



March 28, 2022

LESA SEMMLER
MLA, INUVIK TWIN LAKES

Oral Question 1035-19(2): Medical Travel Policies

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on March 11, 2022 regarding Medical Travel Policies.

With respect to your question about any changes that have been made to the Escort Criteria Ministerial Policy as a result of the review completed in 2021, the answer is no. The Policy itself has not been changed however adjacent support services are being continually fine-tuned as issues are brought forward through the Patient Experience Survey, Exception Requests and the usual complaint process.

To best address the issues you brought forward, I have set out answers in a Q and A format. This format provides multiple answers to a question, as there are many factors that determine the response.

Why would a patient on medical travel be put up in a hotel rather than a boarding home? Does this only happen in Yellowknife, or does it happen in Inuvik and Hay River as well?

- Not all medical travel clients qualify for boarding home benefits. Boarding homes are only approved for patients who meet a certain income threshold, or those who have supplementary benefits through either Non-Insured Health Benefits, Métis Health Benefits or Extended Health Benefits.
- Patients who do not qualify for boarding home benefits would need to make their own accommodation arrangements and would be eligible for a subsidy by submitting an expense claim after travel is completed.
- Patients who qualify for boarding home benefits but choose to stay somewhere else would be eligible for a subsidy by submitting an expense claim after travel is completed.
- For patients who qualify for boarding home benefits:
 - When the boarding home is full, the boarding home places patients and their approved non-medical escorts in hotels. The boarding home still provides their food and ground transportation.

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- With the onset of COVID19, the allowable occupancy at the boarding homes was significantly reduced resulting in a greater number of patients having to be placed in hotels.
- Some patients are required to be in isolation due to Covid infection or have a medical reason why a communal setting is unsuitable, and they would be placed in a hotel.
- In Inuvik, patients are sometimes placed in hotels. Hay River does not have a boarding home.

How often are patients on medical travel put up in hotels (how many patients are put up in a hotel on a given day)?

- Over the past several months, approximately 30% of patients and their non-medical escorts have been placed in hotels in Yellowknife by the boarding home – an average of 600 patient nights managed by the boarding home with an average of 190 of those nights with patients and/or their approved non-medical escorts placed in hotels.
- These numbers significantly fluctuate from day to day, and week to week. Boarding homes tend to be quite full mid-week but less so on weekends. As well, some months are much busier and fuller than others.

When medical travel patients are put up in hotels, are they given a per diem for food? If yes, how much is it?

- Patients and their approved non-medical escorts who are placed in hotels by the boarding home do not receive per diems. The boarding home provides them with three meals per day as well as snacks.
- Patients who either do not qualify for boarding home benefits or choose not to stay with the boarding home, but who are still eligible for medical travel benefits, would receive a subsidy of \$18/day for meals and incidentals.

Do medical travel escorts get a per diem for food? If yes, how much do they get?

- Escorts for patients who are staying with the boarding home or placed in a hotel by the boarding home would receive three meals per day and snacks from the boarding home – not per diems.
- Only the approved non-medical escorts of patients who do not qualify for boarding home benefits, or choose not to stay at the boarding home, would be eligible for the subsidy of \$18/day for meals and incidentals.

If a patient on medical travel is put up in a hotel, what can they expect in terms of meals provided (How many meals and snacks do they get a day, and what do these meals and snacks typically consist of)?

- Clients receive three meals per day as well as snack food with each meal. The meals are the same for clients in hotels as they are for clients at the facility.
- The Yellowknife boarding home uses a rotational menu, approved by a dietician. Portion sizes are also approved by the dietician. Clients can call the boarding home to request larger portions or if they have questions or concerns or special requests.
- Clients with dietary restrictions would notify the boarding home upon check-in.
- Typical menu items:
 - Breakfast** - Eggs or pancakes, oatmeal or cream of wheat, sausage or bacon, bannock or pastry, juice, snack (yogurt, fruit cup)
 - Lunch** - Soup, sandwiches/stew/stir fry w/rice/baked macaroni, vegetables or salad, bottled water, snack (cookies)
 - Dinner** - Chicken/pork/fish/bison, potatoes/rice/fries, vegetables, bottled water, snack/dessert (cake/pie)
- Patients in isolation, who are unable to leave their hotel rooms, are provided with additional food and snack items such as a sandwich, yogurt, fruit cups, cookies, pastries etc.

The purpose of the medical travel policies is to ensure consistent delivery of the program to eligible residents. As with any policy, there is no way to capture every possible unique circumstance which is why an Exceptions Policy was implemented in 2019. The Exceptions Policy is intended to allow for reasonable consideration of unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis that would have previously been denied as the circumstances did not meet the policies' criterion. The Medical Travel Office does review the exception requests over time to identify potential gaps. If a policy gap is identified, the policy may be amended to address the issue.

Thank you.



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Minister of Health and Social Services

c Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs