



19th Legislative Assembly Disability Priorities



Priorities Outline



1. **Priority #1:** *Bringing Northerners with Disabilities Home-- Addressing the Residential Southern Placement Program*
2. **Priority #2:** *Eliminating Discrimination and Improving Access to Extended Healthcare*
3. **Priority #3:** *Creating Pathways for Independent Oversight*



Priority # 1: Residential Southern Placement Program



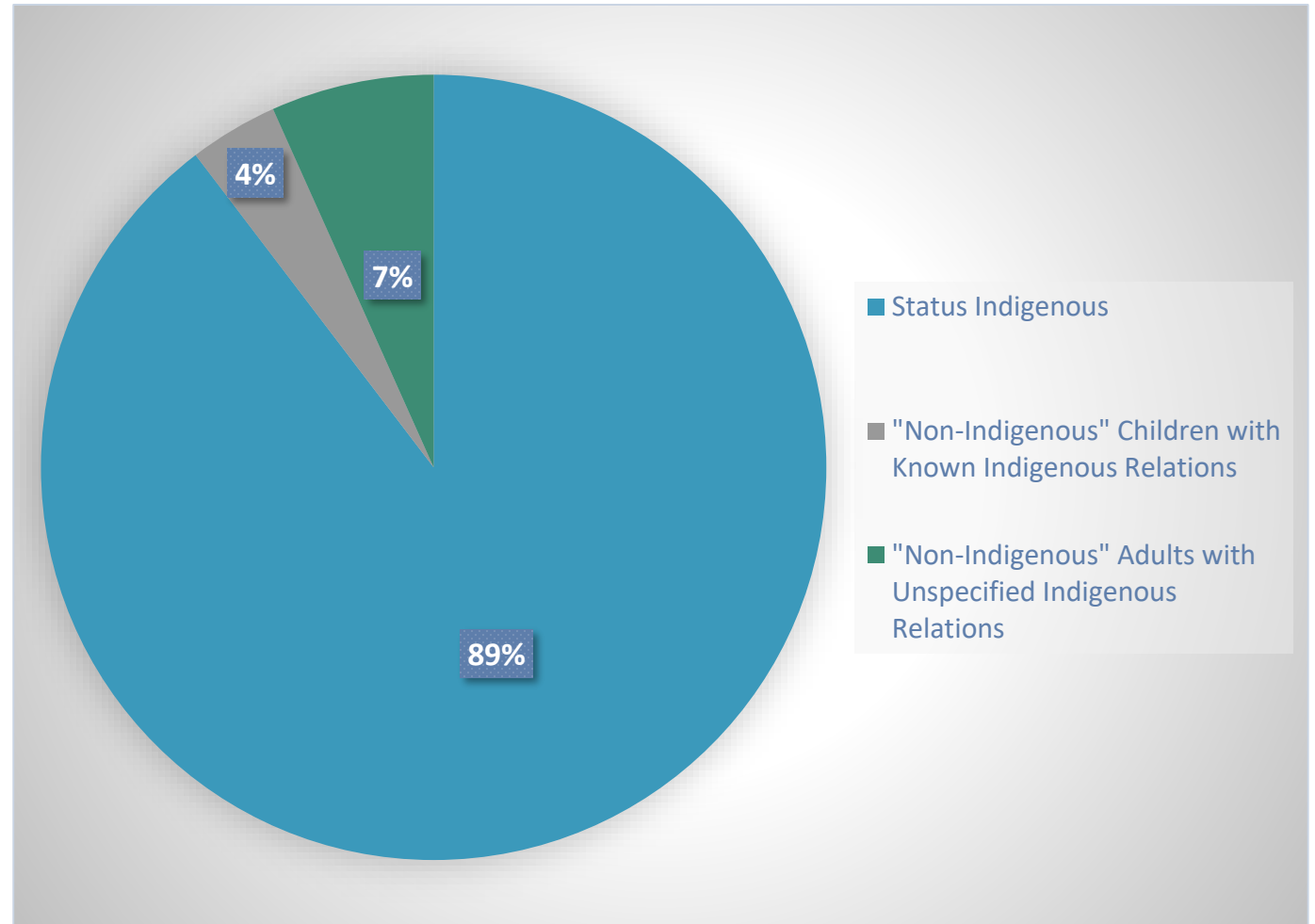
- Residential Southern Placements are contractual agreements made between the GNWT Department of Health and Social Services and Care Agencies in the Provincial South. Agreements are in place with over 15 agencies in Alberta, Manitoba, and British Columbia.
- Residential Southern Placements are long-term care arrangements that result in the displacement of persons with disabilities, almost exclusively cognitive disabilities, from their homes, families, communities, and culture.
- Currently, the GNWT has a budget of **28.5 million dollars** funding the Residential Southern Placement Program, which represents an **increase of 77%** over the past 7 years. During this time, no investment in the development of in-territory residential supports for persons with disabilities.



Placement Disproportionate Impacts: Indigenous Residents



Ethnicity	Number of Children (<18 yrs.) in Placement	Number of Adults (> 18yrs.) in Placement
First Nation	35	56
Inuit	10	38
Metis	5	1
Non-Indigenous	6	11
Total	56	106



Placement Disproportionate Impacts: Cognitive Disability

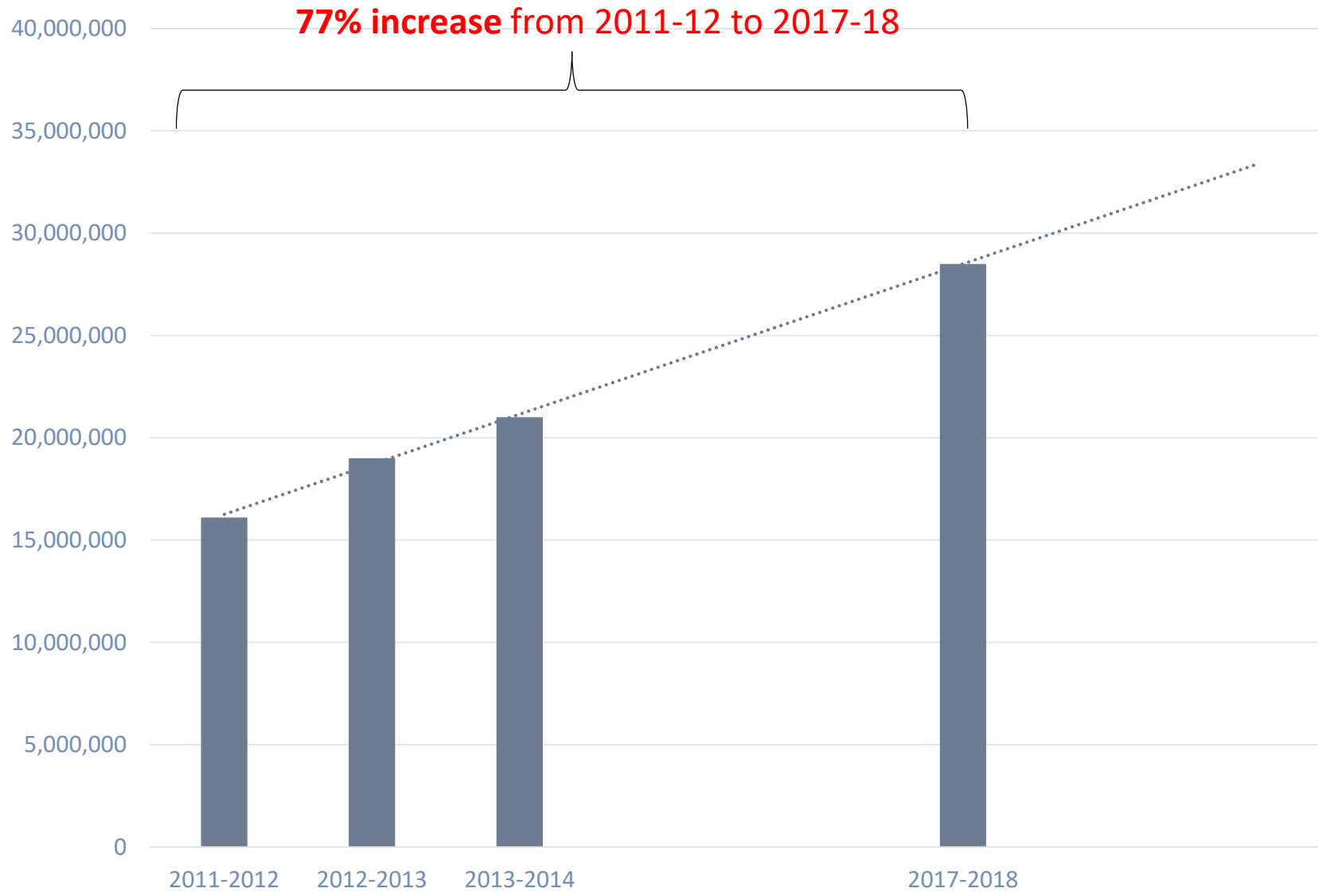


Disability Category	Percentage of Placements
Intellectual disability	66%
Psychiatric disability	31%
Brain injury	3%



Long Term Displacement

Length of Placement Range	Approximate Number of Adults in Range
Less than 1 year	16
1-2 years	10
2-4 years	21
4-10 years	34
10-15 years	8
15-20 years	14
Greater than 20 years	2





How do we address this?

- Investing in in-territory residential supports for persons with cognitive disabilities to prevent unnecessary displacements
- Investing in community development and natural care networks to keep individuals with disabilities within their families (e.g. respite; parent/caregiver training)
- Creating meaningful opportunities for persons with cognitive disabilities (e.g. investing in inclusive post-secondary training/education/vocational programming; inclusive social and recreation programming; supported employment)
- Giving Indigenous Organizations and Governments autonomy over the delivery of health and social services to ensure that Indigenous residents are able to receive culturally responsive care and support that preserves language and cultural practices while keeping families intact (this also creates employment opportunities for communities!)





