

Backgrounder: Canada–Northwest Territories bilateral agreement to improve health care services

February 2018

Today, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) signed a bilateral agreement outlining how the territory plans to invest \$6.07 million in targeted federal funding over five years to improve access to home and community care and mental health and addiction services. In 2021-22, this agreement will be renewed for the remaining five years of the ten-year commitment.

The Northwest Territories Action Plan aligns with the objectives and pan-Canadian priorities set out in the Common Statement of Principles on Shared Health Priorities.

Home and Community Care

The GNWT will use federal funds under this agreement to further support two projects identified within its Continuing Care Services Action Plan.

1. The International Resident Assessment Instrument (interRAI) is an internationally researched and recognized set of clinical assessment instruments compatible across multiple health care sectors. InterRAI is widely regarded as a best practice for clinical assessments, particularly in the delivery of home care and continuing care services. Implementation of these instruments will directly support improved access to and delivery of home and community services for Northwest Territories residents. It will also ensure that care is being delivered in the right setting, and that those in long-term care facilities whose needs can be better met within the community are provided the opportunity to return to the community with appropriate supports in place.
2. Over the next several months, the GNWT will be working on a Paid Family/Community Caregiving Pilot Project, building on its successful adoption in other jurisdictions, including Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. The pilot project will provide eligible individuals with the following options:
 - To directly manage an individualized funding budget and employ caregiver(s) of their choosing to meet their care needs; or
 - To choose a caregiver(s) who will work with home and community care resources and existing family caregivers to meet needs that cannot be met by the public system (paid caregiver).

These program options will provide individuals with the ability to choose who cares for them, which is of particular significance in small Indigenous communities where home and community care resources are limited.

Mental Health and Addictions

The GNWT will allocate federal funding under this agreement to develop and implement a Territorial Suicide Prevention and Crisis Support Network, focusing on prevention, intervention

and postvention activities. The Territorial Suicide Prevention and Crisis Support Network will provide proactive suicide prevention activities and expert and timely intervention in times of crisis for all Northwest Territories residents and communities impacted by mental health or suicide-related crises. This will include enhancing culturally appropriate approaches to the prevention of suicide-related crises and improving the ability of health care providers to respond to community and family needs when a crisis occurs.

Efforts will include:

- Developing community-level suicide prevention plans to improve resiliency, instil a sense of hope, and reduce stigma by increasing mental health and suicide awareness;
- Supporting the adoption of a seamless care pathway approach to service delivery, recognizing that mental health and wellness services need to be tailored to the needs of the individual;
- Developing a culturally relevant, common suicide risk assessment tool to be used across the NWT Health and Social Services System, in partnership with the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement;
- Providing timely access to quality services for individuals who have been identified as being at risk for suicide; and
- Providing a coordinated response and healing supports for individuals, families and communities impacted by a suicide or other crisis.

Federal Provincial and Territorial Collaboration to Strengthen Health Care

Budget 2017 committed \$11 billion over 10 years in new federal investments to improve access to mental health and addiction services, as well as to home and community care across Canada. Provinces* and territories already received the first year of this funding through a legislated transfer following their endorsement of the Common Statement of Principles on Shared Health Priorities. Funding for the remaining years will flow to provinces and territories through a series of bilateral agreements.

The Common Statement of Principles sets out the objectives and pan-Canadian priorities for federal investments in home care and mental health. It commits governments to addressing specific health system gaps and to focusing efforts in areas that will have the greatest impact. Bilateral agreements will set out details of how federal funding will be used in alignment with the Common Statement of Principles. As of August 2017, provinces and territories accepted their share of the \$11 billion in federal health funding.

Provinces and territories have also committed to working with the Canadian Institute for Health Information to develop a focused set of common indicators to measure progress and report to Canadians.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments have also committed to engaging with regional and national Indigenous leaders on their priorities for improving the health outcomes of Indigenous peoples.

* The federal government has agreed to an asymmetrical arrangement with Quebec, distinct from the Common Statement of Principles.