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BENEFITS INCREASED FOR DISABLED, SENIORS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

WHITEHORSE – Persons with disabilities and seniors receiving social assistance will see an improvement in their quality of life, with a 100 per cent increase in their territorial supplementary allowance (TSA).

Health and Social Services Minister Peter Jenkins today announced that the TSA will increase from \$125 per month to \$250 per month.

“Social assistance is intended to balance the responsibility of the government to provide for the basic needs of our more vulnerable citizens and families, with opportunities that promote independence and attachment to the workforce,” Jenkins said. “For some of our folks that is not possible; they need additional assistance in addressing extraordinary costs they are faced with by virtue of their situations.”

The territorial supplementary allowance was originally introduced to provide additional benefits above the basic social assistance rates to those individuals who were considered to be possibly excluded from full-time employment in the labor force, including those with disabilities and seniors who were on social assistance.

The minister said that an internal review of the social assistance program found that benefit enhancements to these two groups was a priority. Other social assistance rates still remain among the highest in the country.

In addition to the increase to the TSA, the government is also introducing an annual earned income exemption of \$3,900 for persons who qualify for the TSA.

“This means that these individuals will be able to take on jobs and not lose their benefits as long as they do not earn more than \$3,900 in a year,” said Jenkins. “It is important for people to work, to interact with others and not live in isolation. But we didn’t want them to not take that opportunity for fear of losing their benefits. This gives them both the benefit of the financial support and the benefit of being part of a work community.”

The total cost to the government for these new changes is expected to be approximately \$306,000 per year.

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