

**ENDOSCOPY BLITZ**

Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Department of Health and Social Services Action Plan, "A Foundation For Change", we are taking actions to ensure the accessibility to health care services is optimized for NWT residents.

As members are aware, the incidence of colorectal cancer in the Northwest Territories is among the highest in the country. Men are 1.5 times more likely, and women 1.3 times more likely, to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer than their Canadian counterparts. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the territory for both men and women. NWT Colorectal Cancer Advisory Committee in November 2009 report cites that 20 residents are diagnosed with this type of cancer each year in the NWT.

For this reason, in January of this year, a NWT Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines was issued by the Department. The response to this important preventive measure has been very positive and has resulted in a long waitlist for endoscopy procedures. For non-urgent endoscopic procedures such as a colonoscopy, gastroscopy and cystoscopy, the current wait list for non-urgent procedure is up to 2 years.

To respond to this need and to reduce the wait times, I am pleased to announce today that the endoscopy blitz will take place in Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik. This involves the work of both local and locum specialists and the cooperation of many health authority staff who will coordinate this schedule.

For the first time, two one-week endoscopy blitzes are planned in Hay River - one from May 25 to 29 and one from September 21 to 25. The procedures will be performed by a specialist at a rate of ten procedures per day. A total of one hundred endoscopies will be performed on high need patients during the two weeks on clients from the South Slave region. This will more than complete the urgent and semi-urgent cases for the entire South Slave region.

For Beaufort Delta Region, plans are underway to have its own endoscopy blitz in the fall. This blitz will serve clients from the Sahtu Region as well as Beaufort Delta, who are currently on a waiting list.

Mr. Speaker, Stanton Territorial Health Authority is also finalizing a plan to maximize efficiency and to increase the number of procedures being performed to ten procedures per day in order to reduce its wait list. Together with two blitz being planned in Hay River and Beaufort Delta, we will decrease the waitlist at Stanton Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, endoscopy is a common procedure which includes colonoscopy and gastroscopy. Gastroscopy detects cancer of the stomach and colonoscopy.

The good news is that colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable and beatable! If detected early, this disease can be successfully treated 90% of the time.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that waitlists are consistently monitored and updated by clinicians based on need. As mentioned we have waitlists and will continue to do so as does the rest of Canada. Access to specialists and medical equipment continues to be a challenge.

By consistently monitoring and updating the wait list and making better use of all of our health facilities and staff and working closely with our Authorities, we are able to put together this Territorial Service Plan to better serve our residents all across our Regions.

I would like to thank the CEO's and Medical Directors in each Authority for their leadership and commitment. It is by working as a Territorial team as envisioned on "Foundation for Change" Action Plan that we will continue to meet the challenges of delivering essential medical services to the NWT residents.

I would also like to advise the House that in next few days, I will be announcing a mammography blitz in South Slave Region aimed at improving breast health screening and early detection of breasts cancer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.