

Disability Awareness Week and Disabilities Review

Mr. Speaker, Disability Awareness Week is approaching in the NWT.

Each year we acknowledge persons with disabilities and strive to raise awareness of challenges they may face in their daily lives with accessibility and inclusion. We also recognize volunteers who work to help persons with disabilities achieve equality within their communities during the annual Disabilities Awareness Tea.

Mr. Speaker, there are more than 3,000 people in the NWT who identify as having a disability. The GNWT has committed in its mandate to ensuring effective supports and programs are in place for persons with disabilities. Completing the NWT disability review and renewal project is part of fulfilling that commitment.

The project is being led by the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with non-government organizations from the disabilities sector and a working group comprised of officials from the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment, Municipal and Community Affairs, Justice, Finance and the NWT Housing Corporation.

The disability review will document existing resources and identify gaps in disability programs and services as well as opportunities for improvement.

This review will ensure government departments are maximizing the use of existing resources, are marketing them effectively, and establishing priority areas for new initiatives, should additional resources become available.

Through the disability review, we will also develop a strategic framework and a five year action plan that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities.

The action plan will be focused on four pillars, ensuring services are person and family centered ensuring services are person-centred and family-driven; improving inclusion and accessibility of services; increasing awareness and education; and coordination, evaluation and reporting.

As a first deliverable, we will publish an updated inventory of existing GNWT programs and services in the near future.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that this review and the development of the strategic framework and action plan will enhance and improve the programs and services we have for persons with disabilities, and ultimately enhance their quality of life here in the NWT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.