

minister's message

I am pleased to share the first quarterly report from 'A Foundation for Change – Building a Healthy Future for the NWT 2009-2012'. We have a great deal to share in this first update, in part because we started working on many of these priorities before the final plan was released in November. Overall, I think Northerners will be pleased with the actions to date.

Many of these early actions involve new funding and support for health promotion. New funds have been distributed to community agencies to support the promotion of healthy choices. Schools across the Northwest Territories have been funded to purchase snowmobile helmets for use in on-the-land activities, protecting children and youth while they are at school and promoting a culture of helmet use and injury prevention. Family violence shelters have been provided with new money to assist with operations and maintenance and staff retention.

We are already hearing positive responses to the Diagnostic Imaging and Picture Archiving and Communications System, or DI/PACS, which has been installed at Stanton, Inuvik, Hay River and Fort Smith. Doctors are pleased to be able to consult over high resolution images with Specialists at Stanton or in Southern Canada. The quality and accessibility of these images over space and time will result in better care for Northerners.

We still have a great deal of work ahead of us, including many of the priorities under the goal of Sustainability. This will be particularly challenging work for those of us working within the Health and Social Services system. We have decisions to make about how to do business most efficiently in support of the people of the NWT. I look forward to reporting to you on the results of this work in the future.



Sandy Lee
Minister of Health and Social Services
January 2010

a foundation for change reporting our actions

success stories

hss helps schools in the north make helmet use part of their culture

In November 2009, we provided one-time funding to NWT schools so that all youth who participate in on-the-land snowmobiling activities will wear helmets.

These helmets will do more than protect youth during school activities. Their availability models safe behaviour which encourages helmet wearing at other times, as well. This is important, because every year in the NWT, there are head injuries which could have been avoided by wearing helmets and thinking about safety. Young people are an important audience for this message, both because they are injured more often than other age groups, and because we know that the younger a safe behaviour is learned, the easier it is to keep it up!

Health and Social Services is not just providing the funding for helmets. We will be working with schools to make sure all students receive safe travel plans and related safety training, safety tarps for emergency shelter and search and rescue visibility and retro-reflective stickers for snowmobile helmets, to ensure increased driver visibility. In 4 communities, personal satellite trackers (SPOT) are also available on loan from the Health Centre.

Using best safety practices during school on-the-land activities creates awareness, reduces risks, meets school insurance requirements, allows all students the chance to participate, and promotes traditional culture along with a culture of safety. This is an important move forward under the action of Promoting injury prevention to targeted audiences.

a welcoming place: the yellowknife day shelter

Yellowknife's homeless population now has a place to go during the day, with the opening of the Yellowknife Day Shelter. This shelter provides a safe, warm place during the daytime and washroom access, as well as access to support services, including addictions treatment and counselling and other help.



Northerners Enjoy Opening of Yellowknife Homelessness Day Shelter photo credit BHP Billiton 2009

Until now, homeless people in Yellowknife have had few places to go during the day. The hospital emergency room, RCMP overnight area and ambulance services have had increasing demands, and there have been increasing issues with violence.

This day shelter is a three-year pilot project run by the John Howard Society.

We worked together with BHP Billiton and the City of Yellowknife to turn this vision into reality and fund this project jointly.

Continuing to implement the NWT Homelessness Framework to ensure efficient and effective use of resources to address homelessness is an important priority under the goal of Wellness.

bringing services to northerners in the 21st century

Innovation is crucial to effective service delivery in health and social services, especially in the North. Modern technologies have the potential to both improve the quality of care available, and also to bring services to Northerners across great distances. Much of the work to date has been enabled by Federal Canada Infoway funding.

Northern children are beginning to receive speech language services in their home schools, thanks to the Telespeech project, which has brought Telehealth units into schools and health centres. Locating the Telehealth units in schools is already helping bring health care to children and young people, but there is a potential for many other health and social services uses in the future – connecting Northerners to counselling specialists, as an example.

Another important move forward in terms of technology is the DI/PACS (Digital Imaging/Picture Archiving and Communications system). This new digital system for taking images such as X-rays is now being used in Hay River, Inuvik, Fort Smith and at Stanton Territorial Hospital. Digital images can be sent anywhere in the world and be looked at by a wide range of health professionals, resulting in quality care that is accessible across the NWT.

