

**Leadership Council Public Meeting - Minutes  
March 5-7, 2024  
Doug Wieterman Hall, Hay River Community Centre**

**PRESENT:**

- Mr. Gerry Cheezie, Chairperson
  - Mr. Ted Blondin, Vice Chairperson and Chair, Tlicho Community Services Agency
  - Ms. Nancy Trotter, Chair, Yellowknife Regional Wellness Council
  - Ms. Phyllis Mawdsley, Chair, Fort Smith Regional Wellness Council
  - Ms. Jo-Anne Cecchetto, Deputy Minister, Dept. of Health and Social Services
  - Mr. Muaz Hassan, Chair, Dehcho Regional Wellness Council (virtual)
  - Ms. Gina Dolphus, Chair, Sahtu Regional Wellness Council (virtual)
  - Mr. Brian Willows, Chair Hay River Regional Wellness Council
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- Ms. Kim Riles, Chief Executive Officer, NTHSSA
  - Ms. Marissa Martin, Chief Financial Officer, NTHSSA
  - Mr. Tim VanOverliw, Executive Director of Corporate and Support Services, NTHSSA
  - Ms. Jenna Long, Director, Health Services NTHSSA (virtual)
  - Ms. Kristy Jones, Executive Director, Child, Family and Community Wellness, NTHSSA
  - Ms. Arlene Jorgensen, Executive Director Special Projects and Mentorship, NTHSSA (virtual)
  - Dr. Claudia Kraft, Territorial Medical Director, NTHSSA
  - Ms. Lorie-Anne Danielson, Acting Chief Operating Officer, Stanton Territorial Hospital, NTHSSA (virtual)
  - Ms. Meghan Dewhirst, Acting Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA Yellowknife Region (virtual)
  - Mr. Wilson Dimsdale, Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA Dehcho Region
  - Ms. Mimi Hamlyn, Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA Sahtu Region (virtual)
  - Ms. Sujata Ganguli, Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA Fort Smith Region (virtual)
  - Mr. Roger Israel, Chief Operating Officer, NTHSSA Beaufort Delta Region (virtual)
  - Ms. Erin Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer HRHSSA
  - Ms. Susan Laramée, Senior Advisor of Governance, NTHSSA
  - Mr. Kevin Whitehead, Senior Advisor to the CEO, NTHSSA (virtual)
  - Ms. Jocelyne Jalbert-Strader, Senior Administrative Coordinator, NTHSSA

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ms. Jeannie Mathison, Asst. DM, Finance, Policy and Planning, DHSS
- Ms. Stacy Ridgely, Director, Policy, Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations, DHSS

**PUBLIC:**

- 1 MLA (Minister), 1 Constituency Assistant, 1 Mayor, 1 SAO, and 1 Regional Wellness Council member from the Hay River region.

## 1.0 Call to Order

The March 5, 2024 meeting was closed to the public. The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 9:15 am, with Ms. Dolphus offering an opening prayer.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority approved the March 5, 2024 agenda as amended.

**Motion: Mr. Willows**  
**Second: Ms. Trotter**  
**LC24/03-001 – Carried**

The Leadership Council met with the NTHSSA and DHSS senior management to review and discuss the 2023-24 OAG Audit Plan for NTHSSA, more detail on the Child & Youth Counselling Program Evaluation, communications planning to increase the profile of the NTHSSA governance structure, the upcoming survey assessment of the Accreditation Canada Governance standard, and the growing importance of the Problematic Substance Use Committee in assisting regions cope with increasing illicit drug use.

## 2.0 Adjournment

The Leadership Council adjourned its March 5 proceedings at 4:21 pm. Members were reminded of the Regional Health Centre tour and Public Reception beginning at 6:30 pm.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority adjourned its proceedings for March 5, 2024.

**Motion: Mr. Willows**  
**Second: Ms. Trotter**  
**LC24/03-002 – Carried**

## 3.0 Call to Order

The public meeting on March 6, 2024 was called to order at 9:09 AM.

