

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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# Bill 144

**An Act to enact the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019**

**Ms J. Monteith-Farrell**

**Private Member's Bill**

1st Reading      November 19, 2019

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



## EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill enacts the *Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019*. The Act requires the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee. The committee's mandate is to make recommendations for improving the facilitation of reasonable access to health services for people in Northern Ontario by means of reasonable, realistic and efficient reimbursement for travel costs. The committee is required to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including, at minimum, the stakeholders specified in the Bill. The committee is required to report its recommendations to the Minister. The Minister is required to inform the Assembly of the recommendations that he or she will implement.

**An Act to enact the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019****Preamble**

The *Canada Health Act* declares that “the primary objective of Canadian health care policy is to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers”.

The Northern Health Travel Grant helps people get to the healthcare they need. The program provides financial support for eligible applicants to travel to their closest medical specialist or ministry-funded health care facility. However, many people in Northern Ontario are unhappy with the program’s operation. In particular, they are dissatisfied with inadequate customer service, insufficient coverage and low rates of reimbursement. Improving the Northern Health Travel Grant will help Ontario meet a key objective of the *Canada Health Act* for Northern Ontario residents.

Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

**Definition**

1 In this Act,

“Northern Ontario” means the districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming.

**Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee**

2 (1) The Minister of Health shall, within 60 days after this Act receives Royal Assent, establish an advisory committee to be known as the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee in English and Comité consultatif des subventions aux résidents du Nord de l’Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales in French.

**Composition**

(2) The committee shall be composed of persons that the Minister believes will make useful contributions to the committee’s work, including,

- (a) recipients of Northern Health Travel Grants; and
- (b) health care providers working in Northern Ontario.

**Same**

(3) The Minister shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the composition of the committee reflects the diversity of the residents of Northern Ontario and, in particular, includes,

- (a) women;
- (b) Indigenous people;
- (c) members of racialized groups;
- (d) persons with disabilities;
- (e) seniors; and
- (f) persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

**Remuneration and expenses of committee members**

(4) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation prescribe remuneration and payment of expenses for the committee members.

**Mandate**

3 (1) The Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee’s mandate is to make recommendations for improving the facilitation of reasonable access to health services for people in Northern Ontario by means of reasonable, realistic and efficient reimbursement for travel costs.

**Same**

(2) In particular, the committee shall inquire into the following matters respecting the Northern Health Travel Grant and may make recommendations about them:

1. Ensuring the rates of reimbursement reflect actual travel and accommodation costs incurred by persons required to travel to receive health services.
2. Enhancing service standards for communication with applicants.
3. Enhancing service standards for timeliness of the assessment of claims.
4. Broadening the types of health services for which travel costs are reimbursed.
5. Introducing pre-payment for costs, in particular for repeat visits to health care providers.
6. Introducing direct payment to providers of lodging and transportation.
7. Introducing payment for accommodation expenses incurred by a travel companion.
8. Simplifying and modernizing the process for proving expenses, including introducing electronic submission of receipts.
9. Ensuring the rules and policies relating to the Northern Health Travel Grant are reviewed.

**Consultations**

(3) In carrying out its mandate, the committee shall consult with all relevant stakeholders, including, at minimum, the following:

1. Primary care providers, including the following:
  - i. Community Health Centres.
  - ii. Aboriginal Health Access Centres.
  - iii. Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics.
  - iv. Family Health Teams.
2. The Ontario Medical Association.
3. The Northern Ontario School of Medicine.
4. The Association of Ontario Midwives.
5. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.
6. The Canadian Institute for Health Information.
7. The Ontario Autism Coalition.
8. Each public health unit in Northern Ontario.
9. All other provincial health agencies, including the following:
  - i. Cancer Care Ontario or its successor.
  - ii. Local Health Integration Networks in Northern Ontario or their successors.

**Report**

(4) On or before the day that is six months after the committee is established, the committee shall report its recommendations to the Minister.

**Implementation of Advisory Committee's recommendations**

**4** On or before the day that is 90 days after the Advisory Committee reports its recommendations to the Minister, the Minister shall inform the Assembly of the recommendations that he or she will implement.

**Commencement**

**5 This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.**

**Short title**

**6 The short title of this Act is the *Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019*.**