

Update on the NWT Disability Framework and Action Plan

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has made a commitment in its mandate to ensure that effective supports and programs are available for persons with disabilities.

In March 2016, our Government initiated the Disability Program Review and Renewal Project to identify the status of current services, gaps in services and opportunities for improvements through the development of a new strategic framework and five-year action plan.

The development of this Framework has been the product of a partnership between the Government of the NWT and our disability partners from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind Alberta – NWT Office; the Hay River Persons with Disabilities Committee; the NWT Disabilities Council; Yellowknife Association of Community Living; the NWT Seniors Society; Foster Family Coalition of the NWT, and the NWT Association of Communities. The perspectives, knowledge and commitment of these organizations were instrumental in the creation of the Framework, which we are publicly releasing today.

The Framework is based on the fundamental belief that every person with a disability has the right to full citizenship and opportunity. It outlines our vision, values, principles and goals, and sets direction for our future actions.

The Framework is founded on four interconnected goals that represent and give meaning to our shared vision and commitment. These goals support outcomes that are person and family centred; that facilitate inclusion and accessibility; that contribute to changing attitudes, beliefs and practices regarding disabilities through awareness, education and training; and ensure a whole of government approach

through coordination, evaluation and reporting. These goals will shape and guide our priority objectives and associated actions in the Disability Action Plan that is currently being developed.

Along with the Framework, we are releasing a companion document, Disability Matters, which provides a short summary of the direction we will be undertaking.

Mr. Speaker, disability influences all of us, directly or indirectly. Programs and services for persons with disabilities mean many different things to many different people. Each individual accesses different services based on their wants and needs.

Sometimes, the largest barrier is knowing where to start when trying to access disability programming and supports. This is why we are also releasing today the GNWT Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities Inventory.

The Inventory is a resource that outlines programs and services that are available to persons with disabilities through GNWT Departments, Agencies, and those delivered through non-government organizations. The inventory will be updated on an ongoing basis to ensure it is current and responsive.

We are also finalizing a five-year Disabilities Action Plan that builds on the goals established within the Framework, and focuses on existing strengths in our system. It looks at improving communication and collaboration, increasing access to disability related programs and services while addressing the social determinants of health. This Action Plan will be released in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, achieving our vision will require continued collaboration with our partners in the disability sector. It is only through continuing engagement that we can create programs and services that promote equity, participation, accessibility and inclusion for all NWT residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.