



MR. R.J. SIMPSON
MLA, HAY RIVER NORTH

DEC 20 2018

Oral Question 371-18(3): Dialysis Services

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on October 12, 2018 regarding Dialysis Services.

With respect to the specific issue raised of residents who are required to travel to Yellowknife to access Dialysis Services, while we always try to make services available as close to home as possible we recognize there are situations where residents have complex medical conditions requiring ongoing access to medical services (such as dialysis) outside their home community. In some cases patients have remained in boarding homes for up to two years, both at a significant cost to the system and a disruption to their life. Also, boarding homes were never designed to accommodate long term residents and patients have expressed concerns. Some flexibility is required to develop creative solutions that are both patient-centered and more cost effective for the system.

As you are aware, the Department and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority completed an internal review and assessment of the Medical Travel Ministerial Policies. As a result, a number of areas were identified where changes would strengthen or clarify the policies. The results of our internal analysis and proposed changes to Medical Travel Ministerial Policies were shared with Members of the Legislative Assembly through the Standing Committee on Social Development (SCOSD) for discussion and comment on October 25, 2018. The Department is now moving forward to update and implement the policy changes.

One of the Ministerial Policy changes being implemented in 2019, that will provide a mechanism to support medical travel planning and decisions related to Dialysis patients, is the establishment of a new Ministerial Policy for Medical Travel Exceptions. This will provide a mechanism for the Director of Medical Insurance to consider exceptions to the Medical Travel policy, to address extraordinary, individual circumstances that the Medical Travel policy currently does not allow for or enable.

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An additional outcome of the internal review was the identification of a number of issues that require further research and financial analysis in order to determine the best way forward, including the issue of long term medical travel assistance and relocation. This is a complex issue that will take time to explore. I will return to Standing Committee to provide updates and to discuss with Members as the work progresses.

In the meantime, the NTHSSA is working with the GNWT Integrated Case Management Team on a case-by-case basis to explore options that meet the needs of individuals. These will inform the research and analysis to support future changes to the GNWT Medical Travel Policy and procedures to improve the quality of care for clients.

We want to ensure Northwest Territories residents are able to access medically necessary and appropriate health services not available in their home community in a sustainable way. In all decisions with medical travel, it is important to achieve a balance where patient experience, the complex nature of the larger health system and clinical decisions, and the ability to financially sustain the program are collectively taken into account.

In the meantime, complex cases will continue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with clients to ensure a patient focused solution to access necessary medical services.

Thank you.



Glen Abernethy
Minister of Health and Social Services

c Mr. Tim Mercer
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. David Hastings
Legislative Coordinator, Executive