

## **Role of PHAC in the regions in supporting emergency health services and access to PPE**

- The role of PHAC in the regions in supporting emergency health services and access to PPE differs by region.
- In the Northern Territories, the territorial governments are the primary provider of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and health and public health services including emergency health services. The territorial governments have contractors that provide medevac services, and regularly procure PPE. During COVID, their normal suppliers have cancelled many of the territories routine and additional PPE orders.
- When there is a community need for PPE (First Nations or otherwise) for health purposes, the communities can request PPE from their Territorial department of Health. They will assess the request and determine if it is an appropriate use of PPE and supply as required and as appropriate. For non-health purposes, if there is a deemed need for PPE the community should request it from the territories emergency management organization. The territories have established committees looking at non-health PPE requests.
- If Territorial health departments requires additional PPE and it is an urgent request, they can put in a request for assistance (RFA) to PHAC through the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile.
- For longer-term needs, each jurisdiction in Canada (provinces and territories) have joined in on a bulk procurement order which is allocated as it arrives on a per capita basis. There was recently a review of the allocation model and each of the territories will now receive a 12 week supply of PPE that covers their entire jurisdiction based on their modeling and then will received ongoing PPE shipments on a per capita but slightly modified basis.
- In certain cases, for example with certain ISC funded health or social services programs in the North, ISC may also be able to fill requests from communities for PPE. ISC (South) has their own stockpile. ISC also has participated in the bulk procurement process. ISC (North) and PHAC (Northern Unit) work closely together in rare cases where PPE requests are received from the communities directly to the Federal Government so that they can be triaged appropriately.
- In the North, PHAC has a role as a partner and enabler of public health capacity-building, including through federal value-add from the provision of technical expertise, surveillance support, and in supporting the territories with support in emergency preparedness and response
- The territories have made great strides in recent years, but continue to have health human resource gaps and lack of basic infrastructure in many communities. The impact of these gaps are apparent in the lack of progress on key public health indicators that continue to show high rates of suicide, obesity, and substance use and abuse, as well as high rates of respiratory infections such as tuberculosis. In addition, overcrowded housing continues to be a challenge. In the pandemic context, these existing problems may be exacerbated as scarce health human resource capacity is directed to new pressures.
- During the pandemic waves, some healthcare workers are no longer able to work at more than one facility which means that locum staff may not be able to travel north as they usually do each year.

- There may be less medical travel south during a pandemic, in these cases there may be additional needs for specialists in the North
- The Northern Unit of Regional Operations liaises with the territorial governments to remain informed of their evolving needs, and works with them on the preparation of requests to NESS or OFMAR (Operational Framework for Mutual Aid Requests) i.e. to seek additional health human resources. The Northern Unit via their Northern Regional Emergency Coordination Centre supports the territories by linking territorial responses to national responses and providing additional guidance or supports as necessary and also acts as a mechanism to support situational awareness for senior level decision makers in PHAC as well as provides situational awareness to the Health Portfolio Emergency Operations Centre
- The liaison role that is provided by Northern Unit also supports access to federal technical advice that might not otherwise be available within the territory. The Northern Unit supports situational awareness and two-way information flow with each territory on supports available, as well as the development of plans, protocols and systems through training, capacity building and best practices exchange with each territory. We also act as a liaison to support other government departments and provide situational awareness and can provide a window to Territorial health.