



### **Plain Language Summary for Bill 40: An Act to Amend the Medical Profession Act**

The Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Health and Social Services is making amendments to the *Medical Profession Act* (Act) and regulations to allow for regulation of physicians to provide virtual care to residents. Initiation of the amendments began following engagement with the Registrar of Professional Licensing and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. The NWT Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta have also had input on the changes.

The current Act requires physicians providing care to NWT residents in person or by any other method to have a licence to practice medicine in the NWT as issued by the Office of Professional Licensing in the Department of Health and Social Services. The required registration proved challenging for physicians to provide virtual care during the pandemic.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, use of virtual care methods in the health and social services system increased to support limiting the need for in-person contact as much as possible. Virtual care methods include telephone, fax, email, texting and video calls.

The revised Act contains the following changes:

- Adds an exemption from getting an NWT licence for physicians in other provinces and territories providing virtual care to NWT residents when there is a referral from an NWT doctor or nurse practitioner;
- Clarifies a regulation-making power to adapt and adopt standards of practice for the practice of medicine;
- Allows the Minister of Health and Social Services to make an agreement with an organization or government about physician licensing;
- Creates a new category of registration and licensing for physicians practicing by virtual care without a referral; and
- Allows registers of physicians to be posted online.

These changes will mean:

- Residents will be able to receive medical services in the health centre, by medical travel or by virtual care in their homes, as appropriate to their level of care;
- With an NWT referral, physicians practicing virtual care will not have to be registered in the NWT; they will be registered in their home province or territory;
- NWT standards of practice for doctors will be created;
- A new category of licensing for doctors practicing medicine by virtual care methods that do not have an NWT referral will be created to protect the public; and
- Improve the posting of doctor registration information online.

For additional information or questions contact:  
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