For a patient this means that you don't have to leave home to get your problem checked out. An image can be taken and sent to a professional. This also means that before putting a patient on an airplane we can better assess what the issue, whether travel is needed or safe and where the patient would best receive care. This ensures care is seamless and appropriate.

Another initiative that is currently rolling out is the first phase of the HealthNet Viewer. This system will allow sharing of information between providers that includes text reports from all 4 NWT hospitals and laboratory results from Stanton, Hay River and Inuvik laboratories as well as those referred by NWT to out-of-territory laboratories. This will insure quicker, more accurate service for our clients.

The work we have done in the area of electronic health and social services is just beginning. As more health information becomes available electronically, the access and quality of services for Northerners will continue to grow. We need to be ready to take advantage of this exciting frontier as it emerges.

All of these activities fall under the Priority of using information technologies to bring timely, quality services to Northerners.

priorities under wellness

Updates to December 2009

1.1 Priority – Improve community services by developing community wellness plans

Action – Survey Program Staff, RCMP and health care professionals to evaluate current service

- This work has been completed.

Action – Develop recommendations based on survey, scope analysis and community assessments

- Survey, scope analysis and an evaluation framework have been completed.

Action – Expand respite care for families of children and youth with special needs

- Pilot programs have begun in Fort Smith, Deline and Aklavik in partnership with the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities.
- Four respite workers have been trained, and six families are receiving help at this time.

Action – Increase supports for FASD prevention



2009 FASD Symposium, Yellowknife

- In the fall of 2009, FASD videoconference training was delivered to communities in the NWT. Additionally, some Prenatal Nutrition Program workers, day care support workers and day shelter support workers from across the NWT were provided with new training.

1.2 Priority – Improve Services for children in care

Action - Expand and promote the existing extended family care model

- Research on the best practices in family care across Canada has been completed.

Action – Strengthen policies and practices to support children who are permanently in care

- We are reviewing the long term plans developed for children in permanent care to ensure they are up to date and meet best practices. 40% of plans have been reviewed to date. There are currently just over 200 Northerners below the age of 19 in permanent care.

Action – Establish a territory-wide system for foster care training

- Through HSS funding, the Foster Family Coalition of the NWT is rolling out foster caregiver training pilot projects before March 31, 2010.
- The training is based on the PRIDE (Parent’s Resource for Information on Development and Education) model.

1.3 Priority – Promote healthy living and wellness

Action - Expand the Healthy Foods North project which coordinates community awareness and access to nutritious foods

- The Healthy Foods North project is evaluating changes in the food consumption patterns of Northerners as the result of pilot projects in the Beaufort-Delta around nutrition education and awareness.

Action - Increase funding and supports around nutrition promotion and food security

- *Drop the Pop*, a school-based program that educates students and families about healthy eating and food options will take place for the 5th time this February. This year there will be a focus on calcium-rich



foods. 43 schools are currently registered for this program, which is the highest participation in *Drop the Pop* to date.

Action - Promote breastfeeding and healthy pregnancies



- A new breastfeeding awareness website at www.breastfeedingnwt.ca was developed to support new parents.
- World Breastfeeding Week was celebrated across the NWT from October 1-7th.

Action - Develop and implement the Tobacco Strategy

- The NWT Quitline is a toll-free telephone number aimed at helping people as they try to quit smoking. It was launched on March 3, 2009. Service is offered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with translation services in all NWT languages.
- The “Don’t be a Butthead” campaign was launched for the 2009-10 school year in September and over 700 youth have already made a promise to be smoke free.

Action - Work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to ensure resources on comprehensive school health and curriculum are maximized

- The Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority has opened a ‘Health Cafe’ at P.W. Kaiser High School in collaboration with the South Slave Divisional Education Council to help connect young people with health services and information in the familiar environment of the school

Action - Promote injury prevention to targeted audiences

- 27 of 33 NWT communities have been provided with life jackets which people can access from community health centres for use during summer months. Since this program first started in 2006, drowning rates have decreased more than 80%.
- 30 schools in the NWT have received funding for snowmobile helmets including schools in Behchoko, Gameti, Wekweeti, Whati, Fort Liard, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Jean Marie River, Kakisa, Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake, Wrigley, Deline, Tulita, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, Yellowknife(3 schools), Fort Smith, Lutsel’ke, N’dilo, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk,

Uluhaktok, and Inuvik(2 schools). See more detail on this project in the Success Stories section.

