

Long-Term Care Bed Projections

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories knows how important it is to enable Seniors to age in place with dignity as loved and valued members of our communities. That is why the 19th Legislative Assembly has identified this as one of the 22 priorities in the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories. We are taking a whole-of-government approach to create the conditions in which Seniors will be able to stay at home as they age.

Mr. Speaker, one way the Department of Health and Social Services is working to achieve this mandate priority is by implementing recommendations from the Home and Community Care Review. We want to support Seniors to remain living independently with services such as nursing care, personal care like bathing and dressing, and home support for meals and laundry.

While we focus on improving home and community care services, we know that not everyone's care needs can be met in the community, particularly those with complex conditions and those who need care throughout the day and night.

For this reason, the Department is also providing equitable access to high quality long-term care services to support Seniors.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2015, the GNWT provided an estimate of how many long-term care beds we would need in future years. At that time we had only five years of long-term care data and used a ratio-based model.

Last summer, the Department decided to update these numbers. Staff worked with the NWT Bureau of Statistics to redo the estimate of long-term care beds required over the next 14 years. Later today, I will be tabling the result, a report titled, Projected Demand for Long-Term Care Beds in the NWT and the Department's Response to Long-Term Care Bed Projections. The summary of the report tells us we will not require as many new beds as we thought in 2015.

The NWT Bureau of Statistics used the most current and best practices to establish the demand for care. The Bureau used 10 years of NWT long-term care data for its modelling and provided the Department with projections for three scenarios based on age and care needs. The projections for all three indicate the same thing; the number of beds needed has decreased.

The Department of Health and Social Services has accepted one of these scenarios. We are confident that these projections are based on the best evidence available. These projections align with key findings about long-term care use in the NWT, such as our average age of admission into long-term care, and the care levels individuals require upon admission.

To make a long story short, we will need an additional 169 long-term care beds by 2034. This is a reduction from the 2015 bed projections that identified we would need 435 additional beds in the same time frame.

These updated projections are based on a model that is aligned with best practices used by other jurisdictions. The NWT Bureau of Statistics used 10 years of the Department's Long term care data and regional and territorial population projections to provide the new long term care bed projections up to 2035.

Our projections now tell us the NWT's long term care bed use is 72 per1000 population age 70 and older, as compared to the 115per 1000 population age 70 and older used for the 2015 projections. This is one of the biggest contributors to the adjustment in the 2020 bed projections. We have also added additional long term beds in Norman Wells and Behchoko since the projections were done in 2015.

The revised bed projections will not result in a reduction of services for seniors. We will use our home and community care resources more effectively. This means that seniors will receive the support they need in their home communities for as long as possible without going into long term care. Long term care is meant for seniors who require high levels of care, and that can no longer be supported in their homes. Examples of this include medically complex diagnoses, a person who requires 24/7 care, and a person who is at high risk of injury to self or others.

Seniors will be supported by the whole of government, which includes targeted investment in other areas including additional seniors housing.

Mr. Speaker, this is a dramatic change and these new long-term care bed projections will require a shift in the Department's current plans for capital spending in several NWT communities.

The Department plans to discuss these changes with stakeholders. We want to determine the best approach to provide an evidence-based continuum of services to meet the care needs of Seniors, including Home Care, Long-Term Care and other innovative approaches.

Through initial engagement with Indigenous governments and health and social services system leaders, we have confirmed the desire to have Elders and their caregivers supported to remain living in their home. The Department will continue to work collaboratively to respond.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services is committed to enhancing Home and Community Care services to more fully meet the care needs of Seniors and Elders so they can remain independent as long as possible, and ensuring long-term care services are in place when their needs can no longer be met in their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.