



Seniors' Action Plan

2002-2003

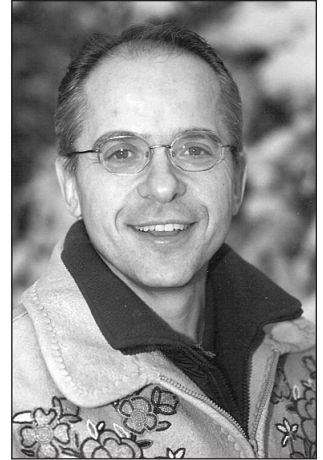
Response to the Review of
Programs and Services for Seniors



June 2002



Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present the Government of the Northwest Territories' response to the *Review of Programs and Services for Seniors* (February 2002).

This *Action Plan* responds to concerns and recommendations we received from seniors, communities, caregivers and members of the public. It builds on the current base of seniors programming through improved coordination and integration of services at all levels of government, and improved program design for a number of program areas.

The *Action Plan* also recognizes the valuable contributions of seniors to NWT society as well as to the NWT Government. Several actions will raise the public profile of seniors and create a forum for ongoing involvement by seniors with both the current and future leadership of the government.

I look forward to keeping seniors and all NWT residents informed of our progress as we implement these actions over the coming year.

J. Michael Miltenberger
Minister Responsible for Seniors



Table of Contents

Introduction1

A Voice for Seniors3

Integration/Coordination of Programs4

Improving Programs6

Informing Seniors and the Public11

Research and Policy Development15

Next Steps17



Introduction

In June 2000, Members of the 14th Legislative Assembly passed a motion recommending the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct a comprehensive review of seniors programming. An interagency working group was assembled to carry out the review. This working group included representation from a number of agencies:

- NWT Seniors Society,
- Department of the Executive,
- Department of Education, Culture and Employment,
- Department of Health and Social Services,
- Department of Municipal and Community Affairs,
- Financial Management Board Secretariat,
- NWT Bureau of Statistics, and
- NWT Housing Corporation.

Over the next year, review activities included a technical analysis of current programs and services as well as consultations with communities, seniors organizations, caregivers and the general public. The work of the interagency group was guided by a number of principles reflecting the following core values:

- fairness and equal treatment to all seniors in government programming;
- access to government programs for seniors that are harmonized across departments; and
- fiscal sustainability of seniors programs.

In May 2002, Cabinet approved the report, *Review of Programs and Services for Seniors*, along with a set of 28 recommendations and actions responding to review findings. These recommendations and actions are summarized in this *Action Plan*.



A Voice for Seniors

1 Seniors' forum	Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
<p>The Working Group recommends the GNWT support the organization of a 'Seniors' Forum' once during the term of each assembly.</p> <p>Action 1.1 GNWT and NWT Seniors Society work together to identify appropriate time and agenda for initial Seniors' Forum.</p>	June 2002	Health and Social Services
2 Review of programs and services		
<p>The Working Group recommends that the GNWT conduct a comprehensive review of Seniors' Programs and Services once during the term of each Assembly and prior to the Seniors' Forum.</p> <p>Action 2.1 GNWT and NWT Seniors Society work together to identify initial year to commence next review date, including Terms of Reference for future reviews.</p>	June 2002	Minister Responsible for Seniors
3 Community participation		
<p>The Working Group recommends that GNWT departments increase their collaboration with the NWT Seniors Advisory Council and other existing seniors' organizations to identify ways to include and integrate seniors into the affairs and life of the community and society within which they reside.</p> <p>Action 3.1 Encourage departments to facilitate regular meetings with community seniors organizations.</p>	Ongoing	Inter-departmental Committee*

* Interdepartmental Committee for Seniors' Programs reporting to the Deputy Minister HSS/Seniors



Integration/Coordination of Programs

4 Organization and administration of programs

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT identify options for organizing and administering seniors' programs within government, including:

- the feasibility and implications of establishing a single point of entry at the community level, through technology and/or physical location;

Action 4.1 Identify single point of entry including co-location of programs and services at the community level.

- the feasibility and implications for consolidating all or some seniors' programs into one administrative unit;

Action 4.2 Reject recommendation 4.2 in favour of coordinating committee (see recommendation #6).

- the feasibility and implications of establishing a universal identification card and a single application form for seniors' programs.

Action 4.3 Develop options to establish a universal identification system.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

September
2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee *

December
2002

December
2002

5 Coordination at the community level

The Working Group recommends that, where practical in a community, GNWT departments work in conjunction with appropriate organizations and service providers in communities in the NWT, and establish community seniors' coordinating committees with the mandate of providing better inter-departmental and agency coordination and services to seniors.

The committees would meet as required to discuss issues of importance to seniors in the community. The committees would be chaired by a representative from Health and Social Services. Any reports, information or recommended actions arising from the work of the community seniors' planning committees would be forwarded to GNWT departments and to appropriate community organizations and local governments.

Action 5.1 Implement committees in communities interested in establishing seniors' coordinating committees in conjunction with the NWT Seniors Society and specific community organizations, as appropriate.

September 2002

Health and
Social
Services



Integration/Coordination of Programs

6 Departmental coordination

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT strengthen the interdepartmental approach through the Minister Responsible for Seniors by establishing a committee of officials for seniors' programs and services. The mandate of the committee is to ensure that seniors' programs and services are coordinated across the GNWT and that an inter-departmental approach is used by staff when addressing cross government seniors' issues and programs.

Action 6.1 Establish committee with participating departments: Executive; Health and Social Services; Education, Culture and Employment; Municipal and Community Affairs; NWT Housing Corporation and NWT Seniors Society.

Action 6.2 Develop terms of reference for the Committee.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
June 2002	Health and Social Services
June 2002	Inter-departmental Committee

Improving Programs

7 Income assessment

The Working Group recommends that based on the outcomes of the Public Housing-Income Assistance Harmonization Project, departments adopt standard criteria for assessing and determining eligibility for government programs.

Action 7.1 Examine existing program standards for income assessment and set guidelines to be used across relevant departments.

The Working Group further recommends that a scale of graduated benefits be adapted for GNWT income tested seniors' programs, where appropriate.

Action 7.2 Review existing programs which contain income assessment criteria and determine where changes can be made to meet the standards.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

October 2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee

October 2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee

8 Standardized age of eligibility

The Working Group recognizes that seniors have requested that the age of 60 should become the standard age for accessing all GNWT programs and services for seniors. The Working Group also recognizes that significant cost implications could result from standardizing all programs to age 60.

Based on the analysis detailed in this report, the Working Group recommends the GNWT not lower the age of eligibility to 60 years, in the following programs: Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit; Seniors Property Tax Rebate; and Motor Vehicle Licensing.

No further action required.

N/A

N/A

9 Consolidation of income support programs

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT complete the analysis for the proposal to consolidate all income-tested financial supports into one single payment and administration system.

Action 9.1 Complete the analysis and make recommendations to Cabinet with respect to consolidation of income tested financial supports.

December 2002

Education,
Culture and
Employment



Improving Programs

10 Inflation

The Working Group recommends that income thresholds for seniors' financial/income supports reflect differences within the NWT in the cost of living, and cost increases due to inflation, by adjusting periodically to the Consumer Price Index. The Seniors Citizens Supplementary Benefit will be included in these periodic adjustments.

Action 10.1 Develop annual schedule for review of inflationary pressures on financial/income supports.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

July 2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee

11 Adequacy of income

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT investigate the adequacy of income for seniors, focusing on:

- the immediate financial concerns of seniors in need;
- comparative levels of income and income supports across the country;
- implications of the differences in income among seniors across the NWT including cost of living issues;
- forecasting the levels of retirement income for the next generation of seniors; and

The applicability of adapting other systems or models of income support in the NWT (eg: including minimum or guaranteed income levels).

Action 11.1 Prepare analysis of current seniors' income and estimates of income levels for future years.

September 2002

Education,
Culture and
Employment

Improving Programs

12 Seniors' home heating subsidy

The Working Group recommends that the Seniors' Home Heating Subsidy be reviewed annually and adjusted to account for length of the heating season by community. Further, the GNWT investigate the merit of consolidating all shelter benefits for residents living in private accommodation, who are deemed in need.

Action 12.1 Review program annually, and explore potential for adjustments based on heating season by community.

Action 12.2 Prepare report examining options for consolidating all shelter benefits for seniors living in private accommodation.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

March 2003

Education,
Culture and
Employment

March 2003

NWT
Housing
Corporation

13 Independent living and housing needs

The Working Group recommends the GNWT identify a long-term strategy, with public and private sector collaboration, for addressing the supply of seniors independent living options.

