

June 3, 2024

HONOURABLE LESA SEMMLER
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Request to Pause Roll-Out on Changes to Extended Health Benefits Program

The Standing Committee on Social Development (Committee) has continued to hear public expressions of stress and confusion in regards to the Department of Health and Social Services' upcoming changes to its Extended Health Benefits Program.

Members need more information on the array of financial impacts on the Government that different programming options may have:

- how much money will the Department save by implementing income testing;
- what would removing income testing but maintaining current levels of benefit support look like;
- what would removing income testing but expanding levels of benefit support look like; and
- how would any other options the Department has been considering with this program impact the Government financially.

Committee ultimately has not yet received any true data on the cost benefit analysis from the Department on this change.

Further, Members and the public are hearing contradictory messages. The caps communicated to Members in the technical briefing provided on April 19, 2024 do not appear to apply to the online calculator tool implemented for the public by the Department. Committee has concerns regarding what benefits the Department is getting out of changing the program versus the costs of covering the medical needs of residents.

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As a result, Committee urges the Minister to pause the changes to the extended health benefits program indefinitely to allow for more time to collect substantiating financial data and engage with the federal Minister of Health regarding Bill C-64, *Pharmacare Act* to determine how this legislation could support the Government of the Northwest Territories' programming.

Committee looks forward to hearing the Minister's response.



Jane Weyallon Armstrong
Chair, Standing Committee on
Social Development

- c. Members of the Legislative Assembly
 - Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services
 - Principal Secretary
 - Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister, Executive and Indigenous Affairs
 - Committee Members, Standing Committee on Social Development
 - Clerk, Standing Committee on Social Development
 - Advisor, Standing Committee on Social Development