- a) The Chairperson welcomed the Council, presenters, and public to the meeting, and acknowledged the meeting was taking place on Treaty 8 Territory.
- b) The Safety Overview was reviewed, and Attendance recorded as above, by the

Senior Advisor, Governance.

- c) There were no conflicts of interest declared for this meeting.
- d) Mr. Blondin led the meeting in an opening prayer.

#### **4.0 Agenda/Minutes**

##### **Review/Approve Agenda**

- a) The Leadership Council reviewed the agenda for the meeting. The Deputy Minister asked for her Report to be moved earlier on the agenda, Council agreed to hear the DM Report at 11 am.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority approved the March 6, 2024 agenda as amended.

**Motion: Mrs. Mawdsley**  
**Second: Mr. Willows**  
**LC24/03-003 – Carried**

The Chairperson noted the public would be given an opportunity to ask questions just prior to lunch and around the afternoon break.

##### **Review/Approve Previous Meeting Minutes**

The Leadership Council reviewed minutes from previous meetings.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority approved the September 28, 2023 AGM, December 6-7, 2023 quarterly, and February 14, 2024 Budget meeting minutes as presented.

**Motion: Ms. Trotter**  
**Second: Mr. Willows**  
**LC24/03-004 – Carried**

#### **5.0 Regional Wellness Council Reports and Introductions**

Below are summaries of the actions, suggestions and activities of each Regional Wellness Council that provided a Chair report:

- a) **Hay River** - the Hay River RWC met November 6, 2023. Topics included presentations from the Territorial Ethicist and the Community Outreach

Program; developing a guidebook and procedures to avoid ethical conflicts in their work; re-located some services back to the medical building downtown, previously not occupied since the 2022 flood; housing and cost of living continue to affect recruitment; special RWC after action review discussions included fire and flood evacuation roles and responsibilities with one particular concern to define who is responsible for seniors/Elders and persons with mobility issues; other concerns include lack of notice and communications, need for emergency list of HRHSSA positions that must remain during an evacuation, and confirming emergency services provided by other GNWT Departments; homelessness and the illicit drug crisis are other top community issues to address. Next RWC meeting to be determined.

- b) **Fort Smith** – 2 scheduled meetings January 24 (cancelled), and February 21, 2024; patient concerns about medical travel disruptions due to flight cancellations, lateness of appointment confirmations; patient safety concerns in medical boarding home overflow accommodations in Yellowknife; delays in completing the secure room at the health centre impacting RCMP and Town, closed for 18 months; concerns over potential regional impacts of new GNWT fiscal strategy; in February RWC reviewed Mental Health Renewal presentation, toured HSS building in Fort Smith; appreciate additional MH supports and LC Chairperson support after aviation incident. Next RWC meeting is March 20, 2024.
- c) **Thìçhò Community Services Agency** – met in February to meet deadline for Budget submitted in time, included suggestions for savings; hiring struggles for nurses, southern recruitment efforts continue; retention focus at community level, involve nurses in community events and activities, sports, feasts, etc.; working to have a designated doctor in region 3 days per week; syphilis outbreak prevalent in region; getting ready for Accreditation survey in April, policy updates almost final. Next TCSA Board meeting is later in March 2024.
- d) **Yellowknife** – the Yellowknife RWC met on January 17 and February 21, 2024. Jan 17 medical travel improvements, Office of Client Experience report. Feb 21 Home Base presentation, dedicated to youth housing and life skill supports in Yellowknife, tour of łiwegòatì Building on Feb 22. Working with NTHSSA communications team to increase public engagement, using media advisories and direct stakeholder notices. Other RWC concerns include youth mental health supports with changes to the CYC program, suggest Integrated Service Delivery approach. Recommend permanent funding for the Office of Client Experience and Indigenous Patient Advocate positions, including one for the Yellowknife region. Medical travel recommendations include all elders

have escorts, or use virtual care where possible, invest in safe, quiet spaces for elders to await appointments and/or flights. RWC is concerned with wait times at Stanton lab, look forward to solutions being implemented. Next meeting is April 17, 2024 at Northern United Place in Yellowknife.

- e) **Sahtu** – last meeting was on January 10 in Norman Wells. Appreciate efforts of regional COO to assist RWC Chair. Members discussed vision for Mental Health Renewal in the region. Setting up a working group with RWC Members, other regional representatives. Social determinants of health impact mental health status, following Beaufort Delta model. RWC attended the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated annual general assembly on November 30, 2023 in Tulita to present and discuss this program re-design. Next RWC meeting in Deline March 13-14, 2024, will schedule Problematic Substance Use Committee presentation.
- f) **Dehcho** – appreciated CEO attending last RWC meeting; discussed new regional health centre status, Fort Liard and Nahanni Butte residents accessing services in BC, and the updated accommodation policy for permanent nurses. RWC recognizes importance of working with their MLA (Speaker of the Legislative Assembly) to have regional concerns heard at the political level.

## 6.0 RWC Reports Review

The CEO offered comments and responses to themes emerging from the RWC reports :

1. Medical Travel – safety concerns with overflow accommodation in Yellowknife have been addressed with the contractor; volumes have increased significantly, partially due to dental service limitations in regions; contractor has been very responsive in light of concerns and challenges raised. Flight disruptions due new schedules also a factor, bookings based on closest appointments by date. Considering adjusted hours of operations and intake management changes to improve patient notifications. RWCs can receive dedicated presentations on this topic. The Deputy Minister advised expected policy updates are pending conclusion of NIHB negotiations with Canada. NTHSSA is considering ways to increase use of virtual care in appropriate situations to avoid travel, and clarifying availability of boarding home spaces for elders awaiting appointments and travel.
2. Mental Health Renewal expansion – working group led regional consultations to make the program work for their communities; Sahtu is next for similar

initiative. Update at November/December meeting would be timely, can carry over into 2024-25 CEO objectives.

3. Youth mental health concerns also growing, prioritizing their needs could be part of Departmental mandates coming out of Legislative Assembly priorities.
4. Problematic Substance Use Committee – presentation available to individual RWCs, Sahtu and Dehcho already expressed interest. Council is interested in coordinated approaches to addictions, homelessness; understanding responsible groups and community links to supports.

## **7.0 Deputy Minister Report**

The DM clarified Medical Travel is made up of 3 program areas; NIHB agreement with Canada for indigenous residents, administered by the GNWT, includes medical travel, dental services, medical supplies, vision care, and more, new agreement is pending. GNWT employee medical travel is administered by the Department of Finance. For other residents, the GNWT has a separate medical travel policy.

The Deputy Minister Report included information on: Restoring Balance fiscal sustainability strategy for the GNWT and collaborative work of all 3 Authorities and DHSS to submit proposals; priority and mandate development of the 20<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly; bi-lateral agreements with Canada including 3 year action plans for work on shared health priorities (primary health care reform, recruitment and retention, mental health resources) and aging with dignity; progress on the Territorial Health Investment Fund for medical travel, cultural safety and anti-racism training, primary health care reform, and sustainability project work; the IRC coordination agreement around children in care; CYC program changes; federal funding for substance use and addictions used for managed substance access programs, 5 new proposals for opioid and medical detox programming, mental health renewal expansion; Extended Health Benefit program changes; influenza immunization campaigns; measles awareness and precautions; syphilis outbreak cautions; new immunization program standards; new IPAC standards; new colorectal cancer screening guidelines, and breast cancer screening guidelines; 811 update on volumes and activities; illicit drug use and health promotion initiatives (eg. health boxes for promotion of public health); CFS legislation, Health Professions, and Vital Statistics legislative updates; Session dates in May/June.

Council commented on the expectation that medical travel is covered for indigenous residents is 100 percent covered through treaties; the importance of working with indigenous governments to leverage shared responsibility and greater benefits for all

Territorial residents; clarification of the need for measles boosters; and regional allocations for federal substance use and addictions funding.

Council looks forward to revised GNWT emergency management communications, guidelines and responsibilities to avoid dangerous scenarios encountered during the 2023 evacuations in the South Slave.

## **8.0 Governance and HR Committee Report**

The Committee met on February 21, to review and discuss the development of a Council Training and Development Plan to enhance functionality and performance of the Leadership Council; the plan should focus on Finance governance training and Public Board Governance training.

The Committee discussed a process for the CEO performance evaluation for 2023-24, and to review 2024-25 draft goals and objectives. Committee reviewed past Ministers statements around the intent of system transformation to be included in new RWC member orientation and included in the governance communications plan. Committee approved a process for approving an updated Governance Manual at their June meeting, followed by a page-by-page review with new Members at the September Council meeting. The Committee Terms of Reference and Operating Guidelines should be reviewed by Committee Members with changes to be included in the Governance Manual review at the June Council meeting.

The Chairperson opened the floor to questions from the public, there were none.

## **Break for lunch**

## **9.0 Quality Committee Report**

Mr. VanOverliw assisted Mr. Blondin to review the Quality Committee report from the February 22 meeting. Members received an update related to the Accreditation planning and simulated survey for NTHSSA leading to the on-site survey April 22-26. Updates to the Ethics Framework were also discussed, along with a presentation of the Organizational Quality and Risk Management Committee and their activities. The report summarized recommendations from Quality Assurance activities used to improve program and service outcomes for patients and clients, with a proposed level of detail for ongoing reports of OQRMC activities.

The quarterly review of the Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Scorecard included a review of performance indicators and mitigation measures for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2023-24 including:

- Child, Family and Community Wellness indicators on a regional and demographic basis;
- emergency wait times (non-compliant with benchmark);
- ventilator associated pneumonia rates (compliant with benchmark);
- vacancy rates and trends across NTHSSA; and
- incident reporting trends for medication errors, employee incidents, patient falls, and surgical errors

Committee was asked to review the Terms of Reference and Operating Guidelines, to include any suggested changes in the broader Governance Manual update to be considered for approval at the June Council meeting.

### **10.0 Finance Committee Report**

Mr. Willows reported on the February 20 Finance Committee meeting. Committee moved in camera for discussion of GNWT fiscal sustainability strategy. Members reviewed the 2023-24 Q3 Financial Update showing a projected year-end deficit 30.57 million above budget.

The 2023-24 Audit Plan should allow NTHSSA to meet the statutory deadline for submitting audited financial statements to the Minister. The 2024-25 Operating Budget may require updates with clarity from the Restoring Balance and GNWT Budget processes still pending.

Consideration of the 2024-25 Operational Plan and System Sustainability/Deficit Reduction Plan Update were both deferred to the next meeting pending more clarity around GNWT fiscal sustainability strategy impacts on the NTHSSA Budget.

Members were asked to review the Committee Terms of Reference and Operating Guidelines to include any suggested changes in the broader Governance Manual update to be approved at the June Council meeting.

The Committee Chair noted for the record the link between annual operating deficits and NTHSSA not being right funded.

### **11.0 Chairperson's Report**

The Chairperson expressed appreciation to meet once again in an NWT community. Mr. Cheezie summarized his activities since the last Council meeting in December 2023. Of specific note were orientation and transition priority briefings with the new Minister in January. Also of note was travel, comfort and support provided to Fort Smith following the aviation incident in late January.



Mr. Cheezie was pleased to Chair the Budget approval meeting on February 14, and the Governance and HR Committee meeting February 21. He attended the Finance Committee meeting February 20 and travelled to Edmonton in late February to attend the National Assembly of Remote Communities to learn about national issues and solutions affecting isolated Northern communities.

In addition, the Chairperson expressed his support for the governance model of NTHSSA, and the management team charged with operating the programs and services provided to NWT residents. The model provides strong support for high quality patient-centred care, while giving a voice to the regions. In light of the new government, new fiscal strategies, the COVID-19 pandemic, fires and floods, the Chairperson expressed his belief that the governance model is working to improve the HSS system.