- Safe Travel Plans, safety tarps, flares and retro-reflective stickers have been provided to Search and Rescue Yellowknife to promote safe snowmobile travel.

1.4 Priority - Increase supports and services for people who experience family violence through the Family Violence Framework partnership

Action - Provide financial assistance to family violence shelters to address staff retention issues and operations and maintenance costs

- Funding is being provided to the Inuvik Transition House, Sutherland House in Fort Smith, Aimayunga Women and Emergency Foster Care Shelter in Tuktoyaktuk, and Hay River's Family Support Centre.

Action - Expand family violence outreach services to three regions without shelters

- We are currently funding 4 non-shelter region projects by the following organizations:
 - Sahtu Divisional Education Council
 - Zhahti Koe Friendship Centre
 - Acho Dene Koe First Nation
 - Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority

Action - Support provision of programming for children who witness family violence in partnership with the YWCA

- Funding has been provided to the YWCA's Child Recovery Program.
- This increased funding allowed the Project Child Recovery staff person to expand their program in Behchoko and to provide support to other communities and shelters who wish to start their own programs.

1.8 Priority - Deliver vaccine programs and improve communication around diseases

Action – Implement the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Strategy



- The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine implementation began in September 2009.
- The 'Respect Yourself' youth sexual health website is now online. This site provides the highest risk audience of young Northerners with access to current, clear and relevant information about sexual health.



1.9 Priority – Reduce the gap in health and wellness between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Northerners

Action – Collaborate with Aboriginal organizations to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health status and overall wellbeing

- The TliCho Community Services Agency (TCSA) has established the Healing Wind Advisory Committee composed of elders and TliCho health and social services staff to provide guidance in the promotion of health, wellness and positive lifestyles in the region especially in regards to increasing the volume and intensity of messaging related to sexually transmitted infections.
- The TCSA has established a Community Action Research Team (CART) of TliCho youth to develop effective community based health and wellness intervention strategies based on evidence-based research that seek to promote positive lifestyles among young people in the region.

Action –Collaborate with Aboriginal governments to pilot culturally appropriate programs and services

- The Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority (DHSSA) hosted a forum on traditional healing in 2009 which was attended by Dehcho elders, community members and DHSSA staff. This forum will help to guide the parameters of the DHSSA's Traditional Healing Project.
- HSS Worked with the TCSA with funding from the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund of Health Canada to review Child and Family Services practices from a community perspective with a view to developing a cultural framework for program and service delivery in the TliCho communities.

1.10 Priority - Address the issue of homelessness in the NWT

Action – Continue to implement the NWT Homelessness Framework to ensure efficient and effective use of resources to address homelessness

- The day shelter for the homeless in Yellowknife opened in November 2009. See more detail on this project in the Success Stories section.
- We are currently funding projects with the following communities and agencies under the small communities homelessness fund:
 - Tulita Dene Band
 - Rae-Edzo Friendship Centre, Behchoko
 - Ehditat Gwich'in Council, Aklavik
 - Dehcho Friendship Centre, Fort Simpson
 - Nihtat Gwich'in Council, Inuvik

1.11 Priority - Raise Awareness about the importance of safe, clean drinking water

Action – Raise awareness of the steps that can be taken to ensure water supplies are safe for drinking

- We have worked with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs as lead department in the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Management Committee to produce and circulate drinking water tank cleaning videos and brochures.

priorities under accessibility

Updates to December 2009

2.1 Priority - Provide the right services, through the right providers, in the right places

Action - Adjust the primary community care model using information gathered

- Training of frontline staff has begun.
- This work was interrupted by the outbreak of H1N1 but will continue in the new fiscal year.

