

# HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

## SPRING 2024 Session Notes

HSS HOT TOPICS		Joint Note
1	Accomplishments – HSS	
2	405 Alexander <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports</li> <li>• Continuous improvement Steps</li> <li>• Available Supports</li> <li>• Coroner Inquiry into 405 Alexander Deaths</li> <li>• Low Barrier Approach</li> <li>• Connective Transfer Payment Agreements</li> </ul>	
3	Budget – HSS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FTE Summary</li> <li>• Substance Use Health Emergency Funding</li> <li>• Supporting the Future of Health and Wellness</li> <li>• Yukon Hospital Corporation Funding</li> <li>• Special Warrant 2023-2024 Supplementary Budget</li> </ul>	
4	Clinics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre (Bilingual Health Centre)</li> <li>• Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre</li> <li>• Vaccine Clinic Contract</li> <li>• Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic</li> </ul>	
5	Community Wellness Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Wellness Planning</li> </ul>	
6	Cultural Safety and Humility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to Date</li> </ul>	
7	Emergency Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Change Impacts on Health</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuations</li> <li>• Red Cross</li> <li>• Klondike River Flood After Action Engagement</li> </ul>	HSS role Fires & Floods

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8	<b>Health Human Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Human Resources Strategy</li> <li>• Department of Nations Defence's Canadian Forces Health Services</li> <li>• Health Human Resources Steering Committee</li> <li>• Retention Bonuses</li> <li>• Manager nursing bonuses</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Bursaries</li> <li>• Internationally Educated Health Professionals</li> <li>• Foreign Credential Recognition Program</li> <li>• India Internationally Educated Health Professional Recruitment</li> <li>• Licensing</li> <li>• Letter of Intent with Nova Scotia</li> <li>• Physician Assistants</li> <li>• Nursing Home Attendants</li> </ul>	
9	<b>Health and Wellness Yukon (PPF)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Health Transformation Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Legislation</li> <li>• Staff Allocation for Shāw Kwä'ą</li> <li>• Staff Transitions and Union Engagement on the Health Authority Transition</li> </ul>	
10	<b>Joint Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intercommunity Travel</li> <li>• SART</li> <li>• Sexualized Assault Response Team in communities</li> </ul>	
11	<b>MAID</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	
12	<b>NGO Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Funding</li> <li>• Agreement Management</li> <li>• Yukon Shelter Facilities</li> <li>• United Way Society of Yukon and the 211 Helpline</li> </ul>	

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14	<b>Physicians</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims &amp; Billing</li> <li>• Collaborative Care</li> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Fee-for-Service</li> <li>• Find a Primary Care Provider Program</li> <li>• Locums</li> <li>• Mayo Community Health Centre Staffing</li> <li>• Medical Director</li> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding</li> <li>• Watson Lake Physician Contract Termination</li> <li>• Yukon Medical Association Negotiations Strategy 2024 Member Study</li> </ul>	
15	<b>Safer Supply and Prescribing (Opioids)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding Safer Supply</li> <li>• Prescribing Authorities</li> <li>• Opioid Treatment Services</li> </ul>	
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36	<b>Medical Travel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Ambulance Program</li> <li>• Including Fertility Treatment in Medical Travel</li> <li>• Residences</li> </ul>	
37	<b>Specialized Medical Treatments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs for Rare Diseases</li> <li>• Hemodialysis</li> <li>• Spirometry</li> <li>• Oxygen</li> <li>• Trikafta</li> <li>• Drug Shortages</li> <li>• Ozempic Shortages</li> </ul>	<b>We listen to Yukoners</b>
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58	<b>Disability Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individualized Supervisory Care (Caregiver Benefit)</li> <li>Disability Services Redesign &amp; Putting People First (PPF)</li> <li>Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)</li> </ul>	
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66	<b>MEDITECH Expanse and Digital Health Strategy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditech Expanse</li> <li>• Digital Health Strategy</li> <li>• System Security</li> </ul>	
67	<b>Hospital Corporation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity</li> <li>• Clostridium Difficile Outbreak</li> <li>• Ernst and Young Report</li> <li>• Funding Breakdown between 2023-24 Supplementary Budget 2 and 2024-25</li> <li>• Accreditation</li> <li>• Discharges</li> <li>• Emergency Room</li> <li>• Mental Wellness Unit</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Surgical Services planning</li> </ul>	

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### Community and Primary Care:

- Worked closely with the Francophone community to open the **Centre de santé Constellation Health Centre** in Whitehorse (November 2022).
  - A Yukon-based physician was recruited to the Centre de santé Constellation Health Centre (December 2023).
  - The Clinic is staffed with 5 bilingual employees.
- Opened a new **walk-in medical clinic** in Whitehorse to provide accessible and essential non-urgent health care services (December 2023).
- Launched the **ColonCheck screening program** (March 2017).
- Introduced a trial **home health monitoring program for Yukoners living with COPD** (January 2017) to assist with monitoring their health from their homes and communities.
- In April 2023, **Emergency Medical Services** moved to the Department of Health and Social Services to enhance the Yukon's healthcare system by making it more integrated and collaborative.
- **Midwifery:** Approved the *Midwives Regulation* and standards of practice (April 2021) and passed the *Midwifery Integration Amendments Act* to allow Registered Midwives to work to their full scope of practice (fall 2022).
  - The Yukon Midwifery Program is expecting to resume full services and begin the intake of new clients starting in February 12, 2024, for application from pregnant individuals before 20 weeks gestation.
  - Birth services are expected to resume in July 2024 for the program's initial clients.
- Launched **Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services** (May 2018).
  - Provided funding to Blood Ties Four directions to purchase and equip the **outreach van** (March 2019).

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- Released the first **Opioid Action Plan** (November 2018).
- Opened four **Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Hubs** to service Yukon communities (spring 2018). Hubs opened in Watson Lake (March 2018); Dawson City (April 2018); and Carmacks and in Haines Junction (April 2018).
- **Free naloxone** kits become available (February 2017). Today, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides nasal and injectable naloxone, and training to pharmacies, communities, partners, and the general public.
- Provided funding to **Queer Yukon to hire a health care navigator position** to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners by removing barriers and helping to identify pathways to care (November 2022).
- Joined the national **Roots of Hope** suicide prevention initiative (September 2021).
- Opened a **Supervised Consumption Site** in Whitehorse (September 2021) with Blood Ties Four Directions and expanded services to include **inhalation** as a method of consumption (May 2022) and 7-day per week access as of January 2024 with extended hours from 10:30 am to 9:30 pm.
- Hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses to increase bed availability through **Withdrawal Management**.
- Assumed responsibility for the Referred Care Clinic in 2019, which has expanded to include 6 prescribers and a team of Registered Nurses, social workers, outreach workers Licensed Practical Nurses and people with lived experience.
- Expanded access to Opioid Treatment Services from the Referred Care Clinic to 405 Alexander and Blood Ties Four Directions

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- Expanded access to a safer supply of opioids to include fentanyl patches and hydromorphone tablets for people living with opioid use disorder.
- **Preventative treatments:** Publicly funded Shingrix and PrEP (January 2021), and increased eligibility for the HPV vaccine (April 2017). In 2022, the **second annual CanAge Adult Vaccination Report** noted that the Yukon was the most improved Canadian jurisdiction (February 2022) for enhancements to the territory's vaccination program.
- Launched the **Sexualized Assault Response Team** initiative (March 2020).

### Continuing Care / Seniors:

- Released the **Aging in Place: Action Plan** (September 2020).
  - All of the 56 recommendations are either operational, in progress, or in development.
- 22 actions are operational, including:
  - integrated intergenerational programming with pre-school and school-age children in long-term care homes;
  - connected seniors with technology literacy training in partnership with Yukon Learn;
  - finalized a new agreement to recruit seniors for the tutoring program offered by Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon; and entered into an agreement with l'Association franco-yukonnaise to provide seniors' specific information and programming to French speaking Yukoners.
  - implemented a virtual exercise program, available to seniors enrolled in the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
  - established an Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee;

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- maintained high-quality infection control practices in long-term care homes;
- opened Wind River Hospice at Whistle Bend Place;
- implemented the Shine a Light on Dementia program to provide education and training to support caregivers (available in both French and English);
- developed a new Rural End-of-Life Care program which offers direct funding to Yukoners in rural communities who have a progressive, life-limiting illness and are at end-of-life;
- engaged Yukoners in a review of the Travel for Medical Treatment Program;
- completed a service evaluation to ensure that Senior Services and Adult Protection Services are effective and accessible;
- expanded the Handy Bus service in Whitehorse to offer seven days per week of service and funding provided for the operational costs of a second bus implemented best practices for ongoing vaccination schedules for seniors and Elders, such as publicly funding Shingrix for all Yukoners 65 – 79 years old, offering the Fluzone High Dose vaccine to eligible long-term care residents, and ensuring long-term care residents were among the first Yukoners eligible for COVID-19 boosters.
- In a **National Institute on Ageing jurisdictional review** of the new National Long-Term Care Service Standard that assessed the delivery of safe, reliable and high-quality long-term care across Canada, the Yukon ranked second, meeting 100 of 117 standards (July 2023).
- Entered into an agreement with **Alzheimer Society of BC** to collaborate on expanding dementia services (April 2023).
  - This includes the launch of the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline for Yukoners across the territory in need of support including

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information on dementia, resources available and support groups. The helpline can be reached at 1-888-852-2579, Monday to Friday, between the hours of 10am and 8pm (September 2023).

- Yukon caregivers of people living with dementia can also access virtual caregiver support groups (December 2023).
- Working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop Yukon-specific online dementia care resources to be available by March 31, 2024.
- Expanded the **Community Day Program** at Whistle Bend Place (April 2021).
- Established a **First Nations Advisory Committee** to review policies and provide input into services.
- Partnered with the Yukon Housing Corporation to support the development of **Normandy Living**, which officially opened in December 2022.
- **Renovated Thomson Centre** to add ten additional long-term care beds (March 2018).
- Introduced the **respite and reablement** unit at Thomson Centre (October 2018).
  - In 2023, the unit continued to surpass the goal of having clients return home (greater than 80%) and achieve their self-determined reablement goals (greater than 85%).
- Opened and staffed **Whistle Bend Place** (September 2018).
  - Launched the Neighbourhood Staffing Model, to support an increase in nursing hours of care/resident/day (2023)
- Reopened 12 long-term care rooms at Copper Ridge Place (January 2023) after temporarily supporting the Child Development Centre in that space following building wide-renovations and successfully recruiting additional staff.

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- Significant functional and aesthetic environmental improvements at Copper Ridge Place (2023):
  - better access and shopping experience for residents at the Kopper Kettle store
  - enhanced outdoor spaces
  - use of a temporary wall tent for increased cultural programming
- Increased collaboration and support to Alexander MacDonald Lodge in Dawson City from Whitehorse-based long-term care homes, including:
  - sharing of staff to support leaves
  - scheduled visits of specialized support staff.
- Began a nursing staffing stabilization initiative to ensure residents continue to receive high-quality care while also actively supporting the health and wellbeing of staff through more sustainable shift coverage. The first month saw a significant decrease in overtime burden on nursing staff (November 2023).
- Leveraged technology and collaboration with the French Language Services Directorate to bring virtual 'Interpreters-on-Wheels' into the long-term care homes to improve communication with residents for whom English is not their first language (2023).
- Restarted regular integrated intergenerational programming with pre-school and school-age children (2023)
- Provided the option of traditional meals to residents of all the long-term care homes, including regular global substitutions of local game meat for commercially available meat (2023).
- Reinitiated the first complex wheelchair seating clinic for Yukoners since the COVID-19 pandemic (2023)
- Provided funding to the Yukon Council on Aging for the **Seniors Information Centre** to provide up-to-date information to Yukon Seniors



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on all relevant seniors' Federal, Territorial and Municipal programs and services.

- **Demonstrated a commitment to reconciliation and honoured the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation** by reading each call to action, as outlined in Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Videos of the calls being read were posted on the Department of Health and Social Services' Facebook page for 94 days leading up to September 30, 2022, and used to initiate discussions about culturally safe and appropriate care with staff and residents of the Yukon's long-term care homes (June 2022).
- Yukon Native Language Centre youth have begun to participate with Elders in long term care homes to speak traditional languages (2023)

### Insured Health:

- Expanded the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program to include **alcohol use disorder** to provide coverage for Naltrexone and Acamprosate (April 2023).
- Enhanced the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits and Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits programs by introducing a **Biosimilars** policy (March 2023).
- Permanently funded **Continuous Glucose Monitors** for all Yukoners living with type 1 diabetes, and **Flash Glucose Monitors** for Yukoners living with type 1 diabetes over the age of 18 (October 2020).
- In partnership with the Yukon T1D Support Network, we collected public input towards the development of a type 1 **diabetes strategy**.
- Launched the **Yukon Dental Program** on January 4, 2023, to provide \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- In partnership with the Yukon Medical Association, the Find a Primary Care Provider program was launched (November 2019).

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- In March 2023, the program was expanded to provide matches with Nurse Practitioners.
- Became a national leader in providing access to **gender-affirming care services** (2021) and completed regulatory amendments to allow Yukoners to receive health care insurance coverage for gender-affirming care that is provided through private facilities (December 2022).
- **Medical travel:** Doubled the medical travel subsidy and indexed it to inflation; removed gateway cities; and introduced drop boxes to submit medical travels forms and receipts at Whitehorse General Hospital and the Whitehorse International Airport.
- Work is underway to introduce a new pharmaceutical markup and cap, and continue to work to further integrate pharmacists into our health care system. Supported expansion of pharmacists' scope to allow pharmacists to deliver some vaccines, prescribe for minor ailments, extend prescriptions, and deliver controlled substances, amongst others (June 2022).
- **Trikafta**, a drug for cystic fibrosis, added to the Yukon's Drug Formulary for coverage (October 2021).
- Reached a new three-year agreement with the **Yukon Medical Association on the next Memorandum of Understanding**, which included a new Attachment and Attraction program (October 2022). This agreement will work to increase Yukoner's access to primary and specialty care, while supporting physician's operating costs. The agreement also saw the creation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Learning Program and a commitment to end help end systemic racism and discrimination in the Yukon's health care system; and a commitment to work with Yukon First Nations, health system partners and providers to support collaborative maternity and early years care.

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### Social Supports/ Family and Children:

- Matched federal funding to the eight **Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs** and provided funding to the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop prenatal and infant supports (November 2021).
- Completed amendments to the **Child and Family Services Act** which came into force on November 30, 2022.
- In partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations launched the **Cultural Connections Project** (February 2022) for Yukon First Nations and Indigenous children in out-of-home care.
- Aligned **Children's Disability Services and Adult Disability Services** in 2016 to facilitate a lifespan approach to providing supports and services.
- In 2018, Disability Services opened **Aurora House**, a group home for three women living with FASD.
- In 2019, Disability Services opened **Max's Place**, a group residence based on a harm reduction model for three adults living with FASD.
- Increased direct operating grant funding to **Early Learning and Childcare Centres** (February 2018) for the first time since 2008.
- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan** released in September 2019.
- With the Council of Yukon First Nations and First Nations governments, committed to the **Honouring Connections** initiative (December 2019) to address systemic over-representation of First Nations children in the child-welfare system, advance reconciliation, and promote reunification with family, community and culture.
- Provided Pioneer Utility Grant recipients for the 2022 calendar year with a one-time 10% top-up payment, which was distributed in February 2023.

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## Accomplishments

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- Provided \$808,000 for the **Yukon Seniors Income Supplement** to provide monthly inflation relief payments between April 2023 and March 2024.
- Worked with our partners to equip all Yukon schools with free menstrual products and installed dispensers for free menstrual products in several Government of Yukon public washrooms.
- Increased access to emergency shelter facilities through the provision of low-barrier, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate emergency shelter and drop-in services at **405 Alexander** since 2019, as well as opening the **men's shelter in Dawson City** with Tron'dek Hwech'in in 2019.
  - Transferred the operations of 405 Alexander (October 2022) to Connective in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- As part of strengthening downtown safety in Whitehorse, a Library Outreach Worker will provide library patrons with access to services and support.
- The Government of the Yukon released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan (December 2023), a living document completed in partnership with community partners and summarizes the actions taken to date and future actions to help shape a safe, supportive and thriving downtown sector.
- The Government of the Yukon provided support in operationalizing a Council of Yukon First Nations led mobile downtown outreach initiative to provide after-hours and weekend supports.

### Yukon Hospital Corporation:

- Developed an **Ophthalmology** wait time strategy with the Yukon Hospital Corporation (January 2019).
  - Cataract assessment wait times reduced to four months.
  - 870 cataract surgeries were completed between 2019 and 2020.

# Session Briefing Note

## Accomplishments

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- 450 cataract surgeries were completed in 2021.
- Launched and expanded the **Orthopedic Program** at Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - Introduced two resident orthopedic surgeons and supported the program to access a third surgeon with services provided by a series of locums.
  - Completed the first in-territory hip replacement surgery (November 2021).
- Providing funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to start construction on a new **Mental Wellness Unit** (previously known as the Secure Medical Unit) in spring 2023.
- Launched **1Health** in Yukon Hospitals (December 2021). Commenced work and engagement on a **Digital Health Strategy** to support with addressing the strains on our health care system.
- Began collaboration on the **Bridge-to-Home** quality improvement initiative to improve care transitions for patients from hospital to home and community with support from Healthcare Excellence Canada and the British Columbia Patient Safety and Quality Council (October 2022).

### Other:

- Conducted a **Comprehensive Review** of the Yukon's health and social care system (November 2020).
  - Accepted the Independent Expert Panels' 76 recommendations in the **Putting People First** report (August 2020).
  - Released the first Putting People First Annual Report on November 23, 2022.
  - The Second Annual Report was released on December 12, 2023, with 89% of the recommendations reported as being operational or in progress.

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- To date, 18 actions are operational, and 50 actions are in progress.
- We have commenced work on developing Health and Wellness Yukon.
- Established a **cultural safety team** within the Department of Health and Social Services to advance a coordinated approach to cultural safety within the health and social care system, consistent with the recommendations in the Putting People First report (May 2023) Hiring is ongoing.
- Through discussions between HSS and YFN leadership, a **Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Health** was established to guide the implementation of *Putting People First* and the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon (July 2023).
- The Minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health appointed executive members to a Health Transformation Advisory Committee to **implement** priorities and direction on the development of Shäw Kwä'a (**pronounced SHOW – KWA - AH**)/Health and Wellness Yukon and continuing to improve health and social services in the Yukon.
- Established a **Health Human Resources Steering Committee** to respond to the local, national and global health human resource crisis.
  - Signed a **letter of intent with the Government of Nova Scotia** to collaborate on the recruitment, retention and training of health care professionals, including the credentialling and licensing of internationally educated health professionals (July 2023).
  - Announced a **\$6M nurse retention and bonus package** for Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical Nurses employed by the Government of Yukon (December 2022).

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- The Government of Yukon, Yukon Hospital Corporation and health partners released a **Health Human Resources Strategy** with 25 actions spanning five key pillars aimed to boost delivery of care and improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals (December 2023).
- Introduced departmental guidelines for formal and informal employee recognition to inform the ways gratitude can be consistently demonstrated based on the principles of intentionality, integrity, equity, proportionality, transparency and fiscal responsibility to acknowledge work and contribute to employee retention (2023).
- As part of the response to the **Substance Use Health Emergency** declared on January 20, 2022, we have worked with all levels of governments, Yukon First Nations, and non-government organizations.
  - In 2022, we have hosted **two Mental Wellness Summits** (February and September 2022) that were attended by over 550 participants in February and nearly 350 participants in September.
  - We have expanded **safer supply**, including by improving access to safer supply for clients through Opioid Treatment Services and by working with physicians and Nurse Practitioners.
  - Worked with our partners to increase access to **nasal and injectable naloxone** in all Yukon communities, as well as fentanyl testing kits.
  - Installed Brave alarms at 405 Alexander in single bathrooms and shower stalls.
  - On July 25, 2022, we launched a new **Overdose Outreach Team** through the Referred Care Clinic to provide harm reduction education, system navigation and connection to services related to substance use, and outreach to individuals at high risk of opioid overdose or those who have recently overdosed.

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- Launched the mobile crisis team, **Car 867**, in partnership with the RCMP (November 2022) to respond to calls related to mental health and suicide.
- Launched the **Put the Person First** campaign, the **Support is Here for You** campaign (November 2022), and a **Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services** campaign (Winter 2023-2024) to increase awareness of substance use supports.
- Supported youth wellness through the **Youth Roots: Photovoice** project (April 2023).
- Continue to support **land-based healing** initiatives, including:
  - The Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation;
  - A week-long on-the-land camp for families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in partnership with the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society;
  - Hives for Watson Lake in partnership with Liard First Nation;
  - Worked with Tr'ondék Hwéch'in to provide a land-based camp for youth.
  - Hosted a family camp called Strengthening Family Connections in August 2023.
  - Partnering with the Nelson Project for a three-day cultural learning camp in December 2023.
  - The Government of the Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations launched a Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund. (November 2023).



**Session Briefing Note**  
**Accomplishments**

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**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services [Date approved]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services [Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with Connective, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations and our community partners to take action to improve health and safety and enhance supports for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We are committed to helping people who are experiencing homelessness to access the services they need as easily as possible.
- 405 Alexander Street, also known as the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, offers a low-barrier, 24/7 shelter and supportive living units, and a range of drop-in services for unhoused and street-involved adults.
- 405 Alexander is operated by Connective, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- Our government provides Emergency Medical Services, Home Care, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach services at 405 Alexander.
- Several non-governmental organizations are also onsite to provide services, including Blood Ties Four Directions.
- We are committed to working in partnership with Connective, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations and our community partners to meet the needs of the community and 405 Alexander guests.

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**Key facts:**

- 405 Alexander Street has capacity for 54 emergency shelter guests per night and has 20 permanent supportive housing units operating under housing first principles.
- In 2022-2023, there was an average of 45.5 emergency shelter guests staying at 405 Alexander per night and 19.4 people per month living in Housing First Units.
- From April 1 to December 31, 2023, there was an average of 42.3 emergency shelter guests per night.

**Reports:**

- In May 2023, two independent reports were released evaluating the shelter's effectiveness, its impact on the community and the clients it serves. Both were completed with our involvement and support.
  - Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Evaluation, commissioned by the department of Health and Social Services and prepared by Vink Consulting; and
  - A Path Forward, prepared by House of Wolf & Associates at the request of the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- Findings within the two reports were informed by discussions with clients, shelter staff and community partners.
- Responding to these findings and the recommendations from the 2020 Community Safety Plan requires the involvement of all our partners, as well as multiple departments and levels of government.
- We are committed to ensuring the safety of Yukoners and are meeting with the City of Whitehorse, First Nations governments, Yukon businesses, Connective, the RCMP and the federal government to discuss next steps.

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- Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Evaluation by Vink Consulting determined that 405 Alexander is reaching people who are homeless and street-involved, outlines key outcomes for guests and finds that it is providing benefits to shelter guests, supportive housing unit residents and the government that outweigh its costs. The report found that:
  - Most guests are satisfied with the services provided and the shelter is meeting needs of clients, though some unhoused women are choosing other emergency accommodation options, such as couch surfing.
  - Clients should be more supported to find permanent housing and more could be done on culturally appropriate approaches.
  - For every dollar spent on this shelter, the social return on investment amounted to \$2.11. The analysis found that for every dollar invested in a Housing First program, the estimated social return would be higher, at \$2.90.
  - Despite 38 per cent of shelter guests reporting that their substance use has increased as a result of accessing the shelter, the report also states that this is more likely a result of homelessness and an overall nation-wide increase in substance use and negative impacts on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A Path Forward assessed the safety and perspectives of community wellness. The report recommended:
  - The purpose of 405 Alexander Street should be determined and communicated.
  - Decentralizing some aspects of service delivery.
  - Safe gathering spaces inclusive of women, LGBTQ2S+ people and sober clients should be considered.

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- Education and engagement events such as town-halls, community walkthroughs and social media campaigns would increase a cross-demographic sense of community, understanding and empathy.
- Increasing opportunities for cultural connection with land-based components that are within and outside of 405 Alexander is vital for First Nations guests.
- Harm reduction initiatives such as a Managed Alcohol Program should be considered for substitute therapy programs.
- Implementing a downtown-Whitehorse Community Safety Officer program via partnerships with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council would increase visibility and access to justice and safety services.
- Mitigating opportunities for unsafe gatherings and intimidating behaviour through the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design approach can lead to a reduction in fear and improve quality of life for the community. The approach includes three principles: Natural Surveillance or high levels of observation, Natural Access Control or decreasing the opportunity of crime, and Territorial Reinforcement by creating a sense of pride in a space.
- Implementing a case management approach and data management system between key partners may reduce gaps within overlapping systems and increase efficiency and access to intervention programs.

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**Continuous improvement steps:**

- Along with Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations, we are working on a plan to enhance the area outside 405 Alexander as recommended in A Path Forward using an environmental design approach.
  - On September 28, 2023, in partnership with Connective, we removed the high back benches from outside 405 Alexander as part of a broader environmental redesign intended to support our work to enhance the area.
  - Further assessment in responding to concerns about garbage and area cleanliness is underway. We are in discussion with Connective on the use of “sharps containers” for the safe dispensing of objects such as needles.
- In August 2023, Connective undertook a public awareness campaign: Facing Forward: Portraits of Resilience in Whitehorse to draw attention to the stories of guests and staff working for Connective and showcase the role of 405 Alexander.
- Recommendations from the Community Safety report that we received in 2020 have been operationalized. Highlights include:
  - Improved the provision of women-only services.
  - Ensured that the Shelter has sufficient and appropriate guidelines and processes in place related to occupational health and safety.
  - Explored and implemented new ways of engaging with neighbours.

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- Increased access to culturally-based programs and services and adequately trained staff to address diverse and culturally sensitive needs.
- Continued engagement with clients with lived experience to ensure they have a role in matters affecting programming and operations.
- Employing people with lived experience to work with shelter clients.

**Available supports:**

- We provide a range of on-site supports including Emergency Medical Services, Home Care, social supports, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach services.
- Emergency Medical Services has expanded their Paramedic Specialist Clinic hours at 405 Alexander to at least 20 hours a day.
- Emergency Medical Services supports the Mobile Paramedic Response Unit at 405 Alexander Street, which is equipped to provide mobile drug testing services and other health care services.
- Opioid Treatment Services from the Referred Care Clinic for guests of 405 Alexander have expanded to offer prescriber coverage two days a week. This approach has been very successful in increasing engagement in Opioid Treatment Services.
- We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to increase awareness of the Supervised Consumption Site among guests of 405 Alexander and have expanded the services and hours of operation onsite and at the outreach van.
- Guests have access to harm reduction education and supplies, including Naloxone kits, and connection to appropriate support and services.

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- Guests have access to social workers and nursing support.
- Indigenous users have access to cultural support and programming, through the Council of Yukon First Nations support of a full-time Cultural Support Worker.
- Staff at 405 Alexander receive training in recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of an overdose.

**Coroner Inquest into 405 Alexander Deaths:**

- A coroner's inquest into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Hager and Darla Skookum at 405 Alexander began April 8, 2024 and concluded April 25, 2024 with the jury issuing eight recommendations.
- Our government is committed to support the Coroner's Office as they conduct this work, review the Coroner's findings once they are available, and to implement the jury's recommendations.
- Community outreach services and other organizations visit the shelter on a regular basis, providing supports to their clients that are guests at the shelter.

**Supports during inquest:**

- The Government of Yukon worked with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation to support community members who attended.
- The Council of First Nations provided food, safe spaces and counselling services for Yukon First Nations for the duration of the inquest.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services worked with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk



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First Nation to provide support in their communities and in Whitehorse that was responsive and respectful to community members' needs.

- We temporarily increased supports in Old Crow, Pelly and Carmacks on the days requested by Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation.
- We increased availability of in-person and virtual Rapid Access Counselling across the territory for the duration of the inquest.
- This support was available for existing clients, and anyone in need of increased support during this difficult time.

**Jury Recommendations**

- The recommendations are on the following topics:
  - Completing a policy review within six months,
  - Completing a training review within six months,
  - Staffing priority for Indigenous people and those with lived experience,
  - Evaluation of Connective's compliance with the first three recommendations through the department of Health and Social Services' transfer payment agreement,
  - Independent review of any future deaths at the shelter,
  - Meetings with families of victims within two months and the provision of counselling for all staff within six months,
  - Developing an improved complaint and communication process, and
  - Creating safe spaces for women and LGBTQ2S+ users of the shelter.

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- We are committed to providing an implantation plan once the recommendations have been assessed.
- The Government of Yukon will meet with Connective to begin work on implementing the recommendations the week of May 6, 2024.

**Low Barrier Approach:**

- The Government of Yukon and our partners at 405 Alexander Street are dedicated to offering person-centered, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed care and services to build and support the resilience of all Yukoners.
- 405 Alexander is a low barrier facility that is non-punitive, non-judgmental and meets people where they are with dignity, respect and compassion.
- Guests of 405 Alexander are not required to be sober or fall into a certain demographic to receive essentials services and support.
- The intention of a low barrier approach is to remove systemic barriers that may inhibit people from accessing food, medical and mental health services, social support and a safe space for overnight shelter.
- Harm reduction is a vital part of a low barrier facility. Harm reduction measures provide opportunities for clients to access life-saving Opioid Agonist Therapies, medications for alcohol use disorder, support for safe substance use, and other health care measures that can treat the implications of substance use.
- A low barrier approach does not mean a no barrier approach. Effective barriers encourage a culture that communicates and protects the physical, emotional, and cultural safety of all shelter guests and staff.

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**Connective Transfer Payment Agreements:**

Whitehorse Emergency Shelter TPA

- TPA began October 1, 2022 and expires March 31, 2025.
- Monitoring and Evaluation
  - D3.1 YG will provide the Recipient with the existing Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework reflecting the program outputs and immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes and the indicators by which those outputs and outcomes will be monitored on an on-going basis.
  - D3.2 The Recipient may amend or revise the Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework, with prior approval from YG.
- We have established regular senior leadership meetings with Connective to occur at least monthly. These meetings discuss TPA expectations as well as a variety of operational discussions.
- Connective works closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations to inform and deliver culturally appropriate programs and services throughout 405 Alexander.
- We are working on implementing a more detailed and robust incident reporting process for all of our programs.
- We are working with Connective to uphold expectations of the TPA to build a positive relationship with the community through public engagements, public meetings and sharing updates and statistics.
- In Spring 2024, HSS will begin a review of the housing first program in both the wood street location as well as 405 to evaluate its effectiveness and offer opportunities to improve.

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Housing First (Yukon Review Board 1) TPA

- TPA began April 1, 2022 and expires March 31, 2025.
- 16 units are managed by Housing First and operated by Connective. Tenants are assessed by the Yukon Review Board.
- Evaluation Questions: To demonstrate effectiveness, show progress on program objectives and understand where change is needed, this performance measurement framework is designed to support program evaluation based on the following questions:
  - Is the program providing housing stability for individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness?
  - Is the program improving the well-being of tenants, including physical and mental health and substance use management?
  - Is the program improving tenants' independence and self-sufficiency?
  - Does this program work well with the population group? Are the interventions provided by the program meeting the needs of the tenants?
  - Are tenants engaging with staff?
- Reporting
  - D3.1 The Recipient shall provide YG with additional Project or financial information or statistics upon request.
  - D3.2 A unionized organization must ensure that a copy of their current collective agreement is provided to their funder, and that they keep the funder updated to any changes or addenda to said agreement.

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Disability Services (Yukon Review Board 2) TPA

- TPA began October 1, 2022 and expires March 31, 2025.
- Two residential services are managed by Disability Services and operated by Connective. Tenants are assessed by the Yukon Review Board.
- Reporting
  - D3.1 The Recipient shall provide YG with additional Project or financial information or statistics upon request.
  - D3.2 A unionized organization must ensure that a copy of their current collective agreement is provided to their funder, and that they keep the funder updated to any changes or addenda to said agreement.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Budget**

# **Spring 2024**

## Health and Social Services

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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that Yukoners are supported by an accountable government that is fiscally responsible while investing in the health and wellbeing of Yukoners.

### **Key messages:**

- Our government is committed to ensuring Yukoners have access to the services and supports they need.
- We are providing a responsible and transparent budget that responds to the health and social care priorities of Yukoners.
- We are working to address long-term pressures related to a growing and aging population and the rising costs of delivering services.
- Healthcare in the Yukon is consistently above the average national cost per patient at around \$15,696 compared to the Canadian average of \$8,740 as per the most recent forecast by the Canadian Institute for Health Information.
- In 2023 alone we saw an increase of 1,000 residents with more growth projected for the future.
- We work with our health and social care partners, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, to meet core funding needs and improve access to services and supports.
- Alongside other provincial and territorial governments, we continue to work with the federal government to discuss funding, so that we may advance the Yukon's priorities.

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**Spring 2024**

## Budget

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### Key facts:

- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$594.4M** (\$594,372,000) in the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M.
  - This is an increase of **\$82.37M** (\$82,370,000) over the 2023-24 Main Estimates and represents an increase of 16.1%.
- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$9.4 M** (\$9,386,000) for Capital expenditures.
  - This is a decrease of **\$6.5M (\$6,547,000)** over the 2023-24 Main Estimates and represents a decrease of **41.1%**.
- We are prioritizing health infrastructure planning and are investing more than \$5 million in the new Mental Wellness Unit and Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Since 2018-19, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased from **\$400.7M** (\$400,705,000) to **\$594.4M** (\$594,372,000) in 2024-25.
  - The 2018-19 figure does not include the restatement of Emergency Medical Services, which was transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services in April 2023. Emergency Medical Services had an operations and maintenance budget of **\$9.8M** (\$9,797,000) in 2018-19.
- In 2024-25, a total of **\$58.1M** (\$58,108,000) in funding is available through the Canada Health Transfer.
- We anticipate sizeable recoveries this fiscal year through federal transfers, including **\$10.0M** (\$10,000,000) through the Territorial Health Investment Fund, **\$7.3M** (\$7,270,000) through the Working Together Funding, and **\$2.5M** (\$2,530,000) through Aging with Dignity.

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**Budget**

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**FTE Summary:**

	Health and Social Services FTEs					
Fiscal Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total FTE Count</b>	1,413.90	1,419.13	1,526.53	1,677.3	1,573.4	1,616.4
<b>Change from Prior Fiscal Year</b>	<b>61.45</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>107.40</b>	<b>63.50</b>	<b>(103.90)</b>	<b>43.0</b>

\*(FTE counts prior to 2021-22 do not include re-stated positions from EMS)

- In the 2024-25 Main Estimates, there are **1,616.4 FTEs** compared to **1,573.4 FTEs** in 2023-24 There is an increase of **43.0 FTEs**.
  - There is an increase of **15.0 FTEs** to support the continuation and expansion of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy response including:
    - An increase of **5.5 FTEs** to support the implementation of the Managed Alcohol Program
    - An increase of **3.5 FTEs** to further support the Supervised Consumption Site.
    - An additional **6.0 FTEs** to work on the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, advance Community Wellness Plans, work on Planet Youth, and support overall implementation.
  - There is an increase of **8.0 FTEs** to staff the new Walk-In Clinic.
  - There is an increase of **22.5 time-limited FTEs** to support Putting People First, health system transformation, the health authority, as well as the development and implementation of the Health Human Resources Strategy and Cultural Safety.
- Over recent years, FTE changes have been driven by major initiatives such as:



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- In 2019-20, staffing 405 Alexander and the second phase of Whistle Bend Place.
- In 2021-22 and 2022-23, FTE increases were temporary staff related to the COVID-19 response and vaccination rollout.
- In 2023-24, FTE increases were primarily related to the Substance Use Health Emergency response.

**Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:**

- We are providing an increase of **\$1.2M** (\$1,201,000) to support the continuation of services under the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy including work to enable Community Wellness Plans.
- There is an increase of **\$4.3M** (\$4,347,000) to support the Land Based Healing Fund recoverable through the Working Together Funding.
- We are providing **\$1.3M** (\$1,266,000) to launch the Residential Managed Alcohol Program.
- There is an increase of **\$781K** (\$781,000) for the Supervised Consumption site operated by Blood Ties Four Directions, allowing for the expansion of hours to 7-days per week with extended hours between 10:30 am to 9:30 pm.

**Supporting the Future of Health and Wellness**

- The main estimates provide an increase of **\$8.6M** (\$8,559,000) to Health and Wellness Yukon for the work to stand up the health authority as per recommendation 1.2 of Putting People First.
  - This Spring 2024, The Government of Yukon will be tabling the necessary framework legislation, as developed by the Health Transformation Advisory Committee, to enable us to stand up a health authority, marking a large step forward for this initiative.

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- The increase of **\$2.3M** (\$2,330,000) is provided to support the continuation of work on addressing the health human resource shortages experienced across the health and wellness sector.
  - This funding, recoverable from Canada, will be used by the Government of Yukon and partners such as the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon University and the Yukon Medical Association to increase training, recruitment and retention programs to grow and strengthen our workforce.
  - This includes \$120K (\$120,000) to the Yukon Medical Association for the continuation of the physician recruiter position.
- The increase of **\$29M** (\$29,313,000) will provide funding for our legislated health services. This includes:
  - An increase of **\$11.2M** (\$11,184,000) for out-of-territory hospital claims;
  - An increase of **\$10.3M** (\$10,310,400) for physician claims;
  - An increase of **\$5.0M** (\$5,049,600) to support the Pharmacare Program;
  - An increase of **\$1.2M** (\$1,233,000) dedicated to Medical Travel growth and;
  - An increase of **\$1.5M** (\$1,536,000) provided for the Collaborative Care Program

**Yukon Hospital Corporation Funding:**

- The Government of Yukon continues to fully meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Year over year we provide funding through core and additional Transfer Payment Agreements commensurate with the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation as determined by the Yukon Hospital Corporation's board.

# Session Briefing Note

**Spring 2024**

## Budget

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- Since the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the Main and Supplementary budgetary exercises.
- We maintain an ongoing cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as we respond to new or emerging pressures and assess funding needs.
- Over the past year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve our reporting processes, enabled by the review work completed by external parties in fall 2023.
- During the 2024-25 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$110.4M** (\$110,413,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M, as well as **\$5.1M** (\$5,071,000) in Capital expenditures for a combined total of **\$115.5M** (\$115,484,000).
  - This budget responds to growth in hospital and surgical services costs and higher costs associated with responding to health human resource challenges.
  - We are continuing to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation on any additional impacts related to their current collective bargaining process.
- Since 2018-19, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Corporation's O&M funding from \$68.2M (\$68,198,000) to \$110.4M (\$110,413,000), which represents an overall increase of 61.9%.
- While most funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon Hospital Services O&M and Capital budgets, additional funding is also provided through other channels.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we provided a total of **\$123.3M** (\$123,256,000) to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including O&M funding, as well as funding through other Transfer Payment Agreements. This does not include capital funding.

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**Budget**

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Core Funding	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Core Agreement Funding	85,555,000	\$88,295,000	\$93,637,000
TPA and other revenue outside core	4,091,762	\$5,409,584	TBD
COVID	7,663,000	N/A	N/A
Patient Revenue that flows through HSS	3,477,223	\$2,853,786	TBD
Supp. 1 2023-24			\$17,112,000
Supp. 2 2023-24			\$12,507,000
<b>Total Funding and Revenue via HSS</b>	<b>100,786,985</b>	<b>96,558,370</b>	<b>123,256,000</b>
YHC Revenue	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Revenue Outside of HSS	9,011,015	\$9,229,630	TBD
<b>Total YHC Revenue</b>	<b>109,798,000</b>	<b>105,788,000</b>	<b>123,256,000</b>

**Special Warrant 2023-24 Supplementary Budget**

- The Government of Yukon recently issued a special warrant under the *Financial Administration Act* to provide budget authorization to allow for the allocation of **\$25M** (\$25,000,000) under the 2023-24 second supplementary budget to meet financial commitments primarily related to growth within insured health services and other legislated programming.

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- Throughout the 2023-24 fiscal year, we experienced growth in our legislated programs due to factors such as our growing and aging population and the rising costs of delivering services.
- The Government of Yukon occasionally makes use of special warrants to provide spending authority while the legislative assembly is not in session to ensure that Yukoners are accessing the services they need without delay.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Clinics**

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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to improving health care for all Yukoners and expanding access to primary health care services in the territory.

### **Key Messages:**

- We are working with our partners to expand access to both primary care services and mental health services across the territory.
- In December 2023, we opened the Whitehorse Walk-in clinic to provide Yukoners with greater access to primary care providers and same-day services.
- In November 2022, we opened the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre to increase the number of Yukoners connected with a primary care provider and to provide Francophone Yukoners with better access to French-speaking providers.
- We continue to work to connect every Yukoner to a primary care provider as per recommendation 2.2 of Putting People First.

### **Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$2.34M** for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
- As of March 12, 2024, there have been a total of 2,515 eligible applications for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
  - 1,223 patients received their first appointment and have been connected with a primary care provider.
  - 93 others have been offered access to the clinic but have not yet completed their intake form and/or signed their service agreement.
  - 155 individuals have either declined services or discontinued services because of relocation.

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- At present, the clinic is prepared to take on 2,250 patients but is taking a triaged approach to ensure that those requiring immediate access receive it.
  - Patients who are not being given immediate access to the clinic are notified of their waitlist status and will be called as soon as possible.
- Once fully staffed, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre staff complement will include, 1 Clinic Manager, 5 Nurse Practitioners, 1 Registered Nurse, 1 Licensed Practical Nurse, 2 Medical Office Assistants, 1 Social Worker and 1 full-time equivalent contract Physician.
- As of March 2024, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre is staffed by 3 Nurse Practitioners, 2 Medical Office Assistants, 1 Licensed Practical Nurse, 1 Registered Nurse, 1 Social Worker, 1 Administrative Assistant and 1 Clinic Manager.
  - The clinic is supported by a part-time contract Physician who provides consultation services and patient care.
  - Recruitment for 2 additional Nurse Practitioners and the equivalent of 1 FTE Physician (expected to be split between multiple physicians) is underway.
  - There are currently 6 bilingual staff members with recruitment underway for additional bilingual full-time and AOC staff.
- In 2024-25 we budgeted **\$1.43M** to support the operations of the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
- Once fully staffed, the Walk-in Clinic staff complement will include, 1 clinic manager, 2 nurse practitioners, 2 licensed practical nurses, 3 medical office assistants, 1 social worker and 1 full-time equivalent contract physician.

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**Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre:**

- The current and target staff complements for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre are:

Position	March 2024	Target
Clinic Manager	1	1
Nurse Practitioners	3	5
Registered Nurse	1	1
Licensed Practical Nurse	1	1
Medical Office Assistants	2	2
Social Worker and	1	1
Contract Physician	1 part time	1 full time

- The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre first opened its doors on November 7, 2022. The clinic is located at 9010 Quartz Road.
- In addition to delivering high quality health and wellness services in both French and English, the clinic provides an additional access point for primary health care services.
- Registered patients can access primary health care services by booking an appointment in advance, or by accessing same-day appointments that will be set aside for urgent or emerging primary health care needs.
- An application process was set up for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre to ensure that all Yukoners wanting the opportunity to obtain primary health care services have the chance to provide relevant information and give their informed consent.
- Applications are reviewed and prioritized by a team of healthcare professionals at the clinic. Acceptance or waitlist status are determined by the capacity of the clinic's primary care providers, as well as pre-established population health determinants.



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- The population health determinants include several considerations such as current attachment to a primary care provider, complexity of care needs, and their primary language and need for services in French or interpretation support, among others.
- If someone is not initially accepted, they will be added to the waitlist and notified when the opportunity for an intake is available.
- Work continues with physician partners to identify primary care providers to deliver contracted services at the Clinic.

### **Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre**

- Old Crow Health Centre is staffed with two Primary Health Care Nurses via rotation.
- Old Crow Health Centre did not have any closures or reductions in service in 2023.
  - Due to the remoteness of the community, the department works to maintain a full staffing complement at all times.
  - There are no anticipated closures or reductions in service for 2024.
- Despite delays due to the community evacuation in August 2023 and construction product delivery delays, the completion of the new Health and Wellness Centre is anticipated for April 2024.
- The development of the new Health and Wellness Centre in Old Crow is being completed in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, which helps ensure that health and social services meet community needs via an integrated poly clinic approach that is culturally safe and inviting.

### **Vaccine Clinic Contract:**

- Throughout the COVID-19 response, the Whitehorse Vaccine Clinic was based at the Yukon Convention Centre.
- As of September 27, 2023, the vaccine clinic has relocated to its new location on the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Ogilvie in the NVD Place Mall.

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- This move supports efforts to integrate COVID-19 vaccinations into our ongoing health service operations while supporting our immunization team to offer vaccines at a location that meets our programming needs.
- The clinic is a satellite location for the Whitehorse Health Centre and is operating as the Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place.
  - The Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place is offering COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccinations, as well as offer appointments for publicly funded vaccines for people over the age of five.
  - Routine publicly funded vaccines and programming continue to be offered at the Whitehorse Health Centre (9010 Quartz Road), with a focus on patients under five years of age.
  - Yukoners are encouraged to contact a pharmacy, which have COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccination appointments available.
- The lease for the space at NVD Place runs from March 1, 2023 to February 28, 2026 at a reduced lease rate during renovations and was valued at \$49,682.
  - Once renovations were completed and the space occupied on October 1, 2023, the full rental rate of \$324,730 annually came into effect, for a total value of \$374,412.50.

#### **Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic:**

- In January 2023, as part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement, we committed to improving the delivery of and access to health care across the territory.
- The Department of Health and Social Services opened the Walk-in Clinic on December 18, 2023.

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- It operated out of a temporary location at 9010 Quartz Road while its permanent home was under construction.
- Opening the new walk-in clinic in Whitehorse offers Yukoners a new access point for primary care and decreases pressures on the hospital emergency department for non-urgent medical needs.
- On April 29 the Walk in Clinic opened at its permanent location at Mah's Point.
- The clinic is serviced by physicians on contract hours and currently employs nurse practitioners.
- We continue to work with three consultant physicians and the Yukon Medical Association to identify and recruit physicians to provide primary care at the walk-in clinic.
- The clinic is open Mondays-Wednesdays and care will be provided by the interdisciplinary team, including physicians and nurse practitioners.
- Yukoners seeking an appointment are encouraged to call 867-471-0035 to check wait times and book a same day appointment.
- As of March 8, 2024, the clinic has provided care to over 750 patients.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Community Wellness Plans**

**Spring 2024**  
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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting all Yukon communities in enhancing the wellness and health of community members.

### **Key Messages:**

- Every Yukon community has unique characteristics, needs, resources, and challenges that must be considered to effectively address their health and wellness concerns.
- Community wellness represents a co-created and shared vision for healthier communities, which, when communities feel ownership of their wellness priorities and outcomes, in turn yields a healthier population and increased community involvement.
- Yukon communities will be supported in developing and implementing their community wellness plans, tailored to the specific needs of each community.
- Community wellness planning fulfills recommendation 1.4 in Putting People First that advises the Government of Yukon to partner with First Nations governments, municipal governments, non-governmental organizations and members of the public in the long-term planning of health and social services that meet community needs and are culturally safe.
- Community wellness planning also fulfills two recommendations within the Prevention and Harm Reduction areas of growth from the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. These include supporting Yukon communities in creating and implementing community wellness plans and expanding access to drug checking and harm reduction supplies.

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### **Community Wellness Plans**

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#### **Key facts:**

- A community wellness plan is a strategic framework that outlines the goals, objectives, and actions to promote the overall well-being and health of a community.
- Community wellness plans will feed into the Yukon Health and Wellness Plan, a ten-year plan focusing on improving health outcomes across the territory.
- The Health Transition Advisory Committee was given a presentation on the Community Wellness Plan and Yukon Health and Wellness Plan on December 15, 2023.

#### **Community Wellness Planning:**

- Community wellness plans aim to provide a process and mechanism for a community to provide input and direction on important health and wellness outcomes for their community and participate in health and wellness planning that takes into account all of the community assets and needs.
- Wellness is broadly defined as anything that could impact health outcomes and wellbeing and could include, but is not limited to, healthcare service provision, education, safety and justice issues and cultural initiatives.
- Community wellness planning is a comprehensive, community-led approach that is outcome-driven.
- Once clearly-defined outcomes are derived from community engagement, assessments and population-level data, priority services and infrastructure are determined for that community's health and social system.

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- We will develop community wellness plans through community engagement with health and social services providers, non-governmental organizations, First Nations governments, private sector providers and other government partners.
- First Nations are essential partners in the community wellness planning process and will be engaged with to provide input to the community wellness and territorial health and wellness plans both on a government-to-government level as well as at a community engagement level.
- All citizens of a community will have an opportunity to provide input for their local community wellness plan.
- To gather the most correct and relevant data for the community, opportunities to engage will be presented in various methods. This could include surveys, community discussions and other quality improvement methodologies appropriate to gathering different types of data.
- We aim to make the engagement process as accessible and culturally safe as possible to make sure input is properly gathered.
- The community wellness planning process is nearing completion and active engagement will begin in the coming months.
- We anticipate all communities will have a community wellness plan within two years.
- Community wellness plans will be publicly available upon completion.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Cultural Safety and Humility**

**Spring 2024**

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#### **Government Priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to embedding cultural safety and humility in the health and social system to create environments where First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples feel recognized, respected and celebrated for their cultural identities.

#### **Recommended response:**

- Our government has committed to moving forward with the recommendations in the Putting People First report. The report includes a recommendation to 'Partner with Yukon First Nations to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated approach to cultural safety and humility that prevents racism'.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working to advance a coordinated approach to embedding cultural safety and humility into the health and social service system.
- This work includes engaging with Yukon First Nations governments to prioritize actions and initiatives outlined in Putting People First for implementation.

#### **Key Facts:**

- The cultural safety team has been collaborating with the Yukon First Nations governments on:
  - The development of a Cultural Safety and Humility Strategy for the Department of Health and Social Services,
  - A "Declaration of Commitment" with a vision of what cultural safety and humility means, acknowledging the need for cultural safety and

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### **Cultural Safety and Humility**

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committing to collaborate with Yukon First Nations (published on March 8, 2024) and,

- A culturally safe complaints process.
- The cultural safety team is focusing on workforce and workplace readiness by integrating cultural safety and humility into organizational leadership, culture, and policies by:
  - hosting leadership learning events with industry cultural safety experts;
  - embedding competencies in the professional development plan for all management-level positions, to support individual and team success in creating culturally safe and welcoming spaces; and
  - engaging with employees on the development of cultural safety and humility operational standards for the Department of Health and Social Services.

#### **Work to Date:**

- Health and Social Services has been investing in embedding cultural safety and humility. Our work to date includes:
  - Many of our health workers are required to take First Nations 101 as a prerequisite to work in the Yukon.
  - Weekly Elder knowledge sharing occurs at the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Sarah Steele building.
  - A Cultural Counselling Consultant position is embedded in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
  - Continuing Care is working towards an Indigenous Relations recruitment competency to recruit First Nations healthcare professionals.
  - Continuing Care holds Monthly Sharing Circles.



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- Family and Children's Services works together with the Council of Yukon First Nations to regularly revise the Core training to ensure that appropriate cultural awareness content is provided to social workers. First Nations family support/community liaison workers are also invited to enroll in the Core training course.
- Custom training on Cultural Safety, Unconscious Bias and Anti-Racism has been developed and introduced over the last two years by the Public Service Commission and is available to all Government of Yukon employees, including health care workers. All Government of Yukon employees can also access training on Residential School Awareness and Yukon First Nations 101.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Emergency Support Services**

**Spring 2024**  
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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to safeguarding and protecting the health and safety of Yukoners during emergencies.

#### **Key messages:**

- Emergency Support Services is available to provide temporary assistance to Yukoners to access food, accommodation, transportation and other necessities during an emergency situation such as an evacuation.
- Individuals who are displaced due to fires or floods are encouraged to register with Emergency Support Services.
- We appreciate the support of staff, non-government organizations, other levels of government, and community members who provided support to Yukoners affected by wildfires or floods throughout summer 2023.
- We are grateful for the help and support of NGOs, organizations, and First Nations and Municipal governments who supported evacuees.

#### **Key facts:**

- In August and September 2023, Emergency Support Services assisted 456 evacuees from Old Crow and Mayo, as well as 32 evacuees from Yellowknife.
- Our government has entered into an agreement with the Canadian Red Cross for the period of July 2023 to March 2026 to provide support to Yukoners during emergencies.
  - The Transfer Payment Agreement with the Red Cross is valued at **\$1.35M** (\$1,345,920) between 2023-24 and 2025-26.

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### **Emergency Support Services**

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#### **Climate Change Impacts on Health**

- The effects of climate change are causing real and lasting harm to the wellbeing of Yukoners. The carbon tax helps the government of Yukon and all Yukoners reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, reducing our local and global climate impacts.
- Smoke from wildfires is linked to serious long-term and chronic health risks. Seniors, Elders, and children are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of wildfire smoke.
- We offer air purifiers for communities experiencing wildfire smoke events to mitigate the health risks of smoke exposure.
- As part of our commitments under Our Clean Future, we are working to:
  - develop a system to track climate change-related illnesses such as heat stroke, respiratory illness, and vector-borne disease;
  - provide training to health care providers to better identify and treat the physical and mental health impacts of climate change;
  - identify clean air spaces that can be used to protect public health during wildfire smoke events; and
  - track and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with health care delivery by delivering care close to home and in communities where possible.

#### **Emergency Evacuations:**

- Last summer, 302 residents of Mayo and 163 residents of Old Crow had to be evacuated from their homes and communities when wildfires threatened their communities. Emergency evacuations cause stress and disruption to the lives of Yukoners and risk the health of the most vulnerable.
- We are grateful to the community members who reached out to offer billeting and other assistance to evacuees during these difficult events.

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### **Emergency Support Services**

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- There are many ways Yukoners can support evacuees such as by donating to the Canadian Red Cross or by helping to share information about how to contact Emergency Support Services.
- In Whitehorse, Emergency Support Services stood up the Canada Games Centre to provide emergency accommodations, should the need arise.
- Clean Air Shelters were set up in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Old Crow last summer to protect residents from smoke.
- Community evacuation assistance has been issued in the amounts of \$245,232 for Mayo residents and \$131,743 for Old Crow residents as of March 1, 2024. Further assistance is expected to be issued in the coming months.
- We worked with First Nations and service providers to provide mental health and cultural supports to evacuees.
- This summer, no evacuees stayed overnight at the Canada Game Centre. We connected evacuees who registered with Emergency Support Services with accommodation through a hotel or motel.
- To ensure the safety of evacuees and appropriate emergency supports are provided, Emergency Support Services does not facilitate billeting.
  - Should an evacuee self-identify a billeting option with someone such as a family member or friend, then Emergency Support Services can work with the evacuee and the individual providing billeting to complete a billet form and receive supports and assistance for costs such as groceries.

#### **Red Cross:**

- Our government has entered into an agreement with the Canadian Red Cross for the period of July 2023 to March 2026 to provide support to Yukoners during emergencies.

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- Support is provided for up to 72 hours for food, shelter, clothing and emergency supplies if Yukoners are displaced from their primary residence due to climate change emergencies such as fires and floods.
- The program includes a Friendly Call service to connect people with trained personnel who provide emotional support, encourage healthy coping strategies, and connections to resources and existing services.
- The Canadian Red Cross will provide Emergency Support Services assistance and relief to Yukoners affected by an emergency.
- The Canadian Red Cross may provide support with areas such as registration, reception services, transportation, personal services, assistance with lodging, and support for food and clothing.

**Klondike River Flood After Action Engagement:**

- We are aware of an engagement meeting organized by the Department of Community Services aimed at gathering feedback from Klondike Valley residents who were impacted by last year's flooding.
- The department will review the After-Action Report once it is available to see how the department can support our government's work to improve our response to future emergency situations.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Health Human Resources**

**Spring 2024**

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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to building healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities using a person-centered approach to wellness to help Yukoners thrive.

#### **Key messages:**

- Health Human Resources presents one of the greatest challenges facing Canadian healthcare systems today.
- Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges in retaining, recruiting and training enough health care workers to meet demand.
- These challenges have been further exacerbated by COVID-19, and by a growing and aging population.
- These impacts are being felt here in the Yukon, and we recognize the seriousness of these shortages. Our comprehensive Health Human Resource Strategy was released on December 13, 2023.
- This intersectoral strategy was developed by a newly created Health Human Resources Steering Committee jointly led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- We are also working closely with federal, provincial, and territorial government partners to respond to this situation.

#### **Key facts:**

- We have budgeted **\$2.8M** (\$2,829,618) during the 2024-25 fiscal year for the implementation of the Health Human Resources Strategy. This includes funding to support the following initiatives:
  - **\$1.5M** (\$1,488,025) for staffing, including salary support for Licensed Practical Nurses bridging to Registered Nurses.

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### **Health Human Resources**

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- **\$321K** (\$321,593) for consulting including a physician recruiter for the Yukon Medical Association and a Policy Analyst at Yukon University.
- **\$580K** (\$580,000) for Yukon University programming including the Social Worker Degree program and the Medical Office Assistant Diploma program.
- **\$340K** (\$340,000) for travel and health professional development including nurse training and support for Indian nursing students.
- **\$100K** (\$100,000) for a Pan-Territorial Health Conference.
- Between January 2023 and February 29, 2024, the department of Health and Social Services has hired 198 nursing positions, including 53 Licensed Practical Nurses and 145 Registered Nurses.
- On December 1, 2022, we announced a **\$6M** package of retention and signing bonuses for nurses employed by the Government of Yukon. The Yukon Hospital corporation are offering similar bonuses totalling **\$3.1M** in 2023-24 and **\$2.4M** in 2024-25.
- Our government provides funding to the Yukon Medical Association for a Physician Recruiter position to support work to recruit locum and resident physicians to the territory.
- The Government of Yukon has entered into a \$3.6M agreement with Canada to fund a four-year program to streamline the entry of foreign-trained health care professionals into Yukon jobs.

### **Health Human Resources Strategy:**

- The Yukon Health Human Resources Strategy was released in December of 2023.
- The strategy provides a systemic, coordinated and informed roadmap towards a health and social services system that will meet Yukoners' current and future needs.

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- The Strategy builds on existing progress in the Yukon's health and social service sectors and includes key metrics to track progress and success, which will be reported publicly.
- The strategy is built on five key pillars which aim to boost the delivery of quality care and services and attract more health professionals to live and work in the Yukon.
  - Retain: Build and support skilled, passionate, healthy, diverse and inclusive teams.
  - Recruit: Grow and attract a passionate, engaged and qualified workforce reflective of the needs of Yukoners.
  - Plan: Collect the right data to support long-term workforce planning, identify gaps and make evidence-based decisions.
  - Innovate: Promote and implement new ways of working and learning.
  - Learn: Create more growth, training and educational opportunities for Yukoners to learn locally.
- Within these pillars are 25 actions to be implemented jointly over the next three years by the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, in partnership with the HHR Steering Committee.
- The \$2.8M we have budgeted for 2024-25 will support work on immediate priorities and allow us to move forward with key elements of the strategy, including training and education opportunities, recruiting and retention initiatives and developing supports for internationally educated health professionals to practice in the Yukon.
- Additional funding for long-term initiatives will be made available through future budgetary processes as the strategy is implemented.



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### **Health Human Resources**

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#### **Department of National Defence's Canadian Forces Health Services:**

- The Government of Yukon, with the support of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of National Defence.
- The program welcomes health professionals from the Department of National Defence's Canadian Forces Health Services Group to work in Yukon health care settings to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills between their deployments.
- Through this partnership, Canadian Forces Health Services nurses and other regulated health professionals will visit the Yukon to learn, advance and share their expertise while enhancing our health care service across the territory.
- Lengths of visits will depend upon placements for a few weeks to months at a time and the number of health professionals participating will depend on availability and interest.
- We anticipate the Canadian Forces Health Services registered nurses to start in Yukon hospitals in late April through this partnership.

