

FOR RELEASE
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Government, hospital collaborate to increase access to continuing care/acute care beds

WHITEHORSE—Working together, the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, doctors and nurses have developed a plan to address hospital bed shortages.

This plan, developed collectively, will free up hospital beds, create 10 new continuing-care beds, and alleviate staffing challenges. It will reduce pressures on the hospital, staff and patients while the new Whistle Bend facility is under construction. The Yukon government is budgeting up to \$5 million for the plan.

"All parties have been working diligently on ways to alleviate the increased demands on both the hospital and on continuing-care beds," Premier Darrell Pasloski said today. "The Whistle Bend facility is the long-term solution. Taking these steps will improve the situation until the time that vital facility is up and running."

Yukon's 193 continuing-care beds are full, and individuals who cannot be maintained at home through Home Care Services have been accessing hospital beds. This has resulted in some postponed surgeries and increased pressure on hospital staff, as a significant number of acute-care beds are occupied by patients awaiting placement in long-term care.

Minister of Health and Social Services Mike Nixon said the partners have identified five key areas that will improve the situation for all.

"We are immediately increasing home care, with greater support available on evenings and weekends to augment hours of complex care," Nixon said. "In addition, continuing-care staff will now supplement care and support to long-term care patients in hospital through programming. These changes will better enable hospital staff to focus on acute-care patients."

The biggest aid will be the reopening of a 10-bed unit in Thomson Centre currently occupied by departmental and hospital staff.

"Relocation of staff will begin immediately," Nixon added. "The space does require minor renovations, and we anticipate that these beds will be available for occupancy by October."

"We welcome the government's commitment and support as we work to ensure Yukoners receive the best possible care," Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees chair Craig Tuton said. "For our team, these are significant measures because we can expect to see a reduction in the next three months in the number of patients in hospital awaiting long-term care, and the opening of additional continuing care beds in two years will bring us to a more manageable level on an ongoing basis."

The Yukon government has also committed to helping WGH create four 'holding beds.' This measure does not increase number of beds, but does mean fewer patients are held in emergency while awaiting admission for treatment and recovery.

The Government of Yukon opened Birch Lodge in February 2016, adding 10 beds to continuing care; the opening of the new McDonald Lodge in Dawson increased the bed count there by four, from 11 to 15.

The new 150-bed continuing care facility in Whistle Bend will open in early 2018.

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