

Improved Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services

Mr. Speaker, increasing the number and variety of culturally respectful, community-based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare is a mandate commitment for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Addictions continue to be a prevalent issue in the Northwest Territories and one that affects far too many of our residents. This government, led by the Department of Health and Social Services, continues to work towards addressing residents' unique needs and to reduce addictions by providing access to treatment, aftercare supports and recovery.

Addictions recovery looks different for each individual, there is no one size fits all approach. As such, the Department is working to improve options and choices for individuals and families as they pursue recovery in a way that works for them. The Stepped Care 2.0 Model, provides rapid same day access to mental wellness and addictions recovery supports that include e-mental health apps, online self-help services and skill-based programming options.

The implementation of a Stepped Care 2.0 Model and approach to care will provide residents with a range of options that they can choose from as and when needed.

Stepped Care 2.0 aligns with the Seamless Care Pathway approach. The Seamless Care Pathway, which is the foundation of the Mental Wellness and Addictions

Recovery Action Plan, ensures individuals and families have timely access to the right level of care that is solution-focused and based on their present needs.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the larger Stepped Care 2.0 approach, we are continuing to enhance the Community Counselling Program. We are now offering same day appointments across the territory to increase access and reduce wait times for residents seeking counselling.

The Department is also continuing to support regional and community Indigenous governments to deliver land-based programming for mental wellness and addictions recovery. Beginning this year the Department will also be working with communities to establish peer support programming like Alcoholics Anonymous, and Wellbriety, at the community level. Additionally, because the availability of safe sober housing close to home is a key piece of supporting individuals in their recovery, we are also exploring options for a transitional housing model that will meet the needs of NWT residents in recovery.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ways we are enhancing services for addictions recovery, is by adding more options for facility-based addictions treatment. The Department recently issued a request for proposals from southern addictions facilities to provide treatment programming to NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that as a result of this RFP process, the number of treatment facilities contracted by the GNWT has increased from four to six. Effective October 1, 2020 the Department has contracts with Thorpe Recovery Centre, Renascent, Poundmaker's Treatment Lodge, Fresh Start Recovery Centre, Edgewood Treatment Centre, and Aventa. I have toured some of these facilities and can confirm that services provided are excellent.

By increasing the number of service providers we can ensure we provide a wide range of specialized services including gender-specific programming, family programming, programming for individuals with FASD, medical detox options, expedited intake of pregnant women and extended care options.

Mr. Speaker, we also anticipate that the addition of these two new facilities will help to reduce wait times for treatment. However, because of the pandemic, every treatment facility is currently operating at reduced capacity. While we anticipate better access in the future, we will likely continue to see longer wait times until these facilities return to full service.

In addition to the expansion of these facility-based options for residents, the Department is also working to implement several eMental Health options. One of these options is an interactive aftercare recovery app. This will be available for NWT residents to support them in their recovery and wellbeing.

Expanding the range of options, Mr. Speaker, means more choice for residents.

The availability of additional options for facility-based treatment, and the enhancement and introduction of other addictions recovery and aftercare programs and support options will ensure residents have access to the right combination of supports at the right time.

These are important steps in providing an improved ability to support mental wellness and addictions recovery, thereby creating meaningful change for individuals, families, communities and the territory as a whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.