Action - Enhance oral health promotion to young children

- The NWT leads the Pan-Territorial Oral Health Initiative (PTOHI) which is funded by the Government of Canada. Through this initiative:
 - Coordinated oral health promotion is being piloted in Inuvik, Fort McPherson and Behchoko.
 - A study is complete on whether a Northern school of Dental Therapy would be feasible. The study did not support the idea.

Action - Pilot community treatment options and educate Northerners about addiction aftercare services available in Beaufort-Delta communities

- We have signed agreements with both the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Inuvialuit Regional Committee for delivery of aftercare services pilot projects in Inuvik, Ft. McPherson and Tsiigehtchic.

2.2 Priority - Manage Chronic Disease

Action - Address Colorectal Cancer through staged screening of stool samples

- The Colorectal screening guidelines have been approved and are in use by NWT healthcare providers.
- Information and screening kits were sent out to a pilot group of homes in Fort Simpson and Fort Smith.

2.3 Priority - Enhance and customize continuing care, while ensuring access and administration is optimized

Action - Increase accessibility to Home care in the NWT

- Services are being enhanced through increased funding provided to the First Nations Inuit Home and Community Care program.

Action - Establish a territorial admission committee to develop and manage access to long-term care

- The Territorial Admissions Committee (TAC) began accepting applications for long-term care in October 2009. The TAC has monthly meetings to review applications.

2.4 Priority - Work with Public Works and Services to ensure facilities are modern, effective and aligned with current and future service delivery

Action - Develop 5 year medical equipment plan and 20 year facility plan

- The initial review of our health and social services facilities has been completed with the Department of Public Works and Services, to determine both technical and functional (program) requirements of Health and Social Services spaces.
- The architectural design for the major renovation of the Fort Smith Health Centre is complete, and is proceeding to tender to be able to begin construction.

Action - Standardized, efficient facility planning

- Planning Studies to develop standard plans for health centres of different sizes, group homes, and long term care facilities are underway and will be completed by March 2010.

2.5 Priority - Use information technologies to bring timely, quality services to Northerners

Action - Update and provide Telehealth equipment in health centres and schools

- Telehealth units have been ordered for all health centres and 8 schools.
- 14 health centre units have been installed and are in use in Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Ulukhaktok, Norman Wells, Colville Lake, Deline, Fort Good Hope, Tulita, Stanton Territorial Hospital, Lutselk'e, Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, and Hay River.

- The first appointments using the installed units have been made.

Action - Implement and continue to evolve the Electronic Health Record System (HealthNet) across the territory. This will allow sharing of information that includes text reports from all 4 NWT hospitals and laboratory results from Stanton, Hay River and Inuvik laboratories as well as those referred by NWT to out-of-territory laboratories

- The first version of HealthNet viewer is available and a pilot group of providers has access. The roll-out of the first version to remaining NWT health care providers has begun and will continue through March 2010.

Action - Implement Diagnostic Imaging/Picture Archiving and Communications System (DI/PACS) at Stanton, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith

- This action is completed.

Action – Install Computed Radiography readers in the 18 community health centres that currently provide diagnostic imaging services

- The first two sites have been implemented in Behchoko and Fort Simpson.

2.6 Priority - Maximize resources and streamline medical facilities

Action - Model service delivery to match utilization and demand, using the Primary Community Care model

- Actual utilization information from Hay River and Fort Smith has been updated, and both authorities have begun planning around this information.
- This information will also feed into system-wide planning.

2.7 Priority - Provide supported and assisted living in smaller communities

Action - Implement a Supported Living program in Hay River for residents of the NWT with moderate to severe disabilities

- Construction of a Hay River Supported Living campus is completed, and clients have moved into two of three homes with admission coordinated through the TAC (see Priority 2.3).

priorities under sustainability

Updates to December 2009

3.3 Priority - Require accreditation as a vehicle for quality improvement and risk management

NOTE: This priority has been amended to: **Implement a system-wide risk management and quality improvement framework.** In future reporting, this is how this priority will be titled.

- To date, all four hospitals in the NWT have attained their 3-year accreditation status.

3.4 Priority – Effective Information Technologies support delivery of Health and Social Services

Action - Implement a Territorial Information Technology governance model for delivering services across the NWT

- A summary of the work that is needed in this area has been developed with our Authorities and planning an appropriate structure will begin in January 2010.