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**Strategic Framework:  
Addressing the needs of Nunavut Seniors**



## Foreword by Premier Peter Taptuna

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It is with great pleasure that I present the Government of Nunavut (GN)'s *Strategic Framework: Addressing the needs of our Seniors*. In this report you will find a summary of the actions our government has taken to date and an overview of our plans for future actions in order to support the needs of our seniors. This report builds on the work of the previous Elders Strategy, introduced during the third Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

During the Assembly's fourth mandate, we tabled our vision for Nunavut, called *Sivumut Abluqta* 2013-17, which goes hand-in hand with the Strategic Framework and the actions outlined in this report. The members of the fourth Assembly consistently advocate for greater support for our seniors, and this report reflects their work.

In years prior, programs and services for seniors were headed by multiple departments. In order to better serve Nunavummiut, the GN has taken steps to streamline the process by having the Premier's office serve as the major conduit and advocate for seniors' programs.

I look forward to continuing the work as Seniors Advocate for Nunavut and want to thank the members of the fourth Assembly for continuing to be strong advocates for Nunavut Elders and seniors.

**Peter Taptuna**  
**Premier of Nunavut**

*Note: In Nunavut, an Elder, is an individual with a role or status in the community that is not linked to a specific age. Generally, seniors benefits can begin as early as fifty-five, depending on the program.*

## Document Overview

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This document provides a strategic review of programs and services Nunavut has in place for seniors, and will act as the framework in the development of a comprehensive strategy to help address the needs of Nunavut seniors as they age. The thematic approach used in this document is based on Motion 023-4(3), passed unanimously in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut on March 16, 2016.

The strategy that will evolve from this framework document will be informed by stakeholder engagement. We recognize the importance of ensuring culturally appropriate services as a critical component in caring for our seniors. This means engaging our seniors and all departments with responsibilities for their well-being, service providers and organizations, and Inuit land claim organizations in the delivery and direction of services for seniors.

As part of the mandate of the fourth Assembly, Premier Taptuna expanded the role of the Premier's office to serve as the designated advocate for seniors across Nunavut. In response to the challenges associated with having several departments administer programs and services for seniors, the Premier's office now operates as the major conduit and advocate for seniors' programs. In this role, the Premier's office works to expedite and enhance the seniors' file across government departments and in the territory more broadly.

## Current Challenges for Seniors in Nunavut

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Nunavut's seniors face a number of challenges due to:

- The unique circumstances of the territory including the size and location of communities, which can result in isolation for some seniors;
- Shortage of facilities and beds for seniors within the territory, resulting in travel for specialized medical services outside Nunavut;
- Limited home and continuing care capacity; and
- Underrepresentation, of seniors and senior's advocacy in the territory.

Additionally, with a growing population and anticipated increase in age related chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis and dementia, increasing numbers of seniors require enhanced care. In many instances, this care needs to be delivered in a residential setting dedicated to seniors. Access to more clinical expertise and facilities is a critical goal of the GN, set out in the Sivumut Abluqta mandate.

## **Government of Nunavut Care Services for Seniors**

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### **Nunavut Seniors Information Handbook**

#### ***Current Status:***

In order to access the services they need, Nunavut's seniors must navigate a complex system of federal and territorial government programs. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- Old Age Security program;
- Canada Pension Plan;
- Elders' beneficiary programs from Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated;
- Eligible housing subsidies; and
- Various territorial and federal programs and services.

#### ***Next Steps:***

In an effort to ensure that seniors are able to understand the system and can access the services they require, the GN announced the creation of a Seniors Information Handbook. The Handbook is in all official languages, and provides seniors with information on which services they qualify for and how to access those services in Nunavut. The Handbook will be tabled, along with this strategic framework document; in the winter 2017 legislative session and will be available in communities in early spring 2017.

### **Seniors Long-Term Care**

#### **Elders' Homes**

##### ***Current Status:***

The Department of Family Services currently provides funding to three Elders' Homes in the territory, which are located in Arviat, Baker Lake, and Iqaluit. All three facilities are currently operating at maximum capacity, given the current state of the facilities and their capability to provide adequate levels of care. The waiting list for long term residential care is growing. Many families are becoming concerned with the lack of spaces and care available for their aging family members.

As a first step in addressing the challenges seniors experience in the territory, on May 26, 2016, the transfer of responsibility for the management of funding and contractual agreements for the three Elders' Homes from the Department of Family Services to the Department of Health, effective April 1, 2017, was approved. A transition team was formed and the Departments of Health and Family Services have worked collaboratively to identify and address current gaps and challenges at the Elders' Homes. This will ensure the Department of Health is aware of these challenges and positioned to ensure that the needs of residents are met.

**Next Steps:**

- The Department of Health is working to create a broader vision for senior care in the territory.
- Upon consolidation of long-term residential care services under one department, the Department of Health, working with other departments will strive to meet the following service delivery objectives:
  - Increased support for seniors to remain independent in their homes;
  - Improved access to Home and Community Care (HCC) services in Nunavut; and
  - Enhanced quality of life and care for seniors in Elders' Homes and Continuing Care Centres (CCCs).
- Further, the Government will continue to pursue increased residential care options for seniors to remain in their communities throughout the continuum of seniors care.

**Home and Community Care (HCC)****Current Status:**

The HCC program, delivered by the Department of Health, can be accessed in all communities throughout Nunavut. The program supports Nunavummiut and their families by providing a coordinated system of home and community services.