## **12.0 Chief Executive Officer Report**

The CEO delivered her report to the Council, highlighting the new Executive Council and Minister, and related orientation briefings offered on NTHSSA operations. The new government priorities will lead to new Department mandates, NTHSSA operational priorities will be aligned accordingly.

Other topics covered in the report include :

- Accreditation survey April 22-26, Governance standard April 23. Staff are well-prepared, motivated and proud to showcase their work.
- For the late January plane crash notice, NTHSSA initiated the protocol for mass-casualty event, and increased mental health supports for staff and community.
- NWT Emergency plan assigns emergency health and social services, patient transport, and on request from municipalities, registration and reception services in host communities for evacuees. HSS after action review co-led by DHSS, NTHSSA, GNWT after action review led by Department of Executive.
- Emergency Management organization representation now at senior executive level for NTHSSA.
- Fall influenza and COVID-19 immunization programs completed.
- Łıwegòatì Building is being furnished, some seasonal work delayed until spring, phased opening dates to be announced soon.
- Gender-affirming care changes in Alberta are not expected to impact services to NWT residents.
- Federal delay in implementation of MAID for mentally ill patients.

- PHCR is being refreshed for a pivot post-pandemic, update at June meeting.
- Federal funding has been requested for mental health renewal expansion.
- CYC program changes leaving potential gaps in youth mental health services.
- EHR upgrade and replacement project is being led by DHSS.
- Service level reductions – birthing services in Inuvik reduced Jan 11 to 23; floods in YK clinics led to closures, day shelter due to lack of heat; birthing services in Fort Smith via midwifery resumed Feb 5.
- Agency nurse use on OBS unit at Stanton not likely to change soon.
- HR – COO changes at Stanton, YK Region; senior management cultural safety and anti-racism training completed; acute care nursing conference in Yellowknife had over 200 attendees; 94 claims processed to date for Friends and Family Travel Program over Christmas break, funding for future not confirmed; OCE 1-year anniversary celebrated in February, funding time limited; Succession planning based on GNWT framework is underway, overview will be presented at the June Council meeting.
- Finance - Q3 variance submitted, supplementary funding received to partially offset overspend; work underway on Q4 variance, expecting some surge in costs. Budget, Operational Plan outline submitted to Minister on February 15.

### 13.0 Leadership Council Business

Draft 2023-24 Corporate Planning Calendar – outlines potential quarterly meeting dates, locations, agendas for 2024-25 fiscal year.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority adopted the 2024-25 Corporate Planning Calendar as amended, subject to finalization and adjustments as directed by Council.

**Motion: Ms. Trotter**

**Second: Mr. Willows**

**LC24/03-005 – Carried**

Committee Memberships – this item was deferred pending the confirmation of personal preferences of Council Members, and the upcoming annual appointment of new RWC Members. An updated list can be approved by email.

Selection of Vice Chairperson – The current Vice Chairperson continues to serve past the expiry of his 1-year term in the absence of any other appointment to the role. Mr. Blondin expressed interest in not continuing, but with Council preference to defer

the selection of a new Vice Chairperson to after the annual appointment of new RWC Members in July, agreed to continue in the role for now.

#### **14.0 NTHSSA Ethics Framework**

Council reviewed changes to the NTHSSA Territorial Ethics Framework, which presents guidance for families and personnel in difficult decision-making scenarios related to patient care, based on organizational values and vision for culturally safe, patient-centred care.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta Health Services, a Territorial Ethicist provides education and training to NTHSSA personnel in the area of ethics, and provides consults to assist with case-specific patient care decision-making.

The new Ethics Framework is a workbook instrument with practical tools to assist personnel, rather than a standard policy document. The shift away from an Ethics Committee towards a community-practice based approach to Ethics, focussing instead on education, escalation to the Territorial Ethicist, and other practical decision-making tools.

Council was satisfied with the progression represented by the new Ethics Framework to enable more timely and efficient decisions. All 3 NWT Health Authorities continue to have access to the Territorial Ethicist through their Quality Division daily operations.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority approved and adopted the new Territorial Ethical Framework Workbook 2024 as presented.

