

Senior Citizens Month and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day June 15

Mr. Speaker, June is the month we make a special point of acknowledging and celebrating Seniors for their contributions to our families and communities.

Seniors are valued members of NWT communities and they contribute by working, volunteering, and passing on knowledge and traditions through teachings, stories, and ceremonies. Seniors also sit on advisory councils and engage with governments and non-government organizations helping to develop strategy and policy. Seniors fulfill many vital roles within our society that enhances our quality of life.

The NWT's population of Seniors continues to grow. Our task is to work together to ensure we provide quality of life for them as they age.

Mr. Speaker, most Seniors want to remain in their own homes or communities. We must ensure services and supports are available to them, including home and community care services, accessible and affordable housing, and transportation and supports for their caregivers to enable them to continue to age in place with dignity.

We are implementing recommendations from the Home and Community Care Review based on the Department's Response to that Review was tabled at this time last year. We are implementing a comprehensive and internationally recognized system of assessment of vulnerable persons within Home Care programs early next year. This change will allow us to improve areas of service that have been identified as being inconsistent or inadequate. This year we are also expanding hours that Home Care services are available in Hay River, Behchoko and Inuvik. We will expand hours in additional communities over time. We are

also engaging Indigenous governments to improve the responsiveness of the Home and Community Care program to the needs of Indigenous residents.

Mr. Speaker, when Seniors are no longer able to stay in their homes with the support of Home Care, we must ensure that our long-term care facilities can provide quality care for them. We have updated our bed projections, and determined we will require fewer beds than previously anticipated.

The Department has engaged with stakeholders in Hay River and the Beaufort Delta region to discuss the new projections. We have shared our plans and received feedback from community partners on how we can enhance services in Home Care and work with other government partners to enhance aging in place.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has a mandate commitment to support seniors. The Department is collaborating with the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment, Municipal and Community Affairs and the NWT Housing Corporation to help advance this mandate work. Together, we can ensure seniors continue to get the services and programs they require in their communities.

We are also developing a Northwest Territories Seniors Strategy that will reflect a whole-of-government approach and assist in coordinating programs and services for Seniors.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day coming up on June 15th. We acknowledge that Seniors are a vulnerable sector in society and can be at high risk for abuse and neglect.

To help address this prevalent issue, the Department provides funding each year to the NWT Seniors Society which is specifically directed towards supporting the Network to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults. The NWT Seniors Society has taken the lead on Elder abuse initiatives by providing awareness workshops in a number of communities and by

providing the toll-free Seniors Information line. Furthermore, this fall we will be launching an Elder abuse awareness campaign and planning is underway to increase training for GNWT staff to identify signs of Elder abuse.

Mr. Speaker, we see where gaps exist in the services our government must provide to ensure Seniors have good quality of life through the stages of aging, and we are working to address them to ensure Seniors are able to enjoy comfortable and dignified lives in the NWT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.