#### **Health Human Resource Steering Committee:**

- The Health Human Resources Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Employees Union, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, Yukon University, First Nations, Yukon Hospital Corporation and several government departments.
- The Committee is looking at all aspects of Health Human Resources including retention, recruitment, planning, learning and innovation. They are also working to help coordinate, support and influence Health

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Human Resource work underway in their respective organizations so that it aligns with the Committee's recommendations and priorities.

- There are working groups and staff focusing on recruitment, engagement and retention, housing, licensing, internationally educated health professional integration, data and planning, training and emerging positions.
- The work of this committee aligns with the ongoing collaborative efforts of Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, which are supported by recent federal investments that identify health human resources as a shared priority.

**Retention Bonuses:**

- The retention and recruitment bonuses were implemented on December 1, 2022 and continue through March 31, 2024. Bonuses are being provided to Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical Nurses who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and performing nursing duties for the Government of Yukon.
- Government of Yukon and the Public Service Alliance of Canada/Yukon Employees' Union ratified a new collective agreement on June 6, 2023, that is in effect until December 31, 2024.
- The new collective agreement contains new nurse pay grids as well as a new retention allowance, effective April 1, 2024, for a Primary Health Care Nurse \$8,000 and Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge \$18,000.
- The Government of Yukon committed \$3.1 million for retention bonuses in 2023-24 and \$2.4 million in 2024-25.
- As of December 8, 2023, Yukon Hospital Corporation began issuing retention and recruitment bonuses to their nursing staff. These bonus packages mimic those offered by the Government of Yukon.

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#### **Manager nursing bonuses:**

- Nurse retention and recruitment incentives have been provided to both union and manager positions that require a nursing designation.
- The manager incentives mirror that of the Letter of Agreement signed by the union on November 30, 2022, for the immediate and annual retention bonus portion.
- The Letter of Agreement that outlined these bonuses covered the period from Dec 1, 2022 to March 31, 2024.
- 23 manager positions received:
  - immediate retention payment of \$8,000 for licensed practical nurses and \$15,000 for registered nurses; and
  - an annual retention payment of \$8,000 for licensed practical nurses and \$15,000 for registered nurses.

#### **Education:**

- In partnership with the Departments of Education and Economic Development, we are working with Yukon University to expand programming to support Yukoners to pursue health-related careers.
- The Government of Yukon funds Yukon University to offer a Practical Nurse Diploma.
- Yukon University offers, in partnership with the University of Regina, a Bachelor of Social Work degree. We are working with Yukon University to enhance this program to better meet the needs of Yukon and deliver a more locally based degree.
- Yukon University offers a Health Care Assistant program which provides Yukoners with the skills needed to be front-line caregivers.
- Continuing Care has supported 5 staff in moving from Nursing Home Attendants into Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse positions.

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- We will be working with Yukon University to offer a Medical Office Assistant program.
  - More Medical Office Assistants will lower the administrative burden on all health professionals.
- We are working with Yukon University to explore bridging program options where Licensed Practical Nurses can attain a Registered Nursing degree.

**Bursaries:**

- We will work to expand programs aimed at supporting students pursuing studies in health care fields and who commit to return to work in the Yukon.
- Our government currently provides funding for the Medical Education Bursary, the Nursing Education Bursary, and the Health Profession Education Bursary programs.
- Consistent with the recently released HHR strategy, these programs are under review to ensure that they meet current needs and objectives.
- During the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services has budgeted \$89,000 through the Medical Education Bursary, the Nursing Education Bursary, and the Health Profession Education Bursary programs to provide financial supports for up to 16 new recipients each year.
- In 2023-24, a total of 16 Yukoners received bursaries for studies in health care fields:
  - **\$30,000** went to six students pursuing nursing education;
  - **\$7,500** went to one medical student pursuing a family medicine residency; and,
  - **\$27,500** went to nine students in other health care professions including three students pursuing licensed practical nursing and two in nurse practitioner programs.

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- Currently, our bursary programs do not include a Return of Service Agreement that requires graduates to return to the Yukon to deliver care.
- Our government is working to expand our programs to create greater incentives for students to return to work in the Yukon.
- Yukon residents studying medicine or intending to study medicine can apply to other funding programs administered by the Canadian Medical Foundation, the First Nations Health Program at Whitehorse General Hospital, and the Yukon Foundation.
- The Government of Canada is offering a student loan forgiveness program for doctors and nurses who reside in a community with a population of 50,000 or less to entice more doctors and nurses to rural communities.

**Internationally Educated Health Professionals:**

- Internationally educated health professionals have historically played an important role in the delivery of health care in Canada. We recognize that leveraging their expertise is a priority for all governments across Canada.
- We are exploring ways to better support internationally educated health professionals to enter health professions in the Yukon.
- We are working with regulators and our federal, provincial and territorial partners to discuss physician licensing and pathways to licensing physicians, including internally educated physicians.
- Internationally educated health professionals who are underemployed and living in the Yukon can contact [HHR@yukon.ca](mailto:HHR@yukon.ca) to connect with a team who are collecting information on how best to support them.
- In 2023, we hired 15 internationally educated professionals into Nursing Home Attendant positions.

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#### **Foreign Credential Recognition Program:**

- The Government of Yukon has entered in to a \$3.6M funding agreement with the Government of Canada to deliver a four-year pilot project called the Foreign Credential Recognition Program.
- The program aims to strengthen and streamline pathways for internationally educated health professionals to enter Yukon's health and social services workforce.
  - This project is expected to run from March 2024 to January 2028.
  - This program will be jointly led by Health and Social Services and Economic Development.

#### **India Internationally Educated Health Professional Recruitment**

- Health and Social Services is working with the department of Economic Development on strategies for effective recruitment of internationally educated health professionals.
- We are finalizing an arrangement with the University of New Brunswick to add 15 nursing seats a year to their program with Manipal University in India.
- Students in this program would do practicum work in the Yukon and graduate with full accreditation and practical and cultural experience to work in the Yukon afterward.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has engaged in positive meetings with Apollo Health, which is the largest private health care provider in India.
- Apollo presents many promising opportunities for recruitment, education and technology support for the Yukon.
- Our primary focus is piloting a recruitment pathway for nurses, initially with the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

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#### **Licensing:**

- We understand that it is vital that Yukoners have access to primary health care. The Registrar of Medical Practitioners actively participates in national and cross-jurisdictional organizations and initiatives aimed at harmonizing and streamlining licensing pathways.
- We recognize that nurses are fundamental to a high-functioning health care system. We are working with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to find ways to streamline licensing for registered nurses.
- Our goal is to minimize any administrative burden that draws resources away from care while at the same time ensuring that health professionals are appropriately regulated, and Yukoners have access to safe, high-quality health care.

#### **Letter of Intent with Nova Scotia:**

- On July 26, 2023, our government signed a Letter of Intent with the Government of Nova Scotia to work collaboratively on Health Human Resources.
- Nova Scotia has adopted innovative strategies to create new opportunities to address recruitment and retention.
- Officials from both jurisdictions have developed a comprehensive set of issues on which to partner and share information.
- Meetings continue with a working level delegation are being held in Spring 2024.

#### **Physician Assistants:**

- Physician Assistants are healthcare professionals who work in collaboration with physicians and other healthcare providers under the supervision of licensed physicians.

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- There are no Physician Assistants practicing in the Yukon and at present they are not regulated to do so.
    - Physician Assistants currently practice in the public healthcare system in Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Nova Scotia and are primarily regulated via the respective provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons. Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island are advancing work to incorporate Physician Assistants into their own healthcare systems.
  - Through the Health Human Resources Steering Committee, we will continue to work with our health system partners to determine the potential for integrating Physician Assistants into the Yukon's health care system.
  - A Physician Assistant's scope of practice varies across Canada. A physician assistant can perform many assessments and skills under the delegation of a physician.
  - Typically, they conduct patient assessments, order and interpret tests, create treatments plans, prescribe medications, assist in surgical procedures and order and perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

**Nursing Home Attendants:**

- As of March 5, 2024, there are 509.05 FTEs working within the Yukon's four long-term care homes.
  - 197 of these are nursing home attendants.
- In a cross-country jurisdictional scan, Yukon's nursing home attendants receive one of the highest wages in the country.



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- The retention and signing bonuses for regulated nurses employed by the Government of Yukon help make the Yukon more competitive in recruiting and retaining nurses in a very challenging labour market.
- The Yukon's long-term care homes have amongst the highest hours of direct nursing care/resident/day in the country, with on average 4.38 hours of care provided per day, per resident. Residents are also supported by a dedicated team of recreation, rehabilitation and First Nations services workers.
- The high standards of care are made possible through an enhanced staffing level model, which allows long-term care homes to maintain capacity and operate at core staffing levels while delivering the full spectrum of services to residents, even in the face of vacancies.
- When unfilled nursing shifts bring the staffing levels below core levels, there are processes in place to share staff across houses and neighbourhoods within each long-term care home to maintain safe working conditions and essential care of residents.
- We appreciate the hard work of all healthcare staff that provide crucial frontline care to all those who need it.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations and health partners to create an effective, efficient, integrated and population centered health and social services system, based on equity and respect for all Yukoners.
- The health authority will serve as a major health service provider and contributor to the transformation of the health system.
- This government is committed to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations on the health and social services system transformation, which includes the establishment of Shāw Kwä'ą /Health and Wellness Yukon/ Santé et mieux-être Yukon.

**Key messages:**

- One of the key recommendations in Putting People First (Action 1.2) is to create an arm's length agency to manage and deliver health and social services in the Yukon – a health authority for the Yukon.
- The Indigenous name for the Yukon's health authority is proposed as Shāw Kwä'ą, pronounced SHOW – KWA – AH, and means all is well/all is good, in Southern Tutchone.
- In French, the name for Health and Wellness Yukon is Santé et mieux-être Yukon.
- We are committed to working in partnership with Yukon First Nations on the health and social services system transformation, including the establishment of Shāw Kwä'ą.
- Upon assent of the Health Authority Act, we will begin the process to develop Shāw Kwä'ą/Health and Wellness Yukon/ Santé et mieux-

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être Yukon for a complete transition. This initiative will take significant work over several years.

- Over time, we envision:
  - jointly improving the health care system with Yukon First Nations with the goal to eliminate the systemic racism that exists today;
  - every Yukoner having access to a regular care team and receiving quality services when needed;
  - services are integrated, connected and are culturally safe;
  - care is provided closer to a person's home or their community;
  - communities and people with lived experience are involved in a meaningful way; and
  - a focus on prevention, including investing in the determinants of health, including Indigenous determinants of health.
- Setting up the health authority is a complex initiative. We are going to take the time to do it right.

**Key facts:**

- In November 2018, an Independent Expert Panel was appointed to complete a comprehensive review of health and social services in the Yukon.
- The comprehensive review resulted in the Putting People First report, which was endorsed by the Government of Yukon in 2020.
- On December 12, 2023, the second Putting People First Annual Report was released, reporting that 89 per cent of the 76 recommendations were operational or in progress:

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- 18 actions are operational;
- 50 actions are in progress;
- six actions are in the initial planning phases or have yet to be started; and
- four recommendations are overarching principles or approaches for the delivery of health care.

#### **Partnerships:**

- We are committed to informing and working in partnership with other health system partners, such as the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, allied professionals and others.
- The new health authority will respect and recognize Yukon First Nations' history, governance and cultural traditions.
- In June 2023, the Chiefs Committee on Health was established to provide advice on the implementation of Putting People First recommendations and oversight of the Health Transformation Advisory Committee.
  - The Chiefs Committee on Health operates at the equivalent of the Yukon Government's Ministerial level. The committee is comprised of the following members, who were appointed by Yukon First Nations Leadership:
    - Chair and Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Pauline Frost
    - Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Barb Joe
    - Carcross/Tagish First Nation Deputy Chief Darla-Jean Lindstrom
    - Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Wolf Councilor Tanya Silverfox
- The Chiefs Committee on Health will form the Yukon First Nations' health committee once the *Health Authority Act* is in effect.

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**Health Transformation Advisory Committee:**

- In June 2023, the Health Transformation Advisory Committee was formed through recommendations from the Minister and Chiefs Committee on Health.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee is made up of the Deputy Minister of Health, the Deputy Minister of Social Services, the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and three Yukon First Nation senior officials appointed by the Chiefs Committee on Health and selected based on their experience and expertise.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee's mandate includes providing recommendations to the Minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health to create Shāw Kwä'ą and identify opportunities for health system integration and improvement.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee held its first meeting on July 26, 2023, and has since developed a Terms of Reference document and a workplan. Work is underway to establish the mechanisms necessary to stand up the authority.
  - The committee met regularly to steer policy and legislative development until the legislation was complete and tabled.
  - The committee led joint engagement on behalf of the Government of Yukon and the Chiefs Committee on Health on the development of the Health Authority Act.
- The workplan is a deliverable as per the committee Terms of Reference and is intended to be a live document that will guide the work of the committee to operationalize Shāw Kwä'ą and implement Putting People First recommendations more broadly.

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**Legislation:**

- Bill No. 38 - Health Authority Act, will serve as framework legislation to establish the governance and structure of the health authority.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee has engaged with Yukon First Nations on the proposed Health Authority Act. A two-day workshop was held in January 2024 to review and receive input on the draft bill and address any questions from Yukon First Nations.
- The conversations and questions were consistent with development to date. There was general excitement and optimism regarding the project.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee also supported the Department of Health and Social Services facilitate information sessions for many NGOs, stakeholders and other interest groups.
- A press conference announcing the tabling of the Health Authority Act took place on March 11, at the Jim Smith Building.
  - The first event was a technical briefing with members of the Health Transformation Advisory Committee, including First Nation citizens and representatives of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the department of Health and Social Services.
  - The second event was a formal press conference with Minister McPhee and Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Pauline Frost.

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### Staff Allocation for Shāw Kwä'ą :

- There are a total of 22.5 net new time-limited FTEs to support Putting People First, Health and Wellness Yukon, implementation of the Health Human Resources Strategy, and Cultural Safety and Humility.

Purpose	FTEs
Health System Transformation: Implementing PPF, Health and Wellness Yukon + Cultural safety (THIF funded)	28.5
Health Human Resources (THIF funded)	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>
Existing THIF-funded positions	(17.5)
<b>Net new</b>	<b>22.5</b>

### Staff Transitions and Union Engagement on the Health Authority

#### Transition:

- We understand that our staff have questions about the staffing changes that will occur with the implementation of the new health authority. We are prioritizing the well-being and support of our workforce as we navigate this transformation.
- We are focused on achieving a health and social system that is integrated, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist, and puts Yukoners at the center.
- This work is in its early stages. We are committed to working with staff, the health and social services workforce, our health system partners, Yukon First Nations, and others. This engagement will occur directly with staff and through union engagement.

