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Asked by: John Main, MLA (Arviat North-Whale Cove)

Asked of: Hon. George Hickes, Minister of Health

Number: 55-5(2)

Date: November 7, 2019

Subject: Community Health Centre Closures

1) With respect to the time frame December 2018-October 2019:

a. On how many occasions during each fiscal year were Community Health Centres closed during regular business hours to non-emergency patients?

Response:

Total Number of Closures and Reduced Services*	
Baffin	135
Kivalliq	177.5
Kitikmeot	282
*This estimate based on availability of data at the time the response was prepared.	

Closure is generally understood as emergency services only, whereas a reduction in services occurs when the facility is open during its usual hours; however, the health centre is not able to provide the full suite of programming which usually means that only emergency services and high or at risk programming are maintained. The occurrences of emergency services only are usually due to limited staffing, medevacs, increased night calls, or weather.

The Department of Health has been piloting a tracking system for closures and reduced services in health centres. It was however determined that this system needed to be refined. Health is currently working on finalizing standardized definitions of reduced services and closures. This would help make the tracking system more consistent across the territory. Although Health recognizes that the data provided may not accurately depict the actual occurrence rates in all communities, the overall reporting has improved since last year. For instance, the Baffin region did not previously track the same information in all communities. It should also be noted that the increase in numbers does not mean that there was an increase in closures and reduced services from last year; rather, it reflects the increase in reporting.

b. In which community or communities did the closures occur?

Response:

Emergencies occur in each community and at times the health centres are closed or offer limited services for that reason. For instance, most communities will experience some reduction in services during staffing shortages.

Please see the table on page 3 for a breakdown per community.

Table A: Reported Number of Times Health Centres have had Closure or Reduced Services

Community	# of Times Reduced Services & Closures
Baffin	
Arctic Bay	10
Cape Dorset	12
Clyde River	17
Grise Fiord	4
Hall Beach	8
Igloolik	24
Kimmirut	15
Pangnirtung	20
Pond Inlet	18
Qikiqtarjuaq	5
Resolute Bay	2
Total	135
Kivalliq	
Arviat	38
Baker Lake	34
Chesterfield Inlet	5
Coral Harbour	17
Rankin Inlet	4
Naujaat	13
Sanikiluaq	48
Whale Cove	18.5
Total	177.5
Kitikmeot	
Cambridge Bay	69
Gjoa Haven	17
Kugaaruk	73
Kugluktuk	54
Taloyoak	69
Total	282

b. What was the approximate length of each closure?

Response:

When there is an emergency that keeps numerous health centre staff on the job for extended periods of time, staff are required to have a rest period to ensure the safety and quality of care provided and ensure compliance with the union contract. Closures are based on these circumstances and are not anticipated to last 24 hours or longer. Closures are often related to a combination of a reduction in the level of staffing and emergency incidents in a community.

There are some exceptions including the Government of Nunavut Holiday Closure.

Reduced services are often due to reduced staffing levels and typically range from a couple days to a couple of weeks.

c. What was the primary reason for each closure?

Response:

The primary reason is reduced staffing levels. This would most often represent those closures or reduce services for greater than 24 hours.

As explained above, when an emergency occurs that requires extended nursing services (e.g., increased night calls, medevacs, etc.), this has a short-term impact on the level of service available to the community while nurses obtain rest in order to resume safe provision of services. This type of closure would most likely be less than 24 hours.

The health centres are also required to close to emergency services only when it is dictated by weather closures as outlined by GN policy.