

Anti-Poverty

Mr. Speaker, poverty reduction is an urgent challenge that everyone needs to be aware of. Poverty levels have further increased with COVID-19, which could push more residents into poverty due to an uncertain economy, food insecurity, and high cost of living.

To support residents during the pandemic, the Government of Northwest Territories took action on several fronts. During the month of March, income assistance recipients received a one-time emergency allowance.

The GNWT is also taking action to provide supports and protection for individuals requiring shelter. Shelters are often crowded, which can present a risk to both individuals and staff. The GNWT is working with shelters to implement supports for physical distancing and isolation for individuals waiting for test results or who receive a diagnosis of COVID-19.

To address homelessness and housing stability, the GNWT provided \$600,000 in funding over four years to support a Housing First Program that rents apartments in Yellowknife to house and support up to 25 individuals who were previously homeless and have concurrent mental health and addictions. The Northern Pathways to Housing is a supportive housing program that supports communities to provide stable housing for single adults and help in integrating them into the community. In recent years the Northern Pathways to Housing Program has provided funding to Aklavik, Fort Simpson, Behchokò, and Fort Good Hope to construct or renovate housing for 16 single

adults experiencing homelessness. We look forward to more communities coming on board.

Mr. Speaker, to successfully reduce poverty we must work together with our partners to make better use of limited resources. Where there is overlap of programs and services between organizations, we must have better coordination for residents accessing the supports they need. To accomplish this, the GNWT hired a Territorial Director of Integrated Service Delivery to guide a whole of government approach to enhance service delivery across the NWT through a coordinated person-centred approach.

The GNWT also increased funding available for the NGO Stabilization Program from \$350,000 to \$700,000. This funding supports non-governmental organizations who deliver critical GNWT funded programs or services to the public to stabilize or develop their capacity to manage them.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT recognizes its central role in providing a coordinated approach with Indigenous and community governments, business and industry, and NGOs to take action on reducing poverty in the NWT.

Last year, the GNWT released its renewed Action Plan, Working Together II – An Action Plan to Reduce Poverty in the NWT 2019-2022. This Action Plan was developed in collaboration between the GNWT and its partners, and focuses on five priority areas: children and family support; healthy living and reaching our potential; safe and affordable housing; sustainable communities; and integrated continuum of services.

The GNWT has many programs and services in place that advance these priority areas and provide a path out of poverty for residents. They have already helped thousands of Northerners. These include initiatives like the Anti-Poverty Fund, which has an annual budget of \$1 million to help eligible organizations and Indigenous governments and communities to support their poverty reduction initiatives.

This year, 28 recipients were awarded funding through the 2020 Anti-Poverty Fund. Because of COVID-19, proposals were reviewed by the Anti-Poverty Advisory Committee through a virtual meeting. The committee is comprised of nine individuals from across the NWT, and who represent community governments, Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, the private sector, and the GNWT.

This year's successful proposals aim to reduce poverty by supporting food security; assisting those experiencing homelessness; early childhood development; employment and training; healthy living; supporting Traditional Knowledge; and on-the-land activities.

The Interdepartmental Anti-Poverty Team is currently working to plan a virtual Anti-Poverty Roundtable, in order to proceed with the event, while still complying with public health orders. The Roundtables will be revised and will now focus on a key poverty reduction issue for each event. This year we will be examining how best to address food security at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that residents have access to supports they need so that they can live in dignity, are free from poverty, and are active members in their communities. We can achieve this through the coordinated

and collaborative effort of all partners. By working together, we can learn more about what is being done in communities and support better futures for our residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.