

**Celebrating Seniors Month**

Mr. Speaker, June is Seniors Month, a time for us to recognize the important role of Seniors in our families, communities, and the territory. They connect us with language, land and culture, and bridge the past and the future.

Under the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019-2023, we are supporting this role by enabling Seniors to age in place with dignity. We want to help Seniors remain in their homes and communities for as long as they are able.

In order to be successful, we must address the core issues that affect seniors' ability to live in their home communities. We collaborated across government and engaged with Seniors, their families and caregivers, municipal and Indigenous governments, and community organizations to determine how we can improve programs, services, and initiatives to better meet the needs of Seniors. The feedback we received helped the department to develop the Seniors Strategic Framework that will shape future efforts across government. The Framework will be tabled this August.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the engagement process, we heard from Seniors about their desire to be valued and included in meaningful ways in their communities. Today marks Intergenerational Day. Here is an opportunity to pause, reflect and reach out across generations, fostering understanding, respect, and meaningful relationships. Seniors want to connect with children, youth and adults alike, and share stories, culture, traditions, and wisdom drawn from a lifetime of experiences. Having strong intergenerational bonds not only contributes to wellness but also fosters a deep sense of belonging in communities. We need to recognize that many Seniors experience isolation and loneliness which poses serious risks to their physical and mental well-being, as well

as makes them vulnerable to Elder abuse. I encourage everyone to reach out and spend time with the seniors in their lives and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge that World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is coming up on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The United Nations established this day to create awareness and encourage a dialogue about all types of abuse and neglect Seniors' experience. Governments, communities, and families must all play pivotal roles in safeguarding the well-being and safety of Seniors. The Government of the Northwest Territories is reinforcing this point by providing a poster and fact sheet about the different types of abuse Seniors face. These resources are available on the Department of Health and Social Services' website and will be distributed to communities this summer.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I urge all residents to join me in celebrating the role that Seniors play in our lives and to recognize their important contributions to create healthy and vibrant families and communities across the NWT. They have laid the groundwork for everything we plan to further improve and accomplish, a foundation that is critical to the future of the territory

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.