



BACKGROUNDER: CANCER CARE VISION FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to improving cancer care for residents across the territory in ways that are equitable, culturally safe, and responsive to the realities of northern life. Cancer affects individuals, families, and communities, and many residents face shared challenges such as long travel for care, navigating complex systems, and accessing culturally respectful supports.

The Cancer Care Vision: A Living Framework for Quality and Priorities in the Northwest Territories (the Vision) provides shared direction for how cancer care will continue to be planned, coordinated, and improved over time. It builds on the completed Charting Our Course: Northwest Territories Cancer Strategy 2015-2025 and reflects what was learned through evaluation, engagement, and lived experience. The Vision is a living guide, designed to evolve as communities share feedback and system needs change.

What we learned from the 2015-2025 Cancer Strategy

The Northwest Territories Cancer Strategy 2015-2025 was the territory's first comprehensive, system-wide approach to cancer prevention, screening, treatment, and support.

An evaluation showed progress in several areas, including:

- More organized and consistent cancer screening programs.
- Improved navigation and communication for some patients and families.
- Increased collaboration among health system partners.
- Increased engagement with communities and local health workers.

The evaluation also identified ongoing challenges, including:

- Access barriers for people living in rural and remote communities.
- Concerns about cultural safety and trust in the health system.
- Gaps in survivorship, palliative, and end-of-life care.
- Ongoing impacts of medical travel and system pressures.

These lessons helped inform the development of the Vision.

What the Vision is

The Vision:



- Guides how cancer care is planned and improved across the Northwest Territories.
- Looks at the full cancer journey, from prevention and screening to diagnosis, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care.
- Recognizes that people often move between communities, regions, and jurisdictions for care.
- Emphasizes equity, cultural safety, coordination, and continuous learning.
- Does not introduce new programs or change current services.

Guiding principles

Cancer care in the Northwest Territories is guided by principles that emphasize:

- Person-centred and family-inclusive care.
- Cultural safety and community-informed approaches.
- Equitable and reliable access.
- Evidence-informed and effective care.
- Connected and coordinated systems.
- Safety, quality, and accountability.

Five goals of the Vision

The Vision is guided by five goals:

- Supporting prevention and wellness to reduce cancer risk and promote health.
- Providing accessible, culturally safe screening shaped by community needs.
- Improving navigation and coordinated transitions across the cancer journey.
- Strengthening holistic supports that improve quality of life.
- Using communication and information systems to improve coordination, learning, and accountability.

Next steps

Moving forward, the Vision will:



- Guide decision-making and priorities across the health and social services system.
- Use quality assurance and ongoing learning to monitor progress and identify gaps.
- Incorporate continuous community feedback and lived experience.
- Share updates publicly as learning and improvement continue.