



June 12, 2024

HONOURABLE LESA SEMMLER
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories

I am writing to confirm your mandate as Minister of Health and Social Services. In addition to your formal portfolio, you will also Chair the Economy, Energy and Climate Change Committee of Cabinet.

As the Executive Council (Cabinet), of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), we are embarking on a collective journey that will lead the Territory through a period of transition and transformative change over the life of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Together, we will advance our shared vision of a Northwest Territories (NWT) that thrives in all aspects, promotes the use and advancement of our human and natural resources, establishes and maintains sustainable fiscal management, and advances cooperative governance with Indigenous governments.

Our collective success in achieving the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly (the Priorities), requires the will and commitment of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to work together in their respective roles for the benefit of the residents of the NWT. In the spirit of consensus government, I expect you to maintain constructive, open, respectful, and collaborative relationships with both your Cabinet colleagues and Regular Members. The Guiding Principles and Process Conventions set out the core principles for communication, transparency, accountability and inclusive decision-making essential to effective consensus government in the NWT. As a Minister, you are accountable to the Legislative Assembly for upholding these principles, for your leadership, for the performance of your responsibilities, and for decisions made by Cabinet.

The GNWT is only one of the governments in the NWT. Collaboration with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations is fundamental to delivering our Mandate, and the NWT has the potential to demonstrate to Canada and the world what collaborative governance between Indigenous and public governments can achieve.

As a Minister, you should advance reconciliation and good governance as you work to implement the Mandate through commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; working to advance, settle and implement Indigenous rights agreements; implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Calls to Justice; information-sharing and innovation through partnerships with Indigenous, federal, and community governments, non-governmental organizations and private industry; and honouring the GNWT's dedication to openness, transparency, and accountability.

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I expect Ministers to strengthen government-to-government relationships with Indigenous governments and advance issues of shared interest by jointly engaging with the federal government to increase funding to the NWT.

The Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly will guide our work through a challenging time. The GNWT must shift toward more collaborative, coordinated approaches to delivering programs and services, ensuring they are designed with a person-centred approach that prioritizes equity and ease of access for all residents. Departments will need to engage, collaborate, and communicate with each other across government in order to provide Cabinet with the best advice and most comprehensive options for consideration. Recognizing this need, I have not assigned symbolic client-based portfolios for Youth, Seniors, and Persons with Disabilities in this government. Instead, I expect all Ministers to direct their departments to work together to meet the needs of diverse client groups effectively and equitably within their department's existing establishment policies, and to find policy solutions that are person-centred by design and promote cohesive, efficient program and service delivery. The GNWT has identified Mandate Commitments aligned with each of the Priorities to realize this vision. I expect you, in collaboration with Cabinet colleagues, to use the appropriate Committee of Cabinet to advance Mandate commitments and develop coordinated proposals for Cabinet's consideration.

The GNWT has an amazing workforce, one which continuously strives to provide services and programs to the best of their ability to residents. As Ministers, we must provide public servants with the guidance and tools necessary for them to work with us in our commitment to serving the people of the NWT. I ask that you lead by example to show that collaboration is the key to success. Strengthening relationships and building new ways of working together will require innovation, creativity, adaptability, and humility across government and throughout the public service. We must conduct ourselves with professionalism and integrity, maintain confidentiality on all matters related to Cabinet and related discussions and proceedings, and never lose sight of our shared vision of an NWT where people are supported in the ways they wish to live, work, and grow.

The impacts of climate change demand immediate attention and should underpin responsible decision-making. Floods, wildfires, and permafrost degradation increasingly impact our operating context and are a source of strain financially, culturally, and emotionally. As a government, we must be responsive in the face of a changing environment and take action that instills public trust in our ability to support residents and meaningfully addresses the causes and effects of climate change.

We are faced with the challenge of providing the programs and services that residents expect and need while operating within a constrained fiscal reality. While this is a difficult task, it is not an impossible one. We have the opportunity to restore fiscal balance to the GNWT and set the Territory and its residents on a path for long term success through sound government spending. We will be guided by the Fiscal Sustainability Strategy to meet the challenges we face over the next four years, including unknown challenges that will inevitably arise, while also allocating government spending to appropriately address the Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly. By ensuring our fiscal house is in order, we will provide certainty and security for residents now and into the future.

In addition to ensuring that we are focusing our existing resources to have maximum impact, we must focus on economic development. This focus includes bridging the significant infrastructure gap between our Territory and the rest of Canada, as the well-being of residents is directly impacted by the strength and resiliency of infrastructure in the NWT. You are responsible for interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration to help streamline regulatory processes and maximize the benefits of development for Northerners. By supporting the development of suitable and affordable housing, transportation networks, clean and reliable energy systems, and digital infrastructure, we will enhance our economic potential, improve quality of life for residents and communities, enhance opportunities for education, skill development and entrepreneurship, and lay the groundwork for future growth and sustainability.

In your capacity as Chair of the Economy, Energy and Climate Change Committee-of-Cabinet, you will ensure cooperation between Ministers and departments on key initiatives relating to economic growth and diversification, workforce development and training, energy policy, renewable and alternative energy solutions, and addressing climate.

The Priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly recognize that individual, collective, and intergenerational trauma is behind many of the health and social challenges impacting NWT families and communities. Colonization and systemic racism are root causes of this trauma for Indigenous peoples and must be addressed to reduce and prevent mental wellness and social issues. Cultural safety, including easy and equitable access, must be at the center of policy and program design. Advancing cultural safety requires engaging in meaningful anti-racism work individually and systemically. You are responsible for leading by example in this respect. Indigenous leaders have expressed a strong desire for the GNWT to engage them as partners in addressing the mental wellness and social issues facing residents by removing barriers and supporting the design and delivery of culturally appropriate, person-centred programs. You are responsible for supporting this by ensuring interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation, which includes advancing Integrated Service Delivery, and fostering a culture of solutions-oriented collaboration.

Our role as Cabinet is pivotal in guiding our government to achieve a shared vision for the future of the NWT. Together we can build the foundation for a united, resilient, and prosperous Territory grounded in true partnership and collaborative governance. I trust that you will work tirelessly beside me in the challenging and rewarding task of leading the GNWT to realize the fullest potential and aspirations of the NWT and its peoples; today and for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Simpson', with a stylized, flowing script.

R.J. Simpson
Premier

Attachment

Minister of Health and Social Services

As Minister of Health and Social Services, you are responsible for directing your Department to carry out its Mandate as set out in the *Department of Health and Social Services Establishment Policy*, which includes promoting, protecting, and providing for the health and well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories. To achieve these goals your department engages in a broad range of activities that you continue to be accountable for.

In addition to the Departmental goals, you will undertake the following to support the achievement of the Government's Mandate:

- Advance reconciliation and good governance by:
 - Developing and implementing funding structures that reduce administrative burdens for communities and increase local autonomy in program design;
 - Training Department of Health and Social Services staff and supporting GNWT departments in their delivery of cultural safety and anti-racism training by offering resources and promoting wise practices; and,
 - Clarifying and redefining roles and responsibilities for HSS corporate support and program and service delivery between the department and Authorities.
- Improve the suitability, accessibility, and affordability of housing options in the NWT by:
 - Collaborating with GNWT partners to increase access to transitional housing for individuals in recovery.
- Strengthen preventative measures, public awareness and improve access to trauma-informed, culturally appropriate health care by:
 - Contributing to the GNWT Restoring Balance exercise by progressively identifying, defining, and communicating core programs services for HSS system, including insured services;
 - Supporting youth in care as they transition from childhood to adulthood through the completion and implementation of the Child, Youth and Family Services Action Plan;
 - Prioritizing connection with NWT students and graduates for employment opportunities with the HSS System, and reducing barriers to entry into HSS professions for NWT residents; and,
 - Reviewing and updating the medical travel program, including scheduling, appointment coordination, and communication.
- Prevent, interrupt, and address the effects of trauma by:
 - Redesigning proposed respite and foster care model(s) for families receiving prevention and protection services;
 - Reviewing and developing HSS policies and programs that are culturally safe, anti-racist and trauma-informed; and,
 - Identifying system changes to strengthen engagement with the Indigenous Advisory Body.

- Enhance the safety of residents and communities by:
 - Updating HSS emergency response plans to reflect lessons learned from the after-action review, including clarification of HSS roles in overall GNWT response, and on a regular basis; and,
 - Establishing an HSS Emergency Management working group to provide oversight and coordination of HSS specific emergency response and support our partners.
- Promote the safety of residents and communities in the NWT by:
 - Developing and implementing elder abuse training and awareness campaigns for GNWT service providers and organizations serving seniors; and,
 - Working with partners to deliver education and awareness campaign focused on illicit drugs, by providing data, expertise, and tools.

In addition to the Mandate objectives listed above, you are also accountable for:

- Defining insured and core services for the HSS system to inform prioritized service delivery within limited resources;
- Finalizing negotiations to recoup the full cost of delivering the federal Non-Insured Health Benefits Program from the federal government;
- Working with the Minister of Finance to develop a costed plan to amalgamate the Hay River and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authorities;
- Working with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to enhance the oversight and accountability of healthy authority budgeting processes;
- Ensuring implementation of the Health and Social Services Working Group under the NWT Council of Leaders;
- Amending the *Child and Family Services Act* to address recommendations from the Standing Committee on Social Development and to align with the federal *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* and recent changes in British Columbia and Manitoba;
- Working with Indigenous governments to advance modernization of the NWT Medical Travel Policy;
- Collaborating with the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs to support Indigenous governments in their efforts to establish regional healing and trauma-treatment programming;
- Advancing Primary Health Care Reform and contributing to GNWT-wide efforts to integrate service delivery;
- Reviewing the Community Health Centre model with the goal of supporting seniors to age in place;

- Integrating Licensed Practical Nurses with their full scope of work across the entire health care system, including options for expansion to smaller communities; and,
- Advancing efforts to maximize scope of practice for all health care providers through Primary Health Care Reform and renewed care models.