



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee  
Report 4-18(3): Report on Adult Residential Addictions Treatment Facilities Tour 2017**

Background

The Standing Committee on Social Programs ('Committee') presented their Committee Report 4-18(3): *Report on Adult Residential Addictions Treatment Facilities Tour 2017* on February 27, 2018. This Report contains four recommendations for the Department of Health and Social Services which address addictions recovery in the Northwest Territories.

One of the recommendations was that the Government of Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to the Report within 120 days.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services enhance its public communications on addictions treatment.

*GNWT Response*

The Department of Health and Social Services (the Department) is currently developing an Addictions Recovery Action Plan under the 2016-2021 mental health and addictions strategic framework, *Mind and Spirit: Promoting Mental Health and Addictions Recovery in the Northwest Territories*. All of the recommendations included in the Committee's report have been included as action items within the Action Plan. Information on the work currently underway in relation to this recommendation is provided below:

The Department is taking steps to develop an overarching communications plan for mental health and addictions in the NWT with the aim to:

- a) Increase awareness and reduce stigma;
- b) Improve access to services across the continuum of care; and
- c) Spread a message of hope and recovery.

As a part of this initiative, individuals who identify as having lived experience will be included in the development of messaging, promotion of materials, and overall strategy.

## Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services enhance community-based aftercare services by encouraging the development of a peer support network, scheduling regular access to counselling and addictions facilities through existing health centre resources (e.g., TeleHealth), and engaging with southern facilities to train territorial healthcare providers in the delivery of family support programming.

### *GNWT Response*

The Department has been examining best practice research, jurisdictional and international scans, and local feedback to identify potential actions to support and enhance aftercare services in the NWT. This work will inform the development of the Addictions Recovery Action Plan and will identify ways in which we can enhance existing services and introduce new programs and initiatives.

As a part of this work, the Department will be updating the Community Counselling Program Standards and Procedures Manual to include aftercare standards and guidelines that are reflective of recovery-oriented and best practice approaches to care.

The Department is currently engaging with the southern facility-based addictions treatment centers to gather more information on aftercare programming available through their facilities as well as opportunities for collaboration in program development and training for front-line staff.

## Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services partner with its fellow social envelope departments, community governments, and community organizations to develop a pilot program centered on ensuring that Northerners completing residential treatment are not discharged into homelessness, but instead connected with housing opportunities.

### *GNWT Response*

It is recognized that housing is a barrier for many residents in the NWT and is reflective of the need to holistically address the social determinants of health as well as the historic, cultural, and systemic contributors to addiction issues in our Territory.

As indicated by Committee, collaboration and strong partnerships where all social envelope departments and external partners are at the table will be required to successfully take on this challenge. The Department's strategic framework, *Mind and*

*Spirit: Promoting Mental Health and Addictions Recovery in the Northwest Territories*, recognizes the need to address the social determinants of health, including housing, in order to reduce vulnerabilities to mental health problems and addictions.

The Department works with other GNWT departments on housing issues through existing interdepartmental fora. The Department will work with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation as well as the other social envelope departments and external partners to collaborate on potential next steps in enhancing NWT residents' access to safe housing opportunities in the NWT.