

GNWT Seniors' Strategic Framework

Mr. Speaker, throughout this term, departments across the Government of the Northwest Territories have been working towards our mandate commitment to enable Seniors to age in place with dignity.

To focus this work, Regular Members passed a motion calling on the Department of Health and Social Services to create a strategic framework for Seniors. That work is now finished, and later today I will table the GNWT Seniors' Strategic Framework. This Framework is an inventory of measures required for improving programs, services, and initiatives to better meet the needs of Seniors and help them to stay at home for as long as possible.

Many people and organizations contributed to this Framework. Their engagement reflects their commitment and respect for Seniors and their valued place in our communities and territory. Their participation strengthened our understanding of the needs of Seniors, existing gaps in programs and services, and provided insights as to how to enable Seniors to age in place.

Mr. Speaker, the resulting Framework outlines 20 key focus areas, organized into four pillars: Built Environment, Healthy Aging, Safety, and Information and Communication. Advancing work on these focus areas, whether through mandate commitments or departmental business plans, will be instrumental in ensuring we can meet Seniors' needs. I am going to speak to each one separately.

The Built Environment pillar emphasizes the importance of accessibility, suitability, and affordability of housing along with the rest of the physical environment to enhance the safety of Seniors to participate in daily, recreational, cultural, and social activities. This pillar is about transportation and outdoor lighting, for example, that would help prevent

slips, falls and injuries and contribute to personal and property safety too.

Mr. Speaker, the Healthy Aging pillar focuses on supporting the physical, mental, and social well-being through financial support, healthcare services, practical assistance, and age-friendly opportunities for activity, such as intergenerational programs where Seniors can connect with children and youth to share culture, traditions, and knowledge. Over the past two years, the Department of Health and Social Services offered a specific funding stream for communities to deliver services and provide support to Seniors in their health and well-being.

The Safety pillar addresses the right of Seniors to safety in relationships, homes, and communities. Health providers will be promoting a person-centered, integrated service delivery approach, as well as providing access to advice from legal and professional experts as well as safety information and support. Work is ongoing to strengthen staff training to spot the signs of elder abuse and protect seniors from it.

The Information and Communication pillar prioritizes delivering information that is relevant, timely, accessible and culturally appropriate. I hope the next government will invest in system navigation services to support Seniors accessing necessary programs, making informed decisions, and participating in recreational, cultural, and social activities.

Mr. Speaker, a comfortable life for Seniors means having access to the necessary services and support to live independently and safely at home. This goal requires collaboration and coordination of efforts with all government entities and our valuable community partners. That work has already started during this assembly, including the increased home heating subsidy, a new income assistance stream for Seniors, and access to home improvement funding. I am confident these program changes have improved the ability of Seniors to age in place.

I am very proud of this Framework which is the result of a motion I made as a Regular Member in 2020. It provides clear direction to future governments on areas for improving Seniors' programs and services so that we all have the opportunity to age, with the appropriate support where we choose to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.