GNWT Disability Strategic Framework Summary

Note: This summary is provided as a guide we can use to understand the direction the GNWT is taking to understand and address disability from 2017-2027. The official "NWT Disability Strategic Framework" has not yet been released; therefore, even though this is a general summary of the Framework, we ask that you keep this information confidential.

Document Purpose

- **What is the purpose of the Strategic Framework?**
    - The purpose of the GNWT Disability Strategic Framework is to provide a comprehensive and contemporary perspective on disability for the GNWT to use in guiding program development and legislation for the next ten years. The Strategic Framework aims to set out a 10 year shared vision for all GNWT departments to operate under.

Framework's Outlined Vision/Values/Goals

- **GNWT 10-year vision**
    - The GNWT's vision emphasizes a territory that is characterized by equity, accessibility and inclusion, and participation of people with disabilities.

- **Core values**
    - The values outlined in the framework align with the GNWT's 10-year vision. They are: (1) Equity, (2) Inclusion and Accessibility, and (3) Participation
    - All of these values are situated in "all aspects of economic and social life in the NWT"

- **Strategic Framework's goals**
    - Person and family-centered support
    - Inclusion and accessibility (removing barriers to participation)
    - Awareness, education, and training (to change attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding disability)
    - Coordination, evaluation, and reporting (across GNWT departments)

Framework's Perspective on Disability and Disability Issues

- **Disability is a complex issue**
    - The Framework acknowledges that a universal definition of disability does not exist and that defining disability is difficult because of the heterogeneity of the disability community.
    - The Framework adopts the World Health Organization's definition of disability (International Classification System), which understands disability to be a spectrum of ability for all people that is dynamic. Disability is seen as the collective product of an individual's body, personality and environment ("bio-psycho-social model").
    - The Framework presents a number of models of disability that outline the importance of recognizing the impact that a person's social and physical environment plays in the experience of disability. As well, the models progressively call on us to acknowledge that people with disabilities face structural inequality, meaning that disability is a human rights issue.

- **Disability is an important issue**
    - Disability is important because it impacts all people in society. The experience of disability is not just felt by a disabled person-- families, caregivers and larger social networks are also impacted.
    - The framework recognizes that disability is important for three reasons: (1) disability impacts the individual, (2) disability impacts families/caregivers, and (3) disability demand drivers mediate disability.

- **Disability impacts the individual**
    - Having a disability means that a person faces barriers to participation in "aspects of social and economic life"
    - Having a disability influences a person's ability to participate in their community, have a job and reach their potential
    - The barriers that a person faces are caused by a combination of personal (i.e. one's impairment/personality) and environmental factors (i.e. attitudes, inaccessible architecture)

- **Disability impacts of families/caregivers**
    - Supporting a family member with a disability can challenge family quality of life. This is exacerbated in situations where families need to support an individual across the lifespan.

    - The framework uses a case study of supporting an individual with an intellectual disability across the lifespan to show that the following areas are challenged by lifelong care:

- Wellbeing of primary caregiver (increased strain)
- Financial wellbeing (increased strain)
- Family interactions (increased strain)
- Community interactions (increased isolation)
- Wellbeing of individual with disability (compromised in strained family environments)
  - The framework outlined key protective factors that should be enhanced to improve quality of life of families providing lifelong care:
    - Instrumental and emotional support from family, friends, and community
    - Access to social supports
    - Parental partnership
    - Opportunities to see the family member with a disability be successful
    - Family income
    - Parental education

- **The need for disability support is mediated by disability demand drivers**
  - Disability demand drivers (things that cause disability) mediate the prevalence of disability in the NWT. The Framework asserts that disability demand drivers should be explored further to understand what level of support is required by people in the NWT, and to predict the number of people who will experience disability in the future.
  - Demand drivers include:
    - Chronic health condition (including addiction)
    - Aging population
    - Increasing life expectancy
    - Accidents and injuries
    - Birth defects
    - Developmental disorders