



Government of  
Northwest Territories

**Government of the Northwest Territories**  
**Response to Motion 64-19(2): Suicide Prevention**

**Motion**

*NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable member for Nunakput, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to establish a suicide prevention fund of \$250,000 in each region and is expedited directly to communities in crises without application;*

*AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories create a coordinated, collaborative, multi-departmental suicide prevention team to meet with communities in crises to assist community leadership identify suicide prevention strategies and activities as well Government of the Northwest Territories funding that communities can access;*

*AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories subsidize recreation fees in small communities and create new recreational activities for youth and young adults.*

**GNWT Response**

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is already working to address the issue of suicide in ways similar to those that have been described in the motion.

The Community Suicide Prevention Fund is a low barrier fund in place to assist communities, Indigenous Governments (IG), and non-governmental organizations to deliver community designed suicide prevention programming. This is very flexible funding that can be targeted to things like suicide intervention training or more general resilience/protective factor-based activities. Uptake of the fund has been high, with 2021/22 funding completely allocated and 2022/23 funding almost fully allocated. In recent years, the funding has been used to support a wide range of mental health and wellness activities, including wellness camps, outreach support, targeted youth programming, and motivational speakers offering messages of hope.

We have heard from communities that short term, one time, limited funding is not helpful long term and that what is needed is ongoing and consistent support at the community and regional level. Communities have presented options that would allow them to prevent, rather than respond to, a crisis. While the ability to be nimble and support communities in a time of crisis is important, a regional fund enables ongoing support for life promotion and community wellness activities at both the community and regional level, as opposed to funds being directed solely for crisis response.

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While DHSS must align with requirements in the *Financial Administration Act* when providing funding to organizations, we continue to work to make our application processes more straight forward by incorporating feedback from our community partners. In follow up to recent engagement with the Council of Leaders, we are working to explore options to improve the flow of mental wellness and addictions recovery funds to IGs, including the potential for block funding.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) has established a Suicide Prevention and Crisis Response Network (SPCRN). The SPCRN is focused on three key areas to address suicide: Prevention, Intervention, and Crisis Response. This includes the development and implementation of two Suicide Risk Assessments, one for adults and one for youth, and associated training. It also includes the establishment of a regional response approach to provide crisis support and surge capacity when required, as well as critical response training and suicide intervention training.

The SPCRN allows for a community-based approach to determining what the community would find the most helpful when a crisis occurs. This includes regional Health and Social Services Authority staff meeting with community leadership and other relevant stakeholders to better understand the needs and to develop a plan. When needs are identified beyond the scope of what can be provided by the health and social services system, the SPCRN will reach out to other GNWT Departments to identify where additional supports and resources can be provided. The NTHSSA Suicide Working Group, made up of representatives from the Health Authorities and DHSS, is currently working on revisions to their Suicide Risk Assessment tools and policies and will be exploring expanding the membership of this group to include other Departmental partners in their suicide prevention and crisis response activities.

To advance efforts to increase youth participation in sport and recreation programs, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) provides approximately \$12.1 million annually to support a range of sport and recreation initiatives that give youth and young adults opportunities to develop life skills, make healthy personal choices, and meaningfully contribute to their communities and the North. Through this investment, community governments, sport and recreation organizations, and organizations serving youth deliver programs and services, which, in many cases, are either free or significantly subsidized.

MACA will continue to work closely with community governments and organizations to ensure that all communities have access to sport and recreation funding and are supported in program planning and local capacity building.