

Senior Citizens' Month

Mr. Speaker, June is Senior Citizens' Month. As the Minister Responsible for Seniors, I want to encourage all Northerners to join me in recognizing and celebrating the valuable contributions that Seniors and Elders make within our families and communities.

With a focus on aging in place, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made it a priority to help Seniors and Elders live in their own homes for as long as possible by ensuring that the right kinds of supports are available to them.

For its part, the Department of Health and Social Services continues to make progress to advance the Continuing Care Services Action Plan, with a strong commitment to supporting healthy aging and enhancing Home and Community Care services for our territory's aging population. The Department is currently working on the Home and Community Care Review which will help build a roadmap for where and how to make investments in Home Care to help support aging in place. This work includes reviewing gaps in services for each region and community in the Northwest Territories, analyzing demand, and jurisdictional reviews of models and protocols.

I have said it before in this House Mr. Speaker, Seniors and Elders are the fastest growing segment of our population, and one of the challenges that they face is limited access to, suitable or affordable housing across our territory.

On this front our government is making steady progress in the right direction. The NWT Housing Corporation recently completed and released a Seniors Planning Study that provides an overview of the current Seniors' population and housing context in the NWT. Key findings of the study indicate that many Seniors in the NWT face core housing issues.

Armed with this information, the NWT Housing Corporation is looking at ways to improve the delivery of the Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancements CARE Program, such as using local housing authorities to deliver repair and maintenance services in communities.

Improving how we deliver programs and supports to Elders and Seniors is important, but equally important is continuing to work closely with our indigenous governments and community partners to improve support for senior housing in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, there are two additional days of recognition within Senior Citizen's Month that I would like to highlight as well. June 1st is Intergenerational Day, which is a day for us all to reflect on the importance of embracing intergenerational relationships in our communities and homes. We know that fostering healthy and respectful connections between people of all ages, improves our ability to share traditional knowledge and culture, build resiliency, create safer communities, and address social isolation.

To support these efforts, the Departments of Health and Social Services and Municipal and Community Affairs are funding a three-year pilot project, Generations on the Move, led by the NWT Seniors' Society in partnership with the NWT Recreation and Parks Association.

The Project is designed to encourage healthy aging through intergenerational connections and to increase active living opportunities for older adults in our smaller NWT communities. Currently, the communities of Ulukhaktok, Fort Simpson, Whati, Hay River and Fort Providence are delivering intergenerational projects with this funding.

June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Raising public awareness about the abuse and neglect of Seniors and Elders is the first of many steps in preventing Elder abuse. Elder abuse comes in various forms, not just physical abuse. This includes verbal, emotional and financial abuse.

For Elder's struggling with some of these forms of abuse, the Department of Health and Social Services continues to offer a confidential, free, 24-hour NWT Helpline offering counseling support for residents of all ages in need. We are also working to increase awareness through the Department's What Will It Take campaign. This past winter we developed a video featuring a local Fort Good Hope Elder that depicts the subtle but damaging effects of financial Elder abuse. This was played in the Yellowknife theatre, is available online, and there are upcoming plans for promoting this campaign again throughout Senior Citizens' Month.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the commitment to Elder abuse prevention by the NWT Seniors' Society. Leading various Elder abuse prevention initiatives, such as providing the It's Not Right workshop on identifying abuse and how to help older adults at risk, the NWT Seniors' Society has advocated passionately to raise the profile of this important social issue that is present in our homes and communities. They also have a toll-free Seniors' Information Line for questions specific to issues and topics of interest to Seniors and Elders. We are pleased to be working with them on various initiatives and are truly grateful for their dedication towards eradicating the abuse of NWT's aging population.

Through strong relationships with our partners, our government aims to provide high quality programs and services that best support our Seniors and Elders. Together, with our commitment to aging in place, we are creating a future where Seniors and Elders can remain safe, independent and actively engaged in their home communities for as long as possible.

I would like to take a moment to thank all of those involved in enhancing the lives of our territory's aging population. From dedicated individuals to entire organizations, your efforts do not go unseen and unappreciated. During Senior Citizens' Month, and on Intergenerational Day and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I encourage all residents to celebrate the important role that our Seniors and Elders have in our lives and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.