Action 13.1 NWT Housing Corporation to examine their Affordable Housing Strategy to ensure that it incorporates seniors' independent living options.

June 2002

NWT Housing
Corporation
and
Health and
Social
Services

14 Housing repair and maintenance

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT improve seniors' awareness of and accessibility to government assisted home repair and maintenance programs and options in order to promote the principle of seniors' independent living.

Action 14.1 Enhance public education and information campaign to outline programs and services available to seniors.

September 2002

NWT Housing
Corporation

Further, the repair and maintenance programs of the NWT Housing Corporation be reviewed on a periodic basis.

Action 14.2 Establish a regular schedule to review repair and maintenance programs.

June 2002

NWT Housing
Corporation



Improving Programs

15 Continuing care framework

The Working Group recommends that the Continuing Care Framework currently being developed by the GNWT include:

Home care: Use of First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Initiative to enhance home care services to all NWT residents. This includes the communication of program information and the continued training of home care workers.

Action 15.1 Continue to enhance home care programs. Publish educational and communication materials regarding home and community care program activities.

Long term care: Current and future needs for long term care and respite services to enable the elderly to stay in their homes, or those of their families, for as long as possible.

Action 15.2 Complete the long term care needs assessment to identify number of facility beds required, and types of programs needed for the next 5-10 years for inclusion in the Continuing Care Framework.

The cognitively impaired: A program of support for families, spouses, and other persons when the cognitively impaired are living at home. Additionally, the GNWT examine options for housing the cognitively impaired.

Action 15.3 Address rehabilitation services through the service delivery component of the NWT Health and Social Services System Action Plan.

Rehabilitation services: Increased access to physiological, occupational and other medical and rehabilitative services and specialists, based on need for all ages.

Action 15.4 Finalize overall Continuing Care Framework.

Palliative care: Develop and provide information, training and support to families, caregivers and the general public regarding end-of-life issues for all ages.

Action 15.5 Train health care workers and other professionals to support families, caregivers and the general public respecting end-of-life issues.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
September 2002	Health and Social Services
April 2002	Health and Social Services
September 2002	Health and Social Services
June 2002	Health and Social Services
Ongoing	Health and Social Services

Improving Programs

16 Extended health benefits

The Working Group recommends the GNWT review the benefits currently within the Extended Health Benefits program, and, further, recommends adjustment to the following components of the EHB program, if and when appropriate:

- Medical Travel Benefits
- Medical Escorts
- Medical supplies, devices, and aids

Action 16.1 Examine the needs of seniors in the overall context of the review of Supplemental Health Benefits currently underway.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

December 2002

Health and
Social
Services

17 Employment

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT identify solutions to the employment and lifestyle problems experienced by some seniors in the NWT, and those approaching their senior years who have difficulty maintaining employment

Action 17.1 Assess the difficulties faced by older workers in the NWT and adjust current programming to respond to their needs.

Action 17.2 Collaborate with federal government on employment initiatives for near-seniors.

March 2003

Education,
Culture and
Employment

March 2003

Education,
Culture and
Employment

18 Transportation

The Working Group recommends the importance for all concerned parties to identify and fund transportation options in those communities where transportation is a barrier to seniors participating in the activities of daily living

Action 18.1 Examine transportation issues and prepare options that may assist communities.

December 2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee

Informing Seniors and The Public

19 Communication and information

The Working Group recommends the GNWT enhance the current approaches departments use to communicate and inform seniors and the public about programs, services, and activities relevant to seniors in the Northwest Territories.

Action 19.1 Establish a communications plan for informing seniors and the general public about programs and services.

Action 19.2 Update the Seniors Handbook annually.

Completion
Date

Lead
Responsibility

June 2002

Inter-
departmental
Committee

N/A

20 Seniors' database

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT support the establishment of a website of seniors' information. The website will include program and service information, demographic information, national linkages, and any relevant information for seniors in the NWT.

Action 20.1 Modify existing website.

July 2003

Health and
Social
Services

Informing Seniors and The Public

21 Elder abuse

The Working Group acknowledges that abuse of older adults is an issue in the Northwest Territories and recommends that, as a priority, the GNWT support a public awareness campaign to be implemented and delivered in collaboration with the NWT Seniors Society and/or other appropriate organizations. The public awareness campaign on the abuse of elderly persons in the NWT may include community-based workshops and educational and informational materials.

