

THE HONOURABLE JULIE GREEN
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR SENIORS

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Advancing Aging in Place Initiatives

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the Minister Responsible for Seniors to update Members on our mandate commitment to enable Seniors to age in place with dignity. This is an important commitment to me personally because of the number of Seniors who live in my constituency. I continue to hear that they want to stay in their homes as long as possible. That means taking a cross-department approach to providing seniors with access to various services and support when and where needed.

The GNWT has identified several ways in which this goal will be achieved, including:

- Increasing support for Seniors to stay in their homes and communities, including home care;
- Funding actions that enhance inclusion and safety;
- Expediting the removal of barriers to aging in place; and
- Protecting Seniors from abuse and neglect.

The Department of Health and Social Services, the NWT Housing Corporation, and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment are working together to advance this mandate priority.

For example, the NWT Housing Corporation has amended its policies, which will result in improved access to housing support for low-income Seniors. These changes include eliminating the requirement for applicants to have land tenure or insurance when they apply for home ownership repair programs. In addition, specific to Seniors, the NWT Housing Corporation no longer counts the income of adult children or grandchildren when calculating whether they are within the income threshold of the program they're. As a result of these changes, we have

seen Senior's participation in home repair programming increase by up to 25 per cent.

The NWT Housing Corporation also has several other relevant housing initiatives underway including

- the Seniors' Aging-in-Place program; and,
- new and innovative public housing designs that have wide doorways and halls to accommodate barrier-free use.

To assist in addressing the current demand for Seniors' housing, the NWT Housing Corporation is preparing a submission to the federal government's National Housing Co-Investment Fund for new public housing. The NWT Housing Corporation also supported AVENS with its application to advance the Avens Pavilion project, which will add 102 new Seniors' housing units in Yellowknife later next year.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is also working on improving life for Seniors by creating a new stream of the Income Assistance program tailored to them and to persons with disabilities. The department is currently engaging various groups to ensure that this program will meet the needs of NWT residents.

For our part, the Department of Health and Social Services is ready to engage the public to gather information for the development of an NWT Seniors' Strategy. Our hope is that the dialogue will identify gaps in services and offer solutions. The NWT Seniors' Strategy will be complete by September of 2022.

The Department of Health and Social Services will also make funding available in 2022-2023 for communities to deliver services and provide support to Seniors so they can age in place with our unique Age-Friendly Grant Program. The detail is online, and we are now taking applications.

We are also working to ensure NWT Seniors are better protected from abuse and neglect. Three key initiatives are already underway:

- a review of current programs, services and regulatory frameworks;
- examination of training options for staff and bystander intervention; and,
- the development and launch of a public awareness campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is committed to understanding and addressing the needs of Seniors so they can remain in their community for as long as possible. It is critical that our government offer a sustainable approach to meeting their diverse requirements. We have made and continue to make significant progress towards achieving this priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.