



November 18, 2024

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MLA, YELLOWKNIFE NORTH

Oral Question 347-20(1): Physician Workforce Plan

This letter is in follow-up to the Oral Question you raised on October 22, 2024, regarding the Physician Workforce Plan.

The Physician Workforce Plan was developed by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) and provided to the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) in Fall 2020. DHSS has worked closely with the NTHSSA to understand the supporting data, findings and resulting recommendations of the report. Although DHSS supports many of the findings of the report in principle, implementation of the plan is dependent on continued review and assessment of the specific items identified to ensure resources are appropriately aligned with evolving system needs, while being mindful of the associated growth in government spending. The Physician Workforce Plan has been an important document to inform several improvements to date (examples provided below) and it will continue to be referenced for future planning, in complement to other sustainability review and workforce planning activities.

Progress has been made in recent years to address some of the challenges facing physician services in the NWT:

- Additional funding was added to the budget in 2022-23 to address a funding gap associated with life sustaining specialist services, which resulted in rightsizing funding to meet on-call requirements in internal medicine, general surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, and pediatrics using locums. Negotiations between the GNWT and the NWT Medical Association on the Standard Physician Contract have resulted in increases to physician compensation and benefits that continue to position the NWT as a competitive employer of physicians in Canada during a national physician shortage.
- Updates to the locum contract have, amongst other improvements, enabled the ability for locum physicians to provide some services remotely to help fill service gaps. Remote locums are typically physicians that also provide locum services within the territory as well, which ensures continuity of care for patients.

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DHSS continues to work with the NTHSSA to review operating requirements for physician services and assess opportunities to realign funding that supports the sustainable delivery of essential healthcare programs and services across the NWT.

Thank you.



Lesla Semmler
Minister of Health and Social Services

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning