

**GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO
MOTION 14-17(5):
EXPANSION OF POLICING AND NURSING SERVICES**

Motion:

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Range Lake, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends that the government identify at least two priority communities for new nursing and/or policing services;

AND FURTHER, that by December 31, 2014, the government complete long-term plans, working with community governments and including timelines for implementation, to expand police and nursing services into communities now lacking those services;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

GNWT Response

The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) provide policing and nursing services to every community in the Northwest Territories (NWT). These services aim to keep every community healthy and safe. Policing or nursing services are provided in a manner that does not require each service to be present in order to work effectively and efficiently.

Policing Services

As a government, we are committed to ensuring each person has access to the same level of services regardless of where they happen to live. Although some of our smaller communities may not have permanent RCMP detachments, they still receive policing services through regular patrols from adjacent communities, or by having Members dedicated to their community who spend several days per week in that community. In addition, each community's annual policing priorities are established through meetings between community leadership and the RCMP, and reflect their specific concerns.

While the level of policing services in the NWT is jointly determined by the territorial Minister of Justice and the Commissioner of the RCMP, the internal management of the Territorial Police Service remains the exclusive domain of the RCMP Commissioner.

When making decisions and allocating resources, including determining where new detachments should be located, the RCMP take into account a number of

factors, including community population; the number of calls for service received each year; crime rates; the remoteness of, and access to, communities; workload of Members; financial and human resources; and infrastructure. If the RCMP identifies a strong need for another Northern detachment, they will inform the DOJ.

Given the small size and low call out rates in the communities that are currently without permanent detachments, it is simply not economically feasible to establish two new detachments during this period of fiscal restraint. In the NWT, building one detachment would be a 7.5 to 10 million dollar investment, depending on size. Running it would take a further several million dollars annually. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) would be responsible for 70% of those costs under the Policing Services Agreement, with Canada responsible for the other 30%.

Currently, there are 21 communities with permanent RCMP detachments, and two other communities with dedicated RCMP Members serving them from nearby detachments. A further 10 of our smallest communities receive policing services from the nearest RCMP detachment. Each of these communities is either within a half-hour's drive of the nearest detachment, or has fewer than 300 residents. Most have less than 150 people.

RCMP Members conduct regular patrols to these communities, which promotes relationship-building between the officers and the communities, and ensures consistency in service delivery. Overnight visits by RCMP Members are another way to increase the policing presence in a community without a permanent detachment. For example, some communities have secured accommodations so Members can spend a few nights a week in the community.

Community Constables can also complement and support the work of RCMP Members, but, due to RCMP policy, these officers can only be placed in communities that have detachments.

While not every community has a detachment, every community in the NWT has access to policing services. We have not left any community behind. Each community's leadership works with the RCMP to develop policing plans tailored to address their unique priorities and safety concerns. We continue to work with community leaders to identify additional means of enhancing policing services locally.

We have done a lot of work developing policing across the NWT. Currently we have 4 officers for every 1,000 people, which is four times the national average and budgets have increased sharply since 2000.

We understand the Members' concerns about policing in their communities, but the government does not have unlimited funding to dedicate to policing services. We have to be realistic and use our limited resources in the most effective and efficient manner. Any allocations made for the creation of new detachments would result in reduced funding available to maintain current services in existing detachments, which could affect the services provided to the larger communities

where the policing activity and needs are greater. Given all of our policing needs, the GNWT must seriously consider the best use of resources at all times.

Nursing Services

Currently, all 33 communities in the NWT receive nursing services. Community Health Representatives (CHR) and/or Community Health Workers (CHW) reside in every community and provide basic healthcare according to guidelines, as well as some components of public health and school health care. All Community Health Nurses (CHNs) and CHWs have 24 hour access to CHN in a larger center. Home Support Workers also reside in several communities and provide assistance with care needs at the client's home.

Regional Authorities have established a schedule for registered nursing services and physician visits for their communities to deliver primary health care, public health, school health, and chronic disease programs. The number and frequency of nurse and physician visits is determined based on the unique needs of each community. Through a referral process, all residents of the NWT have access to allied health services in the larger centers. Medevac and scheduled medical travel services are arranged through the regional center.

Additionally, nurses are placed in small communities where road access is unavailable in spring and fall for 3-6 weeks, to ensure that health care services are not interrupted. During this period nurses will take the opportunity to provide additional training and/or education to the resident CHRs and CHWs, on top of their daily duties.

DHSS is working with Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) to prepare community residents to respond to emergencies, and to determine how to best support community based first responders with training, ongoing skills maintenance, and coordination of volunteers. MACA has made the development of first responder training a priority in 2014/15. DHSS is also working with Stanton Territorial Health Authority to develop and implement a Medical Response Service to enhance emergency response.

A review of the appropriate service delivery mix for NWT communities is under way, based on advances in technology and new scopes of practise for health care practitioners. Opportunities to support wellness and traditional healing in communities are being sought by DHSS' new Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness Division. The DHSS is also looking at best practices for delivery of care in remote communities in other jurisdictions, such as Alaska.

DHSS is looking at what services the NWT needs based on changes to the system and advances in technology in order to achieve the vision of achieving the best health and providing the best care for a better future for all NWT residents no matter where they live.

Conclusion

Our situation in the NWT is unique and we have to be creative and make the best use of our resources to provide the best services to our residents. As time passes we understand that community needs may change and we are committed to working with communities and community leaders to modify programs when and where necessary. We are also committed to continue providing adequate and efficient services now for the people of the NWT.