

**Seniors Report**

Mr. Speaker, Seniors and Elders hold a unique place throughout our Territory. They are our mentors and caregivers, and the wealth of knowledge and wisdom they provide is beneficial to all Northwest Territories' residents. Seniors and Elders are also the fastest growing population in the NWT, and there is a need to understand how our government programs and services are supporting them now and into the future.

As outlined in the priorities of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, our government committed to taking action so that Seniors in the NWT can age in place. We are dedicated to supporting our Seniors and Elders so that they can live in their homes for as long as possible, surrounded by family and community. Ensuring that appropriate supports, programs and services are available is essential to the fulfillment of this commitment.

The development of the Continuing Care Services Action Plan is one of the ways the Department of Health and Social Services is taking action on this commitment. The successful implementation of this Plan requires strong partnerships and integration across all regions of the territory. We are collaborating with partners across all health authorities and GNWT Departments, as well as local community governments and non-government organizations to make it happen.

For example, our partnership with the NWT Housing Corporation has found new space for adult day programming in four new independent housing complexes for Seniors and Elders in small communities. This dedicated space makes it possible for regional health centres to partner with communities to offer socialization and other supports to help Seniors and Elders to remain in their communities longer.

The Department has also collaborated with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority and the Tlicho Community Services Agency to design and develop the Paid Family/Caregiver Pilot program. Initial implementation of the pilot begins this October and involves engaging with interested parties in select communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is projected that Seniors and Elders will make up over 20% of our territory's population by 2035. The time is now for the GNWT and its partners to better understand what challenges and opportunities exist when it comes to supporting these valued members of our communities. That is why, in November 2017, I committed to working with the NWT Senior's Society to identify how Seniors and Elders in our territory access sixteen different programs and services available to them, which are broken down into the following categories:

- Health and Wellness;
- Housing;
- Income Assistance;
- Law and Victim Services; and
- Community Services.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to release the Report on Seniors' Access to Programs and Services, which was developed in partnership with the NWT Seniors' Society. This report provides an important snapshot of the Senior and Elder population in the NWT, and outlines how they accessed government programs and services in 2017-2018. With this information, the GNWT and its partners are better able to understand what challenges and opportunities exist when it comes to supporting the fastest growing demographic in the NWT.

This report was truly an all-of-government initiative and its development was led by the Departments of Finance and Executive and Indigenous Affairs, with contributions from:

- The Department of Health and Social Services;
- The Department of Education, Culture and Employment;
- The Department of Justice;
- The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs; and
- The NWT Housing Corporation.

The report has shown that the GNWT generally offers the same types of programs found in other jurisdictions, and in some cases provides additional supports and programs which reflect the unique geographic, cultural and regional characteristics of NWT Seniors and Elders. With this information, the GNWT is better able to identify gaps in support and inform future planning for program and service delivery to Seniors.

In considering how the report's findings can be used to enhance program effectiveness ensure that all NWT residents have equitable access to supports in their communities, we will also draw from a new interRAI Clinical Information System to help identify regional trends.

InterRAI is an internationally-recognized, evidence-based assessment system that is widely used in health care sectors throughout Canada, and is part of our Continuing Care and Services Action Plan. The interRAI home care and long term care assessment tools are user-friendly, person-centered, and standardized to provide comprehensive data and information that guide provision of care according an individual's needs.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of implementing the interRAI system across the NWT health and social services system.

InterRAI will provide case managers, home care professionals, and long term care facilities with:

- Identification, prevention and management of emerging and potential resident or client risks;
- Access to assessment information;
- Outcome measures to improve quality care;
- Enhanced data quality with the use of a standardized data set;
- Information to report on continuing care quality indicators; and
- Reliable data for monitoring quality of care and evaluation of residents.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been making investments and taking action to help our aging population remain in their communities for as long as possible. We also understand the importance of fostering cooperation and partnerships between our government and non-governmental organizations to achieve our goal of providing the best care and best health for a better future

For example, we are working collaboratively with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, the NWT Seniors Society, and the NWT Recreation and Parks Association to engage Seniors and Elders at the community level and encourage them to stay active. We have also partnered with NWT Recreation and Parks to support the Functional Fitness for Falls certification program to decrease the number of falls and ensure safer care environments for our seniors and elders. Additionally, we are supporting and encouraging the use of the NWT Association of Communities' Built Environment Guide and Healthy Communities Toolkit.

Part of our ongoing commitment to NWT Seniors and Elders is to support public awareness about Senior and Elder abuse. We are continuing work with the NWT Seniors Society, and with the health authorities, to develop Elder abuse screening tools and protocols for intervention and support.

Seniors and Elders are important contributors to the health and wellbeing of our communities, and it is important that we work together to better understand how we can support them to live active, healthy lives for as long as possible in their home communities. The Senior's Report provides our government with a holistic perspective on the programs and services we offer, and I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the NWT Senior's Society for their enormous contributions to its creation. It is my hope that we will continue to work together on future initiatives to improve access to supports for our Seniors and Elders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.