs and services they have accessed in the past. We want to learn what has worked, what has not, and what residents feel they need to support their recovery. The GNWT will be asking its partners, including service providers, for their support in sharing the survey with clients, as well as using traditional and social media to raise awareness. Hardcopies of the survey will also be available for those who are unable to access the online version at their local community counselling program office and treatment facilities.

Mr. Speaker, a key component of this survey will be to focus on barriers or challenges experienced by people seeking help. We need to understand what gets in the way of recovery so we can work to overcome it. We need to understand what works best when it comes to supporting recovery so we can do more of it. This survey is a critical first step towards this understanding and it will be followed by more focused efforts where we can dive deeper into lived experiences to shape our plans moving forward.

The GNWT is also moving forward by developing an NWT Alcohol Strategy. The intent of this strategy is to reduce alcohol-related harms. Alcohol-related harms refers to a wide range of impacts associated with heavy or risky alcohol use, including chronic health problems, injuries, violence, lost productivity, criminal justice issues, family problems, and death.

The development of the Alcohol Strategy will be informed by feedback from stakeholders and led by a team of professionals that understand outreach and engagement, addiction medicine and treatment, and include representatives from GNWT departments, and evaluation and surveillance experts to ensure measureable results.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to reviewing the feedback received from residents and service users about the effectiveness of the addictions recovery supports we provide. The GNWT wants to ensure that services offered are to meet our commitment to provide appropriate choice, cultural safety and person-centered care. These elements are incredibly important to the effectiveness of services and I look forward to sharing the results of the survey with Members as one way to fulfill our mandate commitment to assist residents with addictions recovery

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.