Priority # 2: Reforming Extended Health Benefits

**Eliminated Discrimination from
the Specified Disease Conditions
Program**

**Extended Health
Benefits Reform**

**Addressing Gaps for Low-Income
Residents to Comprehensive
Extended Health Benefits**

(including prescription drug,
medical device/supplies, dental
care, and vision care)



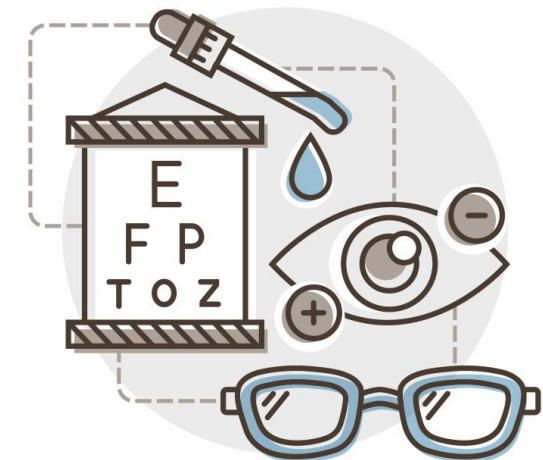
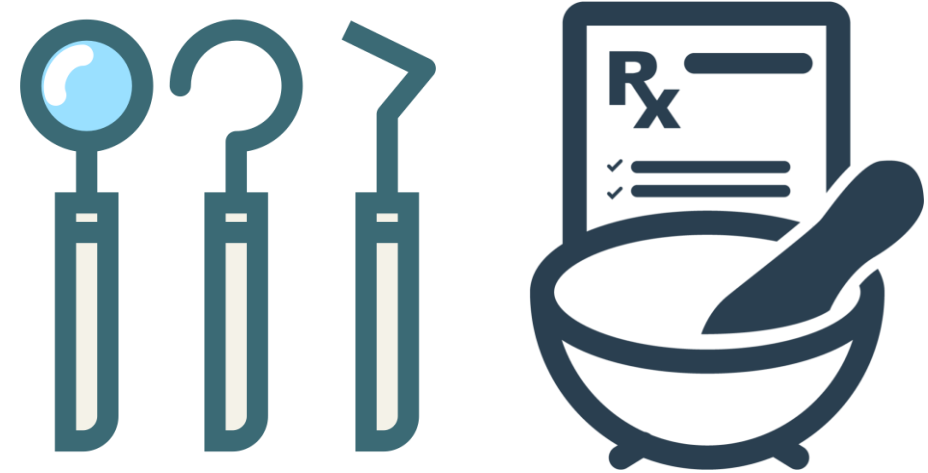
Charter Discrimination

- The Specified Disease Condition Program provides comprehensive coverage for medical travel, medical aids/devices/supplies, and prescription drugs for residents with one of 50 health diagnoses who are under the age of 60 years and do not qualify for Metis Health Benefits or Non-Insured Health Benefits (status Inuit and First Nations residents).
- This means that some people with disabilities or chronic medical conditions cannot access supplementary health insurance because of the type of disability they have even though they have unmet needs for medical supplies, medical equipment, medical travel, and prescription drugs.
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is supreme law in Canada. This means that all legislation and government action made by the GNWT must align with the Charter. Section 15 of the Charter establishes equality rights of all Canadian citizens and tells us that any benefits that the GNWT provides its citizens cannot discriminate on the ground of mental or physical disability. The Extended Health Benefits for Specified Disease Conditions Program is discriminatory because it makes a benefit available to people with only some kinds types disabilities. Residents who have a disability or chronic medical condition that is not one of the 50 recognized conditions are discriminated against based on the kind of disability they have—this is violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Low Income Residents Left Behind



- The NWT has **NO** supplementary insurance scheme for individuals with low-income, even those who are on Income Support. This puts us far behind the rest of Canada.
- The NWT is one of only two provinces or territories (the other being Nunavut) to not have some form of publicly-funded health coverage for prescription medication and medical supplies/aids for low-income residents.
- The NWT is one of only two provinces or territories (the other being Nunavut) to not have some form of publicly-funded health coverage for vision.
- The NWT is one of only three provinces or territories to not have some form of publicly-funded health coverage for dentalcare for low-residents.





How do we address this?

- Eliminating discrimination from the Specified Disease Conditions Program by making eligibility criteria based on medical need and not specific diagnosis (this is the norm in the rest of the country)
- Creating a comprehensive supplementary insurance scheme for low-income residents (at minimum tied to income support)
- Engage directly with the NWT Disabilities Council as an expert in this area and review the released position paper that addresses this Specified Disease Conditions Program in relation to existing case law in Canada.



Priority # 3: Creating Pathways for Independent Oversight



- The GNWT currently has no independent oversight of programming for persons with disabilities. Ensuring that programming and services are meeting the needs of people with disabilities and their families should involve independent, third-party review that directly engages with persons who access these services.
- Families and persons with disabilities currently have no formal process or pathway to express concerns about services or programming, including residential and long-term care services.
- The disability community in the NWT has made it clear that a Disability Ombud Position be enacted that includes a supporting council of persons with disabilities and parents/caregivers. This position should be funded by the GNWT and operate at arms length.