**Motion: Mr. Willows**

**Second: Mr. Blondin**

**LC24/03-006 – Carried**

#### **15.0 NTHSSA Quality Assurance Framework**

An update was provided on anticipated improvements to the NTHSSA Quality Assurance Framework to help formally review and manage client concerns. The changes pertain to the types of secondary reviews required through the Framework and how related information is shared with clients and the NTHSSA governing body. Working with the NTHSSA insurer HIROC, the changes will reflect a just culture philosophy, for staff involved to safely to share what happened without fear of inappropriate discipline; changes will reflect an organizational commitment to

cultural safety, and how to apply those considerations. Other changes around accountability reviews, human factors, the intake process, Child and Family Services concerns, updated clarity around information sharing and quality improvement opportunities, and updated process and documentation steps, will also be suggested.

Council supported the direction of the changes and looks forward to receiving further updates as the draft changes are formalized.

### **16.0 Extended Health Benefits – Program Changes**

Council reviewed proposed changes coming to the Extended Health Benefits Policy effective September 1, 2024. This policy update does not affect residents insured through their employer-sponsored benefit plans, Metis Health Benefits Policy, or the Non-Insured Benefits Policy. The current out-dated policy applies to eligible residents over 60 years of age or those with a specified condition within the policy. Seniors receive benefits for prescription drugs, dental services, medical travel, medical supplies and equipment, and vision care. Specified-disease benefits include prescription drugs and limited medical travel.

Changes will improve equity of access for those outside the above parameters, and provide more predictability for the cost of the program. Seniors are not expected to be impacted by the policy changes. Requirement for specified disease conditions for to receive benefits is being dropped, but an income test will be applied to determine benefit eligibility, with the potential for co-payments to a maximum contribution based on the applicant's income. Income thresholds will be based on place of residence, updated annually according to regional cost-of-living indicators.

Public communications will be ramped up shortly, allowing applications prior to the changes coming into effect on September 1. Alberta Blue Cross will administer the program. Any implications to follow from a possible national pharmacare program will be accounted for when and where appropriate. The proposed EHB policy changes are not expected to impact Treaty rights as indigenous residents are covered through other benefit policies. After the proposed policy changes are implemented, impacts will be monitored through data collection and performance measurement criteria.

While expressing concern about the administrative costs of the new policy implementation, Council appreciated the better understanding provided through the presentation, and recommended public communications focus on clarity for the public on potential impacts, and the positive nature of the proposed policy changes.

The Chairperson opened the floor to questions from the public, there were none.

### **17.0 In-Camera Session was not required.**

### **18.0 Adjournment**

Following a closing prayer led by Mr. Blondin, the Leadership Council adjourned its proceedings for March 6, 2024 at 2:10 PM.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority adjourned its proceedings for March 6, 2024.

**Motion: Ms. Trotter**  
**Second: Mrs. Mawdsley**  
**LC24/03-007 – Carried**

### **19.0 Call to Order**

The Chairperson called the meeting back to order at 9:15 am on March 7. This half day meeting was closed to the public. Mr. Blondin led the opening prayer.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority moved in camera.

**Motion: Ms. Trotter**  
**Second: Ms. Dolphus**  
**LC24/03-008 – Carried**

The Leadership Council met in camera to review issues to discuss with the Minister of Health and Social Services, and met with the Minister virtually. The Council then reviewed a communique to be issued following the meeting.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority moved out of camera.

**Motion: Mr. Willows**  
**Second: Ms. Trotter**  
**LC24/03-009 – Carried**

### **20.0 Adjournment**

Ms. Dolphus offered the closing prayer. The Leadership Council adjourned its March 7 proceedings and closed its March 5-7 meeting at 12:50 pm.

On a motion duly moved and seconded, the Leadership Council of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority adjourned its proceedings for March 7, 2024, and closed its March 5-7 quarterly meeting.

**Motion: Mrs. Mawdsley**

**Second: Mr. Hassan**

**LC24/03-010 – Carried**



June 24, 2024

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Chairperson Approval Signature

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Date