

Draft Child and Family Services Quality Improvement Plan

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to provide Members with an update on the draft Child and Family Services Quality Improvement Plan. The Quality Improvement Plan sets out actions that we are taking right now to address issues identified as part of internal reviews, the 2018 Auditor General's Report, and from staff feedback.

The Quality Improvement Plan extends the work that was started under Building Stronger Families, and refocuses our efforts in those areas where it is needed the most. It reinforces what has already been achieved, ensures outstanding items are completed, and addresses additional gaps that were found. The Plan responds directly to the Auditor General's recommendation to develop a detailed action plan that clearly sets out how we will ensure that the child and family services system will operate in compliance with legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Plan contains key actions that will allow us to better manage, resource and structure our system to ensure that significant changes achieved through the Building Stronger Families Action Plan can be sustained.

It identifies four strategic directions to improve the child and family services system, including:

- Continuing to build a culture of quality;
- investing in human resources;
- building staff capacity; and
- engaging with our partners.

As part of the Quality Improvement Plan, we have already taken important steps in each of these areas.

To meet the goals of the Plan, the government has proposed a new investment of \$3.3 million to add positions to support child and family services. We've already completed an initial caseload analysis and have started a territory-wide recruitment campaign for frontline staff.

We have also set up quality reviews for closed investigations, foster care services and minimum contact requirements. We have clarified roles and responsibilities for the Out of Territory Program, and have established a system to monitor the Interprovincial Placement Agreements and Courtesy Supervision for out of territory placements.

Mr. Speaker, with the renewed focus of the Quality Improvement Plan we have also implemented a revised accountability framework and established a guardianship standard, tool and checklist.

We've established a training team and completed additional training for staff, supervisors, managers and assistant directors. We've created a quality committee and working groups, implemented monthly staff teleconferences and set up an assistant directors' forum.

Mr. Speaker, engagement is one of the strategic directions of the Quality Improvement Plan. Working collaboratively with our partners and receiving ongoing feedback is crucial to ensuring that we are moving in the right direction to improve the quality of Child and Family Services, and are supporting our staff and partners adequately through this process.

While our team continues to work on the priority areas of the Quality Improvement Plan, over the coming months, we will work with key stakeholders to further refine the Plan, and receive valuable feedback on the implementation of specific actions. This is a living document, Mr. Speaker, and will change over time as actions are completed and new actions are identified as needing focused attention to be addressed.

For example, once publicly released, the Department of Health and Social Services will review carefully the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Government Operations in relation to the Auditor's General's 2018 Report, and these recommendations will inform revisions to the Quality Improvement Plan and its implementation.

In addition, we have reached out to Indigenous governments to request a meeting with them to discuss their priorities and how we can work together to strengthen Child and Family Services across the NWT. This feedback will also help shape the Quality Improvement Plan and the implementation of specific action items.

Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to taking action to improve our child and family services system, and our number one priority will continue to be the wellbeing and safety of children and youth in our care. The Auditor General's Report and our own internal audits have shown that there are areas that need focused and better resourced attention to continue to build on the promise of Building Stronger Families. With our living Quality Improvement Plan we will continue to work with Members of this Legislative Assembly, Child and Family Services staff, communities, Indigenous leaders, other partners and the families we serve to make the changes we need for a stronger Child and Family Services system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.