Action 21.1 Collaborate with the Department of Health and Social Services regarding the Addictions, Family Violence and Mental Health Framework and incorporate a public awareness campaign involving Elder Abuse.

Workshops should be delivered at the readiness and request of the community.

Action 21.2 Offer training and workshops to community societies on elder abuse in cooperation with the NWT Seniors Society, at the readiness of communities.

The Working Group also suggests that the GNWT specifically include and/or cite the protection of elderly persons in the development of any future Protection Against Family Violence legislation.

Action 21.3 Work with NWT Seniors Society to develop workshop and training criteria.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
September 2002	Health and Social Services and NWT Seniors Society
September 2002	Health and Social Services and NWT Seniors Society
September 2002	Health and Social Services and NWT Seniors Society

Informing Seniors and The Public

22 Seniors-friendly workshops

Knowledge of the lifestyle issues seniors face is a critical piece of the way society in general understands and responds to our elderly population. Seniors-friendly educational workshops and information are a way to sensitize and educate the general population to the needs of NWT seniors. The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to support the NWT Seniors Society to deliver 'seniors-friendly' workshops, and that the workshops be delivered in the schools of the NWT and within the public and private sectors.

Action 22.1 Work with NWT Seniors Society to identify specific needs, including resource requirements to offer seniors friendly workshops.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
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September 2002

Health and Social Services and NWT Seniors Society

23 Retirement planning

Pre-retirement and retirement planning can have a positive influence on the lives of future seniors. As such, the Working Group recommends that the GNWT develop an education and public awareness program focusing on retirement planning issues.

Action 23.1 Develop and distribute public awareness program focusing on retirement planning.

March 2003

Inter-departmental Committee

24 Consolidation of toll free lines

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT and the NWT Seniors Society examine the feasibility of consolidating the toll free numbers currently used by seniors to contact government regarding programs and services.

Action 24.1 Examine the feasibility of consolidating seniors toll-free lines for seniors programs and services.

July 2003

Health and Social Services



Informing Seniors and The Public

25 Volunteerism

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to work with community organizations to encourage the role of volunteerism in communities and to enhance the participation of all members of society in supporting elderly persons.

Action 25.1 Committee of officials for seniors' programs develop a workplan to implement this recommendation. Workplan should link with the NWT Volunteer Strategy.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
December 2002	Inter-departmental Committee

Research and Policy Development

26 Research

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to conduct research into issues affecting seniors' programming and quality of life, including but not limited to:

- The nature of demographic change in the NWT and its impacts on programming;
- Innovative program delivery models; and
- Other program planning issues requiring

Action 26.1 Identify research plan addressing critical issues and trends affecting seniors in the NWT.

December 2002

Health and Social Services

Action 26.2 Release seniors report profiling demographics, trends and health needs of NWT seniors.

September 2002

Health and Social Services

27 Program principles

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT adopt the principles of the National Framework on Aging into a policy framework for seniors' programs and services:

- **dignity** - being treated with respect, regardless of the situation;
- **independence** - being in control of one's life; being able to do as much for oneself as possible;
- **participation** - getting involved, staying active and taking part in the community;
- **fairness** - having seniors' real needs, in all their diversity, considered equally to those of other Canadians;
- **security** - having adequate income as one ages, and having access to a safe and supportive living environment.

Action 27.1 Agreed as per Recommendation 28 (Policy Framework).

March 2003

Health and Social Services



Research and Policy Development

28 Policy framework

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT adopt a policy framework for the development of seniors programs, as outlined in the model described on page 21 of the *Review of Programs and Services for Seniors*.

Action 28.1 Develop policy framework applicable to all GNWT programs and services for seniors. Submit for Cabinet approval.

Completion Date	Lead Responsibility
March 2003	Health and Social Services



Next Steps

The Department of Health and Social Services will lead the implementation of this *Action Plan* over the next year. An Interdepartmental Committee for Seniors Programs will be established to:

- oversee the development of a workplan;
- coordinate all activities identified in the *Action Plan*; and
- report on progress to the Deputy Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Work is already underway for numerous recommendations. *Action Plan* progress will be conveyed to the public and stakeholders through the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

For more information, contact:

Mark Cleveland,
Deputy Minister Responsible for Seniors
Department of Health and Social Services
phone: 867-920-6173
fax: 867-873-0266