

Celebrating Social Work Month

Mr. Speaker, in March of each year, we celebrate social workers across Canada and in the NWT. This year's theme for Social Work Month is Social Workers are Essential.

Mr. Speaker, social workers play a vital role in supporting and maintaining individual, family and community well being across the Northwest Territories. Social workers are trained to help people address personal and systemic barriers that negatively impact them realizing their full potential.

Social workers perform a variety of functions and roles in our communities. Some work in schools, helping children get the services they need to get the best possible education. Others provide mental health services, helping people overcome mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety as well as substance use disorders.

When families are in crisis social workers are there to help them rebuild healthy relationships. Social workers can be found in hospitals, helping patients get optimal care not only while in treatment but when they return to their families and communities. Social workers also help us to cope with the loss of loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, social workers also play an integral in community organizations and in government, helping create programs and policies to make our society a better and more equitable place for all.

This type of work requires a passion for helping others and a commitment to making a difference in people's lives. These professionals have an ethical obligation to advocate for

broad social change to address social inequalities that will benefit the marginalized members of our communities, and ultimately, all of us.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this House know the 19th Legislative Assembly made it a mandate priority to improve early childhood development for all children. There are a number of activities being implemented across government to support this priority, including efforts to improve the delivery of children and family services, and health and wellness in the NWT.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has invested a significant amount of funding to improve services for children, youth and families in their communities. Social workers advance and provide these services across the NWT. In the last two years, we have funded 15 new social work positions and a number of supporting positions.

On February 1, 2021 the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority restructured the Child, Family and Community Wellness Division to better focus the work, and bring staff under the umbrella of one team. This change in organizational structure will streamline processes for staff and allow for better collaboration and more consistent delivery of programs across the Territory. These investments and new structures will better support social workers in the delivery of these important services.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Cabinet, I want to express how much our government appreciates the hard work and dedication of social workers. I am pleased to have this opportunity to recognize the commitment and positive contributions these individuals make in the lives of children, youth and families in our communities and thank them for their continued efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.