Government of Nunavut
Department of Health

2013/2014
Annual Report on the
Operation of the Medical Care Plan

From the Director of Medical Insurance

Legislative Authority

Legislation governing the administration of health in Nunavut was carried over from the Northwest Territories (as Nunavut statutes) pursuant to the *Nunavut Act*. The *Medical Care Act* (the "*Act*") governs who is covered by the Nunavut Health Insurance Plan and the payment of benefits for insured medical services.

Section 23(1) of the *Medical Care Act* requires the Minister responsible for the Act to appoint a Director of Medical Insurance (the "Director"). The Director is responsible for the administration of the *Act* and regulations by:

(a) assessing the eligibility for entitlement of persons to insured services
(b) assessing the amounts payable to insured services and
(c) authorizing payment of the amounts assessed under paragraph (b) out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund
    (i) to the medical practitioner who provided the insured services or to the person on his or her behalf, or
    (ii) to the insured person who received the insured services as per Section 5 of the *Medical Care Act.*

Section 24 requires the Director to submit an annual report on the operation of the Medical Care Plan (Nunavut Health Insurance Plan) to the Minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

Overview of Health Care Services in Nunavut

The management and delivery of health services in Nunavut is included in the overall operations of the Department of Health (the "Department"). The Department has a regional office located in each of Nunavut's three regions, which manages the delivery of health services at a regional level. These regional offices are located in Pangnirtung (Qikiqtaaluk region), Rankin Inlet (Kivalliq region), and Cambridge Bay (Kitikmeot region). Iqaluit operations are administered separately.

The delivery of health services in Nunavut is based on a primary health care model; for example visits to family physicians, consultations with nurses or nurse practitioners, and advice received from pharmacists are some common primary health care services. There are 24 local health centres in communities across Nunavut, including regional facilities in Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay (with in- and out-patient capacity), two public health facilities (Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet), one family practice clinic (Iqaluit) and one hospital

in Iqaluit. Services based in the Qiqiktani General Hospital include 24-hour emergency services, in-patient care (including obstetrics, pediatrics and palliative care), surgical services, laboratory services, diagnostic imaging, and respiratory therapy.

Nunavut's primary health care providers are predominantly family physicians and community health nurses. The Department recruits and hires its own nurses and physicians. Specialist services are accessed primarily from the Territory's main referral centres in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Yellowknife and Edmonton.

More than one third of the Department's total operational budget is spent on costs associated with medical travel ($62,114,690) and physician and hospital services ($59,970,740) outside the territory. Due to the Territory's very low population density and limited health infrastructure (i.e. diagnostic equipment and health human resources), access to a range of hospital and specialist services often requires residents to travel outside of the Territory. The two regional health facilities (Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay), as well as the Qiqiktani General Hospital, are enabling Nunavut to build internal capacity and enhance the range of services that can be provided within the Territory.

Nunavut Health Insurance Plan

The *Act* governs who is covered by Nunavut's Health Insurance Plan and the payment of benefits for insured medical services. The Nunavut Health Insurance Plan is administered by the Department on a non-profit basis. Insured hospital services are provided in Nunavut under separate legislative authority - the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act*.

Eligibility

Eligibility for the Nunavut Health Insurance Plan is briefly defined under section 3(1), (2) and (3) of the *Act*. The Department also adheres to the *Interprovincial/Territorial Agreement on Eligibility and Portability*.

Every Nunavut resident is covered by, and is entitled to, insured health services with standard terms and conditions. A resident means a person who is lawfully entitled to be, or to remain, in Canada, who makes his or her

home in Nunavut and who is ordinarily present there but does not include a tourist, transient or visitor to the Territory.

Applications are accepted for health coverage and supporting documentation is required to confirm residence. Eligible residents receive a health card and a unique health care number. Coverage generally begins the first day of the third month after arrival in the Territory. However, first-day coverage is provided in a number of circumstances (e.g. newborns whose mothers or fathers are eligible for coverage).

Members of the Canadian Forces and inmates of a federal penitentiary are not eligible for registration. These groups are granted first-day coverage upon discharge. Due to an amendment to the *Canada Health Act*, and subsequent changes to the Nunavut's *Medical Care Act* through *Bill 53 – An Act to Amend the Medical Care Act,* effective April 1, 2013, RCMP members are eligible for coverage in Nunavut.

As of March 31, 2013, there were 35,317 individuals registered under Nunavut's Health Insurance Plan, which is an increase of 276 from the previous year.

Insured Physician Services

The *Act*, section 3(1), and Medical Care Regulations, section 3, provide for insured physician services in Nunavut. The term "insured physician services" refers to all services rendered by medical practitioners that are medically required and are included in the Nunavut Health Insurance Plan's fee schedule of insured benefits which can be found in the Medical Care Regulations. Where the insured service is unavailable in Nunavut, patients are referred to another jurisdiction to obtain the insured service. No new services were added or deleted to the listing of insured services in 2013/2014 The *Nursing Act* allows for licensure of nurse practitioners in Nunavut; this permits nurse practitioners to deliver insured physician services in Nunavut.

Physicians must be in good standing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons (Canada) and be licensed to practice in Nunavut. The Department's Professional Practice Division, located in Kugluktuk,

administers the registration and licensing process for Nunavut physicians through a Medical Registration Committee.

The following is a comprehensive list of insured categories as per Nunavut's Medical Care Regulations. Services provided under these categories are considered insured if the medically required diagnosis and/or treatment is provided in territory or outside of the territory.

Anesthesiology	Obstetrics
Cardo-Thorasic and Vascular Surgery	Ophthalmology
Dermatology	Otolaryngology
General Practitioner	Orthopedics
Gynecology	Pediatrics
General Surgery	Plastic Surgery (not cosmetic)
Internal Medicine	Psychiatry
Neurology	Radiology
	Urology

Visiting specialists, general practitioners and locums, through arrangements made by each of the Department's three regions, also provide insured physician services in territory.

The following in-territory specialist services were provided under the visiting specialists program: ophthalmology, orthopedics, internal medicine, otolaryngology, neurology, rheumatology, dermatology, pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatry, oral surgery and allergist. Visiting specialist clinics were held depending on referrals by Nunavut physicians and availability of specialists.

Uninsured Physician Services

Only services prescribed by, and rendered in accordance with, the *Act* and regulations, and the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act* and regulations, are insured.

All other services, including physician services that are not medically necessary, are considered uninsured. Services provided under the Workers Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) and any other federal or

territorial legislation are not insured under the Nunavut Health Insurance Plan.

Insured Services Provided in Canada (Outside of Nunavut)

The *Act*, section 4(2), prescribes the benefits payable when insured medical services are provided outside Nunavut, but within Canada.

Nunavut has physician reciprocal billing agreements with all provinces and territories (with the exception of Quebec, where physicians bill directly for fee for service). These agreements provide payment of insured services on behalf of eligible Nunavut residents receiving insured services outside of the Territory.

In 2013/2014, a total of $7,601,887was paid for physician services provided outside of the Territory.

Insured Services Provided outside Canada

The *Medical Care Act*, section 4(3), prescribes the benefits payable when insured medical services are provided outside Canada. When NU residents become ill and require a health service while travelling for pleasure or business, insured physician services are paid at rates equivalent to those paid had the service been provided in Nunavut.

In 2013/2014, a total of $1087.20 was paid for physician services provided outside of Canada.

In 2013/2014 there were no patients medically referred outside of the country for health services.