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- Preserving and matching pay, benefits, and pensions are essential to our transformation goals. We are committed to consulting with unions and keeping staff informed as we move forward on these details.
- The legislative framework governing employment relations at Shāw Kwä'ą will remain the same as for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The Yukon *Employment Standards Act* will apply, and labour relations, including collective bargaining, will fall under the *Canada Labour Code*, section 1.
- Under the *Canada Labour Code*, successorship rights exist for all bargaining unit employees.
  - This means that employees currently represented by a union will continue to be represented by a union, and will port their existing, negotiated collective agreements, and their corresponding pension benefits and comprehensive benefits packages.
- We are also committed to honouring and protecting the rights of management staff. Every member of our team, whether frontline, support, or management, plays a critical role in ensuring we can continue to provide high-quality person-centred health care to Yukoners.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission have had regular conversations with the Yukon Employees' Union regarding Shāw Kwä'ą since fall 2023, including advance notice of all communications sent to department staff.
- In accordance with our Collective Agreement, we are committed to consulting with unions and will provide them with formal notice of consultation regarding the transfer of any programs involving bargaining unit employees when appropriate, focusing on matters such as pay, benefits, and pensions.
- The health care providers and staff currently working in the system are our greatest asset. Ensuring an effective transition of staff, including



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working closely with unions, will be one of the key activities during this interim period.

- To date, work to engage and inform staff has focused on gathering information, best practices and forming partnerships.
- Since commencing this work, we have approached health system transformation with a change management lens that recognizes the importance of building awareness amongst the workforce and supporting employees through the planning and eventual transition.
- Short- and long-term communications approaches are being developed to support this work. We continue to hold internal meetings and provide updates to the workforce as they are available.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to expanding the services of the Yukon's Sexualized Assault Response Team and Intercommunity Transportation

#### **Key messages:**

- We are moving forward across government to address public transportation and intercommunity travel.
- Work on this is an interdepartmental initiative involving Health and Social Services, Justice, Economic Development, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and Community Services.
- Work on the Sexual Assault Response Team is continuing with the addition of a low barrier travel assistance to victims accessing services or seeking safety between Watson Lake and Whitehorse.

#### **Key facts:**

- In Summer 2023, we began an engagement with communities as we work to expand Sexualized Assault Response Team services to communities.
  - We held meetings with Yukon First Nations, community services providers and victims of sexualized assault to help identify the needs of all the communities.
  - The Council of Yukon First Nations was a member of the engagement working group for the expansion of Sexualized Assault Response Team services and assisted in ensuring the engagement occurred in a culturally responsive way.
  - In fall 2023, engagement leads and Sexualized Assault Response Team coordinators visited communities to present the

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findings of the engagement it conducted with First Nations governments, Indigenous organizations, and other service providers directly back to these organizations and individuals.

- The information shared during these community visits did not include results from the engagement with victims, as the results for this engagement were not yet finalized.
- A What We Heard report was published Spring 2024
- The Sexualized Assault Response team will be returning to the communities to share results and information of the expansion of services to communities in the coming months.
- The Yukon-wide confidential sexualized assault support line is available 24/7 at 1-844-967-7275. Specific services offered in communities can also be found online at SARTyukon.ca.
- Rapid Access Counselling is available to all Yukoners – call 867-456-3838 to make a counselling appointment within 72 hours.
- Given the interdepartmental nature of standing up intercommunity travel programs, the department is working collaboratively and in coordination with partnering departments to reduce redundancy and ensure current gaps are addressed.
- We entered a short-term agreement with the Whitehorse and Watson Lake transition homes to provide low-barrier travel assistance to victims accessing services or seeking safety from a perpetrator.
  - This agreement provides funds to victims via transition homes to cover travel costs including gas, food and accommodation.
  - This initiative is receiving funding through the federal government's National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services is also working to advance a longer-term solution to enable the continuation of this transportation assistance.

#### **Intercommunity Travel:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has provided funding to the City of Whitehorse to expand the Handy Bus to operate seven days per week and is supporting the city in the purchase of a second bus.
- We have conducted a review of the Travel for Medical Treatment's Medevac Program as per recommendation 8.2 of Putting People First.
- We recognize some First Nations have established shuttle programs for use by First Nations residents.

#### **SART:**

- The Sexualized Assault Response Team (SART) is a network of partner agencies including the Government of Yukon's Women and Gender Equity Directorate, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Services, the RCMP, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Women's Transition Home.
- This Team provides coordinated services and supports to victims of sexualized assault.
- Currently the key components of SART include:
  - A 24-hour, confidential, toll-free support line for all victims of sexualized assault, including those living in communities.
  - Victim support workers are available during weekday business hours and all hours during the weekend in Whitehorse.
  - On-call physicians specially trained to support victims of sexualized assault are available at Whitehorse General Hospital.

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- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services offers rapid access counselling to all Yukoners, including those living in communities, and priority access to the Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team for children under the age of 13.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has a SART Clinical Coordinator who works in partnership with the Department of Justice's SART Victim Support Coordinator to ensure there is continuity of care and wrap-around services for victims of sexualized violence.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has staff across various programs who provide wrap-around supports and services to all Yukoners. The SART Clinical Coordinator works closely with Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to connect victims of sexualized assault with the resources and supports they need.
- Services are also available through Victim Services, community health centres and hospitals, First Nations governments, the RCMP and women's shelters or safe houses where available.
- Whitehorse SART agencies have recently signed the first SART protocol in the Yukon to make this network of services sustainable in Whitehorse and is available on [sartyukon.ca](http://sartyukon.ca).
- SART undertook cross agency training in Fall and Winter 2023, including:
  - Cultural safety and awareness for SART agencies and partners.
  - Documentation for counsellors working with victims of sexualized violence.
  - Responding to online sexualized violence.
  - Responding to 2SLGBTQIA+ victims.
  - A victim's path through the criminal justice system.

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- Over the past 12 months, we have been providing additional training opportunities to service providers.
  - Responding to Children and Youth training – approximately 140 participants across the Yukon attended.
  - Cultural Safety Training – approximately 100 participants across the Yukon attended one of four sessions.
  - Violence and Language training – 80 participants attended in Whitehorse.
- SART Services are consistently promoted throughout the Yukon. An awareness campaign for SART services is ongoing across the territory and will continue until the end of March 2024.

### **Sexualized Assault Response Team in communities**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to addressing sexualized violence in rural communities and in Whitehorse, for all Yukoners.
- The Sexualized Assault Response Team provides a safe and confidential network of services that focus on a victim's needs and choices.
- The departments of Health and Social Services, Justice, and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate are actively working with partner agencies to expand SART services into rural Yukon communities.
- The Government of Yukon and SART partners will use the What We Heard report's insights and recommendations, along with key findings from the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit+ People Strategy, to guide the work to refine and extend services.
- The adjustment in the provision of forensic kits does not signal a reduction in care for victims of sexualized assault. All community health centres

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continue to offer clinic-based care to support victims. This ensures that individuals seeking medical care in the aftermath of such an assault have access to the services they need, right in their community.

- This is not a new limitation but a clarification of existing services. Forensic care has traditionally been available primarily in Whitehorse, and our ongoing efforts are focused on evaluating how we can expand access to SART services to all Yukoners, wherever they may reside.
- On April 3, 2024, a What we Heard report was released following a 2023 summer engagement on expanding SART services to rural Yukon communities.
- The report included the following recommendations to improve services for victims of sexualized assault in the communities:
  - increase awareness of resources and services for victims of sexualized violence;
  - increase access to robust cultural and land-based healing supports;
  - provide extensive training available to service providers and volunteers that is trauma- and violence-informed and culturally safe;
  - increase the number of safe houses, shelters, service hubs and improve infrastructure for victims;
  - create reliable transportation services between communities to access services; and
  - create clear policy guidance and comprehensive training to ensure standardized protocols and procedures for Evidence Collection Kits.
- Work has begun to address previously identified issues:
  - In January 2024, we launched a campaign to raise awareness of sexualized assault and build a culture of consent and promote awareness of and increase access to resources for victims;

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- We are exploring ways to reduce transportation barriers and enhance accessibility, including expanding financial support for transportation through agreements with transition homes;
- Funds have been added to the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund so that Victim Service workers can help with urgent travel including food, gas or flights;
- SART training, that includes cultural awareness and safety, is available to service providers across the Yukon; and
- We are working with community health centres to increase the capacity for trauma and violence-informed responses.
- Sexualized assault victims, regardless of residency, are offered a range of services that can support them after a sexual assault, including referral to Victim Services, access to support workers, free legal advice, transport, counselling and medical care. These services can be offered virtually or in-person, depending on location.
  - At this time, accompaniment to hospitals and the RCMP's Specialized Response Unit are only available in Whitehorse.
- Evidence Collection Kits are available at the Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse hospitals.
  - Kits are conducted by the emergency room doctor.
  - In Whitehorse, kits are conducted by SART physicians.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]



**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to respecting and supporting Yukoners in all stages of their lives including those who choose to pursue medical assistance in dying.

**Key messages:**

- On February 1, 2024, the federal government announced that they will be delaying the expansion of MAID to people experiencing mental illness as a sole underlying condition until March 17, 2027.
- The delay was in response to concerns about whether Canada has enough trained practitioners, including psychiatrists, to assess patients and about the capacity in providing mental health and other supports for those with mental illnesses.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, through its MAID Advisory Committee, is ensuring that assisted dying services are available in the Yukon by having updated policies, practices, training and safeguards in place.
- We are actively working with providers, regulatory bodies and the federal government to ensure we can continue to meet our legal responsibility to provide access to these services.
- As MAID continues to evolve, we remain committed to keeping all Yukoners, including Yukon First Nations governments, informed and up to date on the implementation, safeguards and alternatives to assisted dying.

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)**Health and Social  
Services**Key facts:**

- MAID first became legal in Canada in June 2016.
- The Yukon has had an active Yukon MAID Advisory Committee since March 2020.
- On March 17, 2021, changes to Canada's medical assistance in dying law eliminated the requirement of a reasonably foreseeable natural death.

**Advisory Committee:**

- The MAID Advisory Committee has included Yukoners with lived experience, representatives from Health and Social Services, Justice, Community Services, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Medical Council, Yukon Registered Nurses' Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Palliative Care Physicians, Physicians who provide MAID, and a psychiatrist.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **NGO Funding**

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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting non-government organizations and other partners to provide Yukoners with access to services, supports and timely access to care.

#### **Key messages:**

- We recognize the essential role that non-government organizations play in the delivery of health and social services across the Yukon.
- Our government recognizes that some non-government organization partners have identified additional pressures resulting from COVID-19 and the cost of living. We remain committed to working with our partners to assess funding needs and programming opportunities.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to meet with non-government organizations to discuss current and future Transfer Payment Agreements.
- Non-government organizations are playing a vital role in the Yukon's response to areas such as the Substance Use Health Emergency and to supporting Yukoners experiencing housing insecurity.
- Non-government organizations are also providing a range of services, supports and programs specific to seniors, individuals living with a disability, mental wellness, health promotion, shelters and supportive living, amongst others.

#### **Additional Funding:**

- We recognize that organizations across the Yukon have questions regarding core funding and Cost of Living Adjustments.
- Representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services continue to meet with non-government organizations to understand

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their questions and concerns, including the impacts of inflation and COVID-19.

- The department continuously reviews all agreements with non-government organizations, as part of the regular Transfer Payment Agreement management cycles.
- As we review current and future Transfer Payment Agreements, we are committed to ensuring Yukoners have appropriate access to services through funded organizations.

**Agreement Management:**

- In November 2021, the Department of Health and Social Services engaged a contractor to conduct a review of the management of agreements within the Social Supports branch, which identified several key areas.
- The Office of the Auditor General of Canada's report on housing in the Yukon included a recommendation to improve the oversight of funding agreements.
- We have made significant efforts to address areas of concern and improve the management and accountability of non-government organizations, including:
  - Establishing a working group to focus on system and process improvements;
  - Advancing work to prepare a management methodology and guidebook;
  - Shifting toward more outcome focused reporting and deliverables; and,
  - Creating an Agreement Manager position dedicated to building strong relationships with the NGOs and tracking and managing agreements.

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- We continue to explore additional opportunities to improve reporting requirements for agreements to understand outcomes, including the requirement for capacity building to support the development of logic models and performance measurement frameworks.

**Yukon Shelter Facilities:**

- Our government takes seriously the responsibility to support individuals experiencing homelessness or requiring refuge.
- A large part of our role in supporting those who need access to emergency housing is providing necessary funding to support operations for a number of facilities across the territory.
- This includes funding for the Dawson Shelter Society, the Safe at Home Society, Skookum Jim Friendship Center, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Men's Shelter, Help and Hope for families in Watson Lake and the Yukon Women's Transition Home.

**United Way Society of Yukon and the 211 Helpline:**

- In January the board of United Way Society of Yukon made the difficult decision to dissolve, I would like to thank the United Way Society of Yukon for all their efforts since 1995 in supporting the Yukon Community.
- We continue to encourage Yukoners to give back to their community through donations and volunteering their time.
- Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2024, the department has had an agreement valued at **\$135K** (\$135,000) with the United Way Society of Yukon for the 211 helpline, which is provided by BC211.
- Yukon 211 was launched on October 15, 2020, with temporary support from the Government of Canada, to enable enhanced services during COVID-19.

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- The free and confidential helpline assists people to navigate the Yukon's network of programs and services quickly and easily, 24 hours a day, in over 150 languages.
- 211 staff are:
  - Trained to the level of Victim Service workers (8 weeks of training for access to government public safety training);
  - Certified in Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) response standards, abandonment protocols;
  - Receive coaching for evaluation and real-time feedback; and,
  - Are able to transfer Yukoners to 811 and 911 when required.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Nursing**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is taking steps to recruit and retain nursing staff to ensure Yukoners have access to quality, essential health care services across the territory.

**Key messages:**

- Frontline health care staff work tirelessly to provide Yukoners with core and specialized health care services and play an integral role in responding to the Substance Use Health Emergency.
- We recognize that health care provider burnout is a real and pressing issue. We support all health care providers who have sacrificed much of their personal lives and time to their jobs over the past few years.
- We continue to mitigate the increased pressures resulting from the local, national and global shortages of health care providers.
- Nurses play a critical role in the delivery of health care services in the Yukon. The Department of Health and Social Services has taken several actions to attract and retain nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and health care aides across Yukon communities.

**Key facts:**

- As of February 2024, Community Nursing is experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 15 per cent for Primary Health Care Nurses. This is an improvement over the vacancy rate of 47 per cent in July 2022 and 33 per cent in July 2023.
- Within long-term care homes, we are experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately six per cent for nursing staff including licensed practical nurses, registered nurses and nursing supervisors.

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### **Nursing**

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- Home Care is experiencing a five per cent vacancy rate for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 38 per cent for nursing staff, including licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners.
  - Most of these vacancies are for newly funded nursing positions with recruitment underway.
- As of January 2024, there are a total of 285.2 active nursing FTEs within the Department of Health and Social Services. This includes registered nurse, nurse practitioner, psychiatric nurse and licensed practical nurse positions.

#### **Costs for nurses and agency nurses:**

- In 2022-23 and 2023-24, four agency nursing groups supported the Department of Health and Social Services to deliver nursing services.
  - These organizations have had limited ability to meet staffing needs due to the high demand for nursing staff across Canada.
  - In 2022-23, the department paid a total of **\$1.4M** (\$1,419,608) to three agency nursing groups.
  - So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the department has paid a total of **\$1.3M** (\$1,310,498) to four agency nursing groups. Based on projections, the department anticipates these costs will reach approximately **\$1.7M** this fiscal year.
- Within the Department of Health and Social Services, agency nurses have only been required within the Community Nursing branch where they have supported eleven Community Health Centres this year.



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## Nursing

# Spring 2024

## Health and Social Services

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- Between April 1, 2023, and January 31, 2024, agency nurses have supported 1054 nurse days.
    - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, agency nurses supported 1,224 nurse days through Community Nursing.
  - The Yukon Hospital Corporation has also required the support of agency nurses.
    - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's agency nursing costs were **\$8.3M** across 12 agency nursing groups.
    - So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's agency nursing costs are approximately **\$9.8M** across 10 agency nursing groups. Based on projections, the Yukon Hospital Corporation anticipates that agency nursing costs could be approximately **\$11.5M** this fiscal year.
  - The average cost of accessing one agency nurse per day for Health and Social Services is approximately \$911, which is inclusive of work hours, on-call hours, air travel from out-of-territory and per diems.
    - This cost does not include housing or in-territory ground transportation costs, which are covered through the Community Nursing branch. The average daily cost for housing per agency nurse is approximately \$38.
  - Based on this day rate, the department estimates that an agency nurse that works 260 days per year would cost the department \$247,000 per year.
  - Based on how shifts are calculated at Yukon hospitals, the Yukon Hospital Corporation estimates that an agency nurse would cost \$318,375 per year.
  - The average cost for a registered nurse employed by the Government of Yukon, including benefits, is \$127,109 per year.

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- The average cost for a licensed practical nurse employed by the Government of Yukon, including benefits, is \$103,446 per year.
- So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 26 Health and Social Services new hires had relocation included in their offer letters for a total cost to-date for the department of \$389,518.

**Inter-Professional Practices and Chief Nursing Officer:**

- We created and hired an Inter-Professional Practice and Chief Nursing Officer in March 2023. This position contributes to and oversees quality assurance and clinical safety activities, standardizes professional standards, works with partners on the Health Human Resources Strategy, and evaluates models of care to meet client needs.
- As we transition to the Health Authority, engagement with Yukon First Nations and health system partners including nurses, midwives, health professionals, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Community Services Regulatory Affairs and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association will continue as part of our ongoing Health Human Resource planning.

**Nurse Practitioners:**

- Currently, there are nurse practitioners working in the following settings:
  - 3.5 FTE nurse practitioners at the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre with 1.5 FTE vacant nurse practitioner positions.
  - 1 FTE nurse practitioner and 1 casual nurse practitioner supporting the Whitehorse Walk-in Medical Clinic.
  - 1 AOC nurse practitioner providing clinics in Old Crow and Pelly Crossing.

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- 1 nurse practitioner working with Withdrawal Management Services and 2 nurse practitioners at the Referred Care Clinic under the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch.
  - 3 contracted nurse practitioners working in the Women's Midlife Clinic, the Sexual Health Clinic and delivering primary care.
- Regulations are being developed that will facilitate registration and licensing processes for recently graduated and internationally educated nurses to apply directly to work in the Yukon. They will also permit student nurses to practice in the Yukon.
- We are currently recruiting a Nurse Practitioner to provide services in Mayo.

**Recruitment:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken several actions to recruit nurses to the Community Nursing Branch, including:
  - Widespread job advertisements across websites and social media platforms and targeted outreach to organizations and individuals.
  - Shifting scheduling structures to allow many nursing positions to operate on a part-time rotational basis.
- In addition, materials have been developed for all branches to support recruitment initiatives at large job fairs.
- The department sponsored a group of nurses from across branches to attend the International Council of Nurses Congress in Montreal in July, 2023.
  - This event hosted over 6,000 nurses from around the globe. Yukon nurses attended education events and worked at the nursing recruitment booth to share their knowledge and passion for the Yukon with nurses from across the country and the world.

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**Nursing**

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## Summer 2024 and service reductions:

- As a result of the local, national and global shortage of health care providers, some Community Health Centres have experienced temporary reductions in services.
- We are in the early stages of staffing for the summer and am pleased to note that our staffing situation has improved greatly. We are not forecasting the same level of disruptions as experienced in Summer 2023.
- We continue to work through the hiring process and orientation of new nurses. These steps will also improve our staffing rates as we move towards onboarding.
- At this time, July is looking to be our most challenging month, however work continues to address these gaps. Pelly Crossing and Destruction Bay are both forecasting gaps for July.
- It is important to note that staffing rates are fluid and planning for the summer has not yet been finalized.
- During these service disruptions, the department works closely with allied public safety agencies including EMS, physicians, health care partners and programs to mitigate the impacts on communities and ensure continuity of emergency care through these disruptions.
- Service disruptions are anticipated to continue throughout 2024.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing access to primary health care services, and to working with and supporting our physician partners.

**Key messages:**

- A healthy and strong community of primary health care providers is critical to ensuring Yukoners have access to excellent primary health care services.
- In 2022, we negotiated a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Yukon Medical Association to help increase Yukoners' access to primary care services and foster a strong physician community through a series of innovative initiatives that are in effect until March 31, 2025.
  - The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association will be preparing for the next round of negotiations on a new MOU in advance of the current MOU's expiry date.
  - We will be seeking to have an MOU that supports the quadruple aims of improving patient experience, improving health outcomes, better managing costs and system effectiveness and better experiences for care providers.
- A primary initiative under the current agreement is the Attachment and Attraction program. The goals of this program are to increase Yukoners' access and attachment to primary and specialty care, while offsetting physicians' operating costs.
- The Department of Health and Social Services completed an evaluation of the first year of the Attachment and Attraction program operations

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and is now working with the Yukon Medical Association to determine how to implement the evaluation recommendations.

- We know that the ways family physicians in the Yukon practice is different than in other jurisdictions.
  - Many family physicians here also provide specialized care such as General Practitioner Oncology, General Practitioner Anesthesia and General Practitioner Obstetrical services. These are services that are critical to supporting Yukoners to access primary, acute and palliative care closer to home.
  - The demand for a variety of health services and the ways in which that care is provided means we still experience challenges in connecting all Yukoners to a primary care provider.
- We have heard concerns about administrative burdens or ‘red tape’ presenting obstacles for doctors. We are working to ensure our contracts and payment systems are up to date and in line with modern standards.
- In addition, we have provided funding to the Yukon Medical Association to explore the development of a family medicine residency program.
- Addressing the gap in access to primary care providers is a priority for our government and the physician community.
- Both the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Medical Association are actively working together to address this gap through a variety of initiatives.

### Key facts:

- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$6.5M** (\$6,488,000) to support physician benefit programs, the majority of which are administered by the Yukon Medical Association.
- As part of the Health Human Resource Strategy response, **\$120K** (\$120,000) in funding has been provided to the Yukon Medical

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Association to continue to support the physician recruiter position and enhance recruitment efforts.

- In 2023, the Yukon was supported by 212 visiting physicians, 132 general practitioners and 80 specialists.
- In 2023, there were 33,830 unique patients seen and 477,733 unique patient encounters at care settings in the Yukon.
- Based on 2019 to 2020 data, the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that approximately 17 per cent of Yukoners did not have access to a primary care provider. This compares to a national average of 14.4 per cent.
  - In 2017 to 2018, approximately 21 per cent of Yukoners did not have access to a family physician.
  - This does not reflect access to primary health care services provided in Northern jurisdictions by Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners with expanded scopes of practice.
- Physician counts according to Scott's Medical Database:
  - Between the 2015 and 2021 calendar years, the Yukon's supply of resident physicians increased by 13.1 per cent and the supply of resident specialists increased by 81.8 per cent.

**Claims and Billing:**

- Ensuring that physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and physician community.
- Physician claims are now being paid in under 60 days with the Yukon Medical Association stating this is no longer a matter of concern for its members.
- We have formed a Physician Payment Advisory Committee with the Yukon Medical Association to improve the claims and payment system, as well as respond to concerns with administrative burden.

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- Our physician community has also identified concerns with current administrative burdens including but not limited to billing and payment process, as well as with electronic medical records.
- In Fall 2023, a total of 20 fee codes were modified to allow for auto-payment. The number of claims going to manual assessment has decreased from 30 to 20 per cent. This is an average of 600 claims per week no longer being manually assessed by default.
- Work is also underway to update how the system addresses patient names. Currently, claims are validated using a patient's full name and date of birth to match their health care card. Once implemented, the system will adjudicate using last name, first initial and date of birth to reduce additional need for manual assessment.
- We are working with the Physician Payment Advisory Committee to identify and determine additional opportunities to decrease processing times.
- We have engaged Meyers Norris Penny to assist with system improvements, including developing an audit and recovery process. Physicians will have an opportunity to share their input during this work.

**Collaborative Care:**

- Based on feedback provided by the Yukon Medical Association and their membership, we are currently working with two private primary health care practices in Whitehorse to explore opportunities to embed allied health professionals into these clinics.
- Introducing allied health professionals such as mental health professionals, social workers, and chronic disease nurses into primary health care practices will support Yukoners to access high quality care from the right provider, at the right time.



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- As part of this pilot approach, we are leasing space from the two participating clinics to co-locate appropriate allied health professionals identified in collaboration with each physician practice. These allied health professionals will be employed by the department.
- Co-location of allied health professionals is one of several key steps in the development of high performing team-based primary care. This work aligns with the recommendations in the Putting People First report and is consistent with collaborative care models used at the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre and the walk-in clinic.

**Contracts:**

- While physicians are compensated using a fee-for-service model, the Department of Health and Social Services also uses alternative payment models and a mix of alternative payment and fee-for-service with many physicians and specialists.
- Alternative payment models are being used with some resident specialists, community health and wellness centres, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, and the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
- As recommended by physicians, we are also moving towards an alternative payment model for the inpatient Hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Our government is committed to providing physician compensation that is fairly and equitably set within the local and national market, and that ensures health system resources are managed effectively to enable budget alignment.
- Our government and the Yukon Medical Association have introduced the Attachment and Attraction Program to encourage patient access to family physicians while supporting physicians with overhead costs.

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**Fee-for-Service:**

- The Putting People First report recommends “working with the Yukon Medical Association through the next contract negotiation cycle to develop alternative payment models to transition away from primarily fee-for-service payment for medical services.”
- As part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, we have negotiated fee increases.
  - We continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association and our health system partners to ensure physicians are supported and to explore alternative payment models.
- Many Canadian jurisdictions are considering alternative models that meet the unique health system needs of each jurisdiction, including physicians working in payment models that are a blend of fee-for-service and an alternative payment plan. We are looking at alternate data sources to collect physician encounter information that removes the requirement for shadow billing.

**Find a Primary Care Provider Program:**

- In spring 2023, we expanded the Find a Primary Care Provider Program to include Nurse Practitioners.
- As of January 2024, a total of 1,888 individuals have been matched to a primary care provider through the program. There are 3,591 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 10 per cent of the population.
  - Since expanding the program to include matches with Nurse Practitioners, 224 individuals have been matched with a Nurse Practitioner.

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- There are currently three providers enrolled with the Find a Primary Care Provider Program.
- Primary health care needs of rural residents are met through Community Health Centres.
- All communities have access to itinerant physician services through a Community Health Centre. Residents of Dawson City, Watson Lake and Haines Junction are supported by resident physicians.
- The program does not allow for duplicate applications under the program. Processes are in place to ensure the waitlist is up to date.
  - Individuals who apply for and are accepted to the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre will have their names removed from the Find a Primary Care Provider waitlist.
- Work is also underway to improve system efficiency, communication with applicants, and improve functionality for physicians. These system upgrades are informed by Yukon Medical Association physician feedback and will be launched in 2024.

**Locums:**

- Our government is providing funding to the Yukon Medical Association for a Physician Recruiter position to support work to recruit locum and resident physicians to the territory.
- We are working with the Yukon Medical Association to identify barriers to the recruitment of locum physicians and are hearing that areas such as payments, administrative burden, hospital privileging and licensing are sources of concern.
- As part of our work through the Health Human Resource Steering Committee, which includes physicians, hospital and the Yukon Medical

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Council representatives, we are exploring options to address barriers to recruitment and retention.

- On December 13, 2023, the Steering Committee released the Health and Human Resource Strategy which expresses five pillars, retain, recruit, plan, innovate and learn with 25 suggested ways to achieve these pillars to guide action.

**Mayo Community Health Centre staffing**

- Provision of physician services will resume in May with a newly recruited physician providing care.
- Recruitment for additional primary care support is ongoing to ensure there are sufficient ongoing services available in the community.

**Medical Director:**

- Our government and the Yukon Medical Association are working collaboratively to introduce a Medical Director position.
- The Medical Director position is anticipated to support areas such as community and clinical care issues, as well as our ongoing work to transition to Health and Wellness Yukon.
- This will be an important role that will provide a physician perspective within this work.

**Memorandum of Understanding:**

- The current three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association covers the period from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2025.
- The Memorandum of Understanding includes:
  - an Attachment and Attraction program that is intended to facilitate access to primary and specialty care while supporting physicians' operating costs;

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- the creation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Learning Program and a commitment to help end systemic racism and discrimination in the health care system through learning and behaviour change; and
  - a commitment to work with Yukon First Nations, health system partners and other service providers to support collaborative maternity and early years care.
- The Attachment and Attraction program offers funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard for patients and appointments. Family doctors who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half-day they see patients.
- The Attachment and Attraction program is fully up and running with more than 40 participating physicians.
  - An evaluation of the program has been conducted; we are working with the Yukon Medical Association to address feedback provided.

**Watson Lake Physician Contract Termination**

- Watson Lake is currently supported by a team of four highly qualified physicians and a well-established group of locum physicians with experience providing care in the community.
- Due to recent staffing changes, individuals undergoing transition to a different family physician will be supported to ensure continuity of care.
- Every physician in the community is committed to providing excellent client care.
- Should individuals have concerns or questions about transition of care, they are encouraged to contact Insured Health Services.

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- Our primary concern is to always ensure those seeking care feel confident and comfortable doing so.

## **Yukon Medical Association Negotiations Strategy 2024 Member Study**

- The Yukon Medical Association has published a report entitled, “Negotiations Strategy 2024 Member Study”. This will be an important component to inform discussions.
- Our work continues to be guided by the quintuple aims of improving patient experience, improving health outcomes, better managing costs and system effectiveness and better experiences for care providers.
- We hear the concerns expressed in the Member Study and understand that taking on more patients is difficult due primarily to time and administrative constraints.
- We continue to invest in recruitment of health care providers to ensure there are adequate human resources to provide care to Yukoners. For example, as part of the Health Human Resource Strategy response,
- We recognize there is room for improved service delivery, and we will continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association and other health system partners to achieve this for Yukoners and the physicians that provide crucial access to healthcare.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Safer Supply and Prescribing  
(Opioids)**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with our partners to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency and to expanding access to safer supply and harm reduction.

**Key messages:**

- Offering Yukoners an alternative to the illegal and unregulated drug supply, known as safer supply, is one action we are taking to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency.
- We are working with experts to ensure we can expand access to safer supply in the Yukon as safely and efficiently as possible.
- We are working with our partners and all levels of government to increase outreach services, nursing and social supports for all people who use illicit substances.
- Expanding access to opioid agonist therapy and safer supply, including in communities, is an element of the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

**Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$1.91M** (\$1,912,730) for the Referred Care Clinic.
- In the 2023-24 budget, we provided an increase of **\$279K** (\$279,000) for the addition of 2 FTEs to support Safe Supply.
  - These 2 FTEs are for 1 Social Worker and 1 Medical Office Assistant and are currently filled.
- This increase also reflects carry-forward amounts for 7 FTEs introduced in 2022-23, including:
  - 2 Outreach Practical Nurses

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- 1 Peer Outreach Worker
  - 2 Registered Nurses
  - 1 Registered Nurse Supervisor
  - 1 Social Worker
- Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, there were 206 clients registered with Opioid Treatment Services with an average of 239 appointments per month.
- In 2023, there were 547 clients supported through the Referred Care Clinic with an average of 750 appointments per month.
- Opioid Treatment Services can be reached at 867-668-2552, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 12 pm, and 1 pm to 4 pm.

**Expanding Safer Supply:**

- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy includes providing safer supply medications as a harm reduction intervention.
- To further expand the scope of safer supply, the department is working with an addictions medicine specialist in British Columbia to develop and provide clinical training and prescribing guidelines for physicians in the Yukon.
- We are improving access to safer supply as more personnel are hired to provide wraparound services to help ensure that clients accessing safer supply through Opioid Treatment Services have the supports required.
- The Safe Supply program currently offers Hydromorphone tablets and Fentanyl Patch programs as a safer supply of opioids.
- Expansion of safer supply is not limited to the safe supply of opioids.
  - The department is also exploring options to provide safer supply for other illicit substances such as stimulants.



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**Prescribing Authorities:**

- In Canada, possession of controlled substances is prohibited under federal law.
- To support continuity of care to patients during the COVID-19 response, on March 19, 2020, Health Canada issued a national class exemption under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and its regulations for prescriptions of controlled substances.
- Physicians and Nurse Practitioners, who have trained with Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, may prescribe opioid agonist therapy and safe supply medications in the Yukon.
- The department continues to support physicians to expand their scope of practice to include safe supply prescribing, including providing increased access to training opportunities.
- Our government continues to work with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, so that Nurse Practitioners may independently prescribe opioid agonist therapy medications, such as methadone and suboxone, and safe supply medications.
  - Nurse Practitioners currently provide both opioid agonist therapy and safe supply medications under the authority of the Referred Care Clinic Lead.

**Opioid Treatment Services:**

- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy includes ensuring the availability of Opioid Agonist Therapy wherever Yukoners seek assistance.
- Clients of Opioid Treatment Services can access safer supply on a case-by-case basis.

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### **Safer Supply and Prescribing (Opioids)**

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- Prior to prescribing safer supply, it is common practice to first use less risky medical interventions to treat opioid use disorder.
- Opioid Treatment Services supports people to manage or reduce their opioid drug use.
- We support Opioid Treatment Services' physicians and Nurse Practitioners to engage in continued medical education and mentorship to expand their knowledge and comfort with prescribing safer supply.
- An opioid focused community needs assessment by an external consultant was completed in fall 2022.
  - This assessment provides further understanding of drug use patterns in the Yukon and highlights gaps in the provision of services to inform the expansion of services, including safer supply.
- Physicians and Nurse Practitioners, who have trained with Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, may prescribe evidence-based opioid agonist therapies such as methadone, suboxone, sublocade, and kadian to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings for opioid drugs.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_

[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Substance Use Health Emergency**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with community partners, First Nations and other governments to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency.
- The Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy represents our commitment to implementing innovative, evidence-based initiatives to reduce and prevent substance use-related harms and support Yukoners in their health and wellbeing.

**Key messages:**

- In January 2022, our government declared a Substance Use Health Emergency in response to an increase in substance use related harms in the territory, including a significant increase in opioid-related deaths.
- In August 2023, along with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon released the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- In response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, we have developed Car 867, increased Opioid Treatment Services and access to safer supply, expanded the methods of consumption and extended the hours of operation at the Supervised Consumption Site, held two Mental Wellness Summits, initiated a Paramedic Response Unit in the downtown core, and increased access to harm reduction supplies.
- The Managed Alcohol Program is being initiated in Spring 2024.
- This is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone. We appreciate the work of our partners: Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Connective, the RCMP, Yukon First Nations, and all levels of government towards addressing this public health emergency.

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**Key facts:**

- A Substance Use Health Emergency was declared in January 2022. The Substance Use Health Emergency strategy was released in August 2023.
- The 2024-25 Main Estimates includes an increase of **\$1.201M** (\$1,201,000) for 6.0 FTEs and a previously approved increase of **\$267K** (\$267,000) for the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
  - These are both recoverable through the Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians Agreement. This bilateral agreement was announced in July 2023, and signed March 12, 2024.
- A Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy oversight committee is being formed. The oversight committee will prioritize actions and provide decisions on the strategy's direction.
- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy implementation committee will include project partners that are responsible for carrying out the actions in the strategy. The committee will include representatives from the departments of Health and Social Services, Justice and Community Services, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, Whitehorse General Hospital, Blood Ties Four Directions and the RCMP.
- From April 2016 through the end of 2023, 98 Yukoners have died due to opioids.
- In 2023, there were 23 confirmed substance-use related deaths in the Yukon. Twenty of these involved opioids.
  - In 2022, there were 24 confirmed substance-related deaths in the Yukon.

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- In 2023, there were 168 visits to Whitehorse General Hospital for drug poisoning and 613 alcohol-related visits.
  - In 2022, there were 140 drug poisoning and 677 alcohol-related visits to the Whitehorse General Hospital Emergency Department.
  - In 2021, there were 200 drug poisoning and 677 alcohol-related visits to the Whitehorse General Hospital Emergency Department.
- In 2023, Emergency Medical Services responded to 327 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 825 calls related to alcohol-related calls.
  - In 2022, Emergency Medical Services responded to 341 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 1,076 calls related to alcohol poisoning.
  - In 2021, Emergency Medical Services responded to 360 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 1,225 calls related to alcohol poisoning.

**Resources:**

- Never use alone: the National Opioid Response Service is at 1-888-688-6677. This anonymous service will have someone stay on the phone with you while you use so individuals can be linked to virtual overdose prevention support.
- Opioid Treatment Services is an accessible, low barrier program. Visit 210 Elliott Street or call 867-668-2552.
- Check your drugs: get your drugs checked at the Supervised Consumption Site, the Outreach Van, or Emergency Medical Services. Get Naloxone and learn how to use it: Naloxone is free and you can find it in many places in the Yukon.
- Rapid Access Counselling is available to all Yukoners – call 867-456-3838 to make a counselling appointment within 72 hours.

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**Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy:**

- Our government collaborated with health system and community partners on the development of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- The primary purpose of the strategy is to provide a roadmap for action on how the Government of Yukon, working with partners, can reduce substance use-related harms in the territory.
- As a living document, the Strategy is designed to evolve over time as it adapts to the changing needs of the communities and incorporates ongoing feedback from our partners.
- The vision of the Strategy is that all Yukoners will be mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically well and safe throughout their lifespans and able to contribute to wellness in their families, cultures, and communities.
- The Strategy's mission is that partners will work together to implement innovative, bold, and evidence-based actions so that substance use related harms are reduced and the health and wellbeing of Yukoners flourishes.
- The Strategy highlights four areas of growth: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support, and community safety and wellbeing.
- The Government of Yukon is providing funding to support collaborative efforts aimed at implementing an initial 14 actions outlined in the strategy. The actions cover all four areas of growth.
- The current statuses of these 14 actions are in the table below.

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Prevention		
1	Implement Planet Youth in Yukon communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The department is developing plans to identify two pilot communities, proposals and assessment criteria.</li> </ul>
2	Continue to support Yukon communities in creating and implementing community wellness plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A roadmap outlining the process, scope and roles is being developed to share with partners and communities.</li> </ul>
3	Continue to launch communication and educational campaigns addressing substance use and mental wellness issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active or upcoming awareness and educational campaigns include Opioid Treatment Services awareness, alcohol medications, 988 outreach support and Rapid Access Counselling.</li> </ul>
Harm reduction		
4	Implement a Managed Alcohol Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program development is underway.</li> <li>The program will be launched in Spring 2024.</li> </ul>
5	Further expand the operating hours of Whitehorse's Supervised Consumption Site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hours have been expanded from 12pm-9pm, to 10:30am to 9:30pm, 7 days per week including statutory holidays.</li> </ul>
6	Further expand access to Opioid Treatment Services, including safer supply and Opioid Agonist Therapy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioid Treatment Services are offered at the Referred Care Clinic, Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and Housing First.</li> <li>We continue to explore rural and remote options.</li> </ul>
Treatment and recovery support		
7	Ensure the availability of Opioid Agonist Therapy wherever Yukoners seek assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans, including procurement, are being developed for a Mobile Opioid Treatment Services clinic.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is working with community nursing to offer Opioid Agonist Therapy in communities.</li> </ul>
8	Continue to increase support for Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In December 2023, a Letter of Intent was signed between the Government of Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations and federal government for a Yukon First Nations-led treatment centre.</li> <li>Launched in November 2023, the Land-based Healing Funding initiative will provide \$9 million in funding to Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation-led organizations over 3 years to March 31, 2026.</li> </ul>
<b>Community safety and wellbeing</b>		
9	Continue to invest in preventing gender-based violence and improving services for victims of crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement for the expansion of the Sexualized Assault Response Team was completed in December of 2023. An implementation plan is anticipated for 2025.</li> <li>Victim Services received \$369,000 in funding from the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence to support a transportation network for victims to access services in Whitehorse. Work to establish infrastructure is ongoing.</li> </ul>
10	Increase frontline support staffing and create more safe and sober housing options for individuals grappling with substance use issues when transitioning from the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department of Justice is improving supports for those transitioning into the community through reform of the bail system.</li> <li>Recruitment for a Support and Outreach position and a Clinical Counsellor position is ongoing. These positions will travel to communities to support clients' needs.</li> </ul>



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	criminal justice system back into communities.	
11	Continue to collaborate with Yukon First Nations governments to expand therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches in response to substance use-related treatment needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing initiatives through restorative justice and therapeutic courts include impaired driving, substance use treatment, trauma recovery, intimate partner violence prevention programs for men, healing camps at Jackson Lake and other programming in partnership with First Nations.</li> <li>A Senior Community Engagement Specialist will help identify Yukon First Nations who are interested in developing or expanding therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches. The position is currently filled via a Justice staff member and recruitment is ongoing.</li> <li>Currently, the Department of Justice is in partnership discussions with Carcross Tagish, Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Vuntut Gwitchin to continue exploring new approaches.</li> </ul>
12	Continue to support effective and accountable policing and enforcement responsive to community needs and taking into account the Yukon's modern treaty environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for a Senior Negotiator and a Strategic Policy Advisor has been secured through Community Tripartite Agreements and recruitment is ongoing. These positions will support engagement with First Nations regarding First Nation jurisdiction and authority for enforcement of First Nation laws and related interests.</li> <li>A draft engagement plan and submission are in progress.</li> <li>Discussions regarding enforcement are occurring with First Nations at Administration</li> </ul>

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		of Justice Agreement tables, and a joint Cabinet and Management Board submission is in development.
13	Expand the capacity of the Mobile Crisis Response Team (Car 867).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car 867 is currently available Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. These hours will be extended to 7 days a week for 10-hour shifts in early Spring.</li> <li>• To expand capacity, the Department of Justice is funding two RCMP officers and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is funding two nursing positions.</li> </ul>
14	Increase the Government of Yukon's capacity to investigate and for civil remedies to disrupt the distribution of toxic illicit drugs and organized crime in Yukon communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This action is fulfilled through the existing Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Unit.</li> <li>• The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Unit anticipates signing a protocol with an 11th Yukon First Nation soon. These protocols provide investigative services in First Nation communities.</li> <li>• The Unit is working with communities to update their protocols.</li> <li>• Funding from the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy includes an additional investigator for the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Unit.</li> </ul>

**Actions to date:**

- On September 30, 2021, we opened the Supervised Consumption Site and in May 2022 we completed renovations to support inhalation as a consumption method.

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- Hours have recently expanded to 7 days a week from 10:30am to 9:30pm, including statutory holidays.
  - As of January 25, 2022, we have increased access to Opioid Treatment Services at 405 Alexander by expanding prescriber coverage to two days per week.
  - We are strengthening the Opioid Treatment Services team with 9 new positions. These positions include 1 Registered Nurse Supervisor, 2 Registered Nurses, 2 Licensed Practical Nurses, 1 Community Engagement Worker, and 1 Administrative Assistant. Some of these positions have been filled and others are in the recruitment process.
  - As of January 28, 2022, we expanded opioid medication coverage to include Sublocade.
  - On October 31, 2022, we launched Car 867, a mobile crisis unit that includes an RCMP officer and a trained mental health nurse.
  - We have organized three territory-wide public awareness and education campaigns.
  - On November 16 and 17, 2022 we held Youth Roots: A Substance Use Prevention Gathering, where we explored innovative and emerging approaches with Yukoners, partners and subject matter experts.
  - We hosted two Mental Wellness Summits on February 14 and 15, 2022 and September 21 to 23, 2022 to hear from leaders, partners, subject matter experts and people with lived and living experience.
  - We have increased access to Withdrawal Management beds by hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses.
  - We continue to increase on-the-land healing and treatment options in the territory.
  - The Rapid Access Bike paramedic team launched in summer 2022 to improve EMS service and provide faster response in downtown

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Whitehorse during the summer months. This Yukon EMS program is a partnership with the RCMP and City of Whitehorse.

**Alcohol Use and Managed Alcohol Program:**

- In Spring 2024, we will be implementing a Managed Alcohol Program. This is one of the actions under the initial 14 in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- The Managed Alcohol Program will be offered through a 10-bed residential facility located at 509 Hoge Street in Whitehorse, the previous location of the St. Elias group home.
- Government, health and allied health care partners will conduct client assessments to determine eligibility.
- Managed alcohol programs typically dispense wine, beer or spirits. Clients will have access to individually medically approved volumes of alcohol that will be served under supervision.
- The program will be supported by three teams of new FTE positions including support workers, licensed practical nurses and a supervisor. Job descriptions and classification levels are currently being developed for these positions.
- While the structure and composition of the teams may change as we evaluate the program, we anticipate the teams will be dedicated to intake and assessment, support workers and medical oversight.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is currently working to finalize policies, program manuals and working with Human Resources to recruit staff before accepting clients.
- The program will attempt to reduce harms related to alcohol use amongst people living with severe, treatment resistant alcohol use

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disorder. This includes reducing instances of emergency services, non-beverage alcohol consumption and increase social stability.

- This initiative will help protect one of the Yukon's most vulnerable populations and will support public health and resource allocation.
- Creating a culture of moderate alcohol consumption and an environment that supports informed individual decision-making is a recommendation in Putting People First.
- The Yukