

A Foundation for Change

Earlier today I announced 'A Foundation for Change', Building a Healthy Future for the NWT for 2009 - 2012. This document will be tabled later today.

'A Foundation for Change' is about our future. We need to make changes to our Health and Social Services system now, to ensure our communities and our children continue to have access to affordable, quality health care and social services in the future.

Northerners have access to some of the best health and social services available anywhere. We continue to invest extensively in the health and wellness of our people in order to build the future of our Territory. The Government of the Northwest Territories spent \$313 million for health and social services including \$217 million in funding to Health and Social Services Authorities in 2008 - 2009. Mr. Speaker, this Plan does not call for a reduction in spending. What it does is it targets priorities and actions that will allow for more efficiency and a 'bend in the trend' of health and social services spending in the NWT.

This Plan has a vision for the health and social services system going forward because we recognize we need a strong sense of where change should lead us.

This vision speaks to the importance of Community wellness, priorities and individual responsibility, as well as our accountability in delivering programs and services.

The three goals of 'A Foundation for Change' are wellness, accessibility and sustainability. The Plan will include an increased focus on health promotion and prevention, so people can make positive choices for themselves. The Plan also incorporates an emphasis on infrastructure and information technology to increase access to our residents, particularly in smaller and more remote communities. We will also improve governance, financial management and accountability for programs and services so there is a shared understanding of actual costs and benefits of the system.

Mr. Speaker, 'A Foundation for Change' provides an overview of the priorities and actions we will take to move us in the right direction for the next 3 years. There are action items in this plan where our end result is very clear – for example, there will be new funding for health promotion in small communities. However, there are other areas where we will need to consult with communities, or develop further plans before we know exactly what the end result will be, such as in the development of Community Wellness Plans. Over the course of 2010, we will travel to all NWT communities for Community Assessments. These will be designed to ensure that the services provided to Northerners are better balanced to local resources and priorities. There will also be an opportunity to share current information about regional and community health status and services.

Mr. Speaker, 'A Foundation for Change' includes actions based on a number of partnership frameworks including the "Action Plan on Family Violence", the "Healthy Choices Framework", and the "NWT Homelessness Framework". We will continue to build partnerships and work with communities and Aboriginal Governments through the Community Assessments.

This Plan has been developed through extensive work and review by staff of the Department of Health and Social Services and all eight Health and Social Services Authorities. I would like to thank all of the staff who helped develop the Plan. I particularly would like to extend a thank you to the leaders in the Department of Health and Social Services, the members of the Joint Leadership Council, and Chief Executive Officers who have taken the challenge of developing this Plan very seriously. I would also like to express a special mention of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, Mr. Tom Beaulieu, Chair of the Committee and all Members of the Committee for their positive and constructive feedback, and comments on the plan, which we have worked to incorporate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.