



February 19, 2024

Ms. Janet Pitsiulaaq Brewster  
MLA Iqaluit-Sinaa  
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut  
926 Sivumugiaq Street  
Iqaluit, NU  
X0A 3H0

Dear Ms. Brewster,

Thank you for your questions on the topic of suicide prevention during the 2023 Fall Sitting. Suicide prevention is a pressing issue that deserves attention and open discussion in the Legislative Assembly, and I appreciate your continued focus on supporting families and communities impacted by suicide. I understand the weight and importance of this matter and know it's a sensitive and deeply personal issue for many Nunavummiut. As you touched upon in your questions, there continues to be a sense of urgency and the need for further action on suicide prevention in Nunavut. Please know that my Department is working hard to respond, put in place additional supports, and work with Partners to meet the needs of Nunavummiut as we face this crucial challenge.

Your request regarding the declaration of a Public Health Emergency has been given careful consideration. Following your request, I undertook to meet with cabinet colleagues, departmental staff, and the Chief Public Health Officer to give this matter full consideration. The resulting recommendation is to not declare a public health emergency on suicide at this time. This is both because of the way emergencies are addressed, and the need to find the most effective strategy and actions to prevent suicide in the territory. While a Public Health Emergency would allow for some additional measures (for example, the ability to access private property), these additional measures would not necessarily help to address and decrease rates of suicide in Nunavut.

Additionally, while this type of declaration may draw even more political and media attention to suicide prevention, there is concern that this could take focus away from needed actions. There have been previous declarations on the issue of suicide in Nunavut, such as declaring a "public health crisis" in 2015. Previous action plans on the issue have made some progress but not enough. Declarations and public statements are



If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out. I'm open to any specific suggestions, questions, or information requests you might have on this important topic.

Matna,



Hon. John Main  
Minister of Health  
Minister responsible for Suicide Prevention

CC: Hon. P.J. Akeeagok, Premier of Nunavut  
Ms. Aluki Kotierk, President, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated  
Opal McInnis, Chairperson, Embrace Life Council  
Andrew Blackadar, Chief Superintendent, Commanding Officer, RCMP V Division  
Megan Hunt, Deputy Minister of Health