Based on assessed needs, HCC enables individuals to live as independently as possible in their own home. HCC program includes nursing care, respite care, palliative care, case management and rehabilitation services, as well as assistance with homemaking, foot care and personal care.

The Department of Health also provides education and training opportunities to all employees. Training includes palliative care skills, caring for people with dementia and chronic disease education.

**Next Steps:**

- Funding was provided in the 2016-17 fiscal year to establish a GN-HCC program in Baker Lake.
- Once renovations are completed to the identified office space, the office will open and all Nunavut communities will then have an active HCC program.

**Continuing Care Centres (CCCs)****Current Status:**

The CCCs operated by the Department of Health, provide Levels 3 and 4 nursing home care. Currently there are two 10-bed CCCs located in Igloolik and Gjoa Haven.

**Next Steps:**

- Health has recently repurposed the inpatient unit at the Kitikmeot Regional Health Centre in Cambridge Bay to accommodate seven residential long-term

care beds and 1 respite/palliative care bed. The facility started admitting residents in early February, 2017.

- This increase in capacity will provide care to Nunavummiut on the waiting list for residential long-term care.
- Up to 17 health care positions have been will be created; 10 of which are Continuing Care workers.

## **Out-of-Territory Residential Care**

### ***Current Status:***

Nunavut has limited capacity to provide specialized dementia care (known as level 5 care). Seniors who have more complex needs may require placement in close proximity to a hospital capable of meeting their medical needs.

Demand for residential long-term care for seniors will continue to grow, driven by an aging population, increasing life expectancy and a projected increase in the number of Nunavummiut living with dementia over the next 20 years.

A course called “Caring for the People with Dementia” was first delivered in June 2016 through Nunavut Arctic College for the HCC certificate program.

### ***Next Steps:***

- As part of the development of a government-wide comprehensive Seniors Strategy, the GN will work collaboratively to determine the additional supports and resources required to increase residential care within the territory.

## **Elder Abuse**

### ***Current Status:***

We continue to hear from communities across Nunavut that seniors are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Elder abuse campaigns continue to be a priority for the GN and community organizations in an effort to eliminate Elder abuse.

### ***Next Steps:***

- The transfer of responsibility for the three Elders’ homes to Health will allow Family Services to focus its efforts and resources on its core mission of protecting the most vulnerable, including seniors, from abuse, neglect and financial insecurity.

## Subsidy Programs

### **Current Status:**

The Senior Fuel Subsidy program reimburses eligible homeowners for the cost of home heating fuel to help offset the high costs of living in Nunavut.

To be eligible for the Senior Fuel Subsidy, an individual must:

- Be a permanent resident of Nunavut;
- Be 60 years of age or older;
- Own and live in the home for which the subsidy is requested;
- Not be an Income Assistance recipient; and
- Have a net annual income of \$100,000 or less.

The Senior Fuel Subsidy was revised in 2015 to better support the needs of senior homeowners by increasing the maximum quantity of fuel eligible for reimbursement to 3,500 litres for all Nunavut communities.

The Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit is a monthly payment of \$175 made to low-income seniors in Nunavut. This program is administered by the federal government on behalf of Nunavut, so that seniors receive one monthly payment that combines Old Age Security, guaranteed income supplements with Nunavut's Seniors Citizen Supplementary Benefit.

The Senior Citizen and Disabled Person Tax Relief program provides property tax relief for seniors 65 years or older and disabled persons who are home owners. This program recognizes that seniors and disabled persons face unique financial challenges and should be eligible for tax relief.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) offers dedicated public housing for seniors in 18 communities. Additionally, they offer several homeownership programs that provide assistance and support to seniors. The Senior Citizen Home Repair Program provides seniors, over the age of 60, with financial assistance to adapt and repair their homes when they face difficulties with daily living. The Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Preventative Maintenance program further helps seniors carry out preventative maintenance and minor repairs to their homes.

The above list of programs is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all subsidy programs available to seniors, but rather it intends to highlight some of the programs that have been tailored to the needs of Nunavut seniors.

### **Next Steps:**

- The GN will continue to review subsidy programs for seniors to ensure that they are appropriate and effective.

## Elders Advocacy: Future Directions

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### *Nunavuumi Inutuqait Katujjiqatigiingit - Nunavut Seniors' Society*

In an effort to address the challenges facing Nunavut's seniors, the GN is working with the *Nunavuumi Inutuqait Katujjiqatigiingit* Nunavut Seniors' Society.

This organization, incorporated in 2013, seeks to serve as a voice for Nunavut's seniors through advocacy and empowerment to enhance their quality of life and ensure their dignity, respect and independence. *Nunavuumi Inutuqait Katujjiqatigiingit* will work to improve the lives and living conditions of seniors by promoting health, security and independence in their community.

#### **Status:**

- The Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs (EIA) has engaged *Nunavuumi Inutuqait Katujjiqatigiingit*, and continues discussions to help provide the group with logistical, administrative and financial supports to begin this work in November 2017.

## Summary

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Elders establish the backbone of Nunavut culture and language and the Inuit fabric across communities.

Several actions to simplify the system for Nunavut seniors have been completed, and more will be carried out over the coming months and years. Priorities include ensuring greater access to long-term care facilities in Nunavut, a thorough review and update of programs that have direct impact on seniors, eliminating barriers and enhancing available community supports at the local level.

This Strategic Framework focuses on the complex issues our seniors face, and will act as the foundation to create a comprehensive and collaborative strategy to meet the needs of Nunavut seniors.