



Glen Abernethy: Seniors Citizen's Month

Delivered June 1, 2017

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that June is Seniors Citizen's Month, June 1st is Intergenerational Day, and June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. I would like to invite all Northerners to join me in recognizing seniors across the Territory and their valuable contribution within our families and communities during this month.

Seniors are currently the fastest growing population in the Northwest Territories. It is projected that the number of seniors over the age of 70 will nearly triple between 2015 and 2034. This will increase the need for home and community care and long-term care solutions.

Our government has made a commitment in its mandate to support Elders to live in their own homes for as long as possible and ensure adequate supports are available for those who can no longer do so. Today, I want to provide you with an update on some of the progress that our government has made to better serve our seniors.

We have completed a review of the Long-Term Care Program. The review identified the need to expand long-term care capacity in Yellowknife and in other regions of the NWT. It is projected that by 2026, there will be a shortfall of 258 long term care beds in the NWT. The Review helps us to plan and prioritize investments.

We have and will continue to make investments in health infrastructure for long term care, such as the Jimmy Erasmus Seniors Home that was completed earlier this year. Work is also underway on the construction of the new 18 bed long-term care facility in Norman Wells. The additional ten long-term care rooms in the Jimmy Erasmus Seniors Group Home and the long-term care facility in Norman Wells, once completed, will help reduce the wait list for long-term care in the NWT. Funding has also been approved to begin work in Yellowknife for long-term care beds, with planning currently underway.

The GNWT is also committed to continue working with AVENS on their proposal for a 48 bed long-term care facility. A business case for this has been completed, and we are exploring options to redevelop the old Stanton Hospital into a 72 bed long-term care facility.

We have also been working with the NWT Housing Corporation to support Elders programming in their new seniors independent living units. The Fort Liard facility was completed last October and Elders programming will be beginning soon. Construction is underway in Fort McPherson, Whati, and Fort Good Hope. We expect construction of all these facilities will be completed this year, and then we can begin offering activities for Elders.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that seniors not only remain in their homes for as long as possible, but remain independent, safe and actively engaged in their community. To achieve this, we are developing a Continuing Care Services Action Plan that includes actions for enhanced home and community care services, and expanded palliative care services with an additional \$2.5 million in funding. The action plan will build upon the seven priorities identified in the Our Elders, Our Communities Framework, which was released in June 2014. In addition, the Continuing Care Services Action Plan will kick off a comprehensive review of home care services that will be initiated later this year.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the work of the NWT Seniors' Society. The Society is a non-profit organization that we work closely with, and our government provides funding annually to the Society so that they can support seniors across the NWT. Some of the work that the Society does includes raising awareness of programs and services specific to seniors, supporting the Seniors' Advisory Council, providing a community outreach program, and a toll-free seniors' information line. In addition they support Senior Citizens' Month in June by providing resources to communities to honour and recognize seniors.

I would also like to highlight the important work the Seniors' Society does in the prevention of abuse of older adults. Abuse of older adults can be verbal, physical or financial. This problem is present in our communities, and the Society has been actively creating conversations about this problem, and educating NWT residents about the role we can play to find solutions. The Society has also played an important role in establishing and providing ongoing support to the NWT Network to Prevent the Abuse of Older Adults. I would like to recognize their commitment to educating and working with partners to reduce, prevent, and ultimately eradicate the abuse of older adults. MACA is working with the NWT Seniors' Society to develop fitness and recreation programming for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, it is only by working together with partners like the NWT Seniors' Society that we are able to improve our programs and services to help support seniors so that they can continue to remain safe, independent and actively participate in their communities.

I wish seniors and the NWT Seniors Society all the best in celebrating these three important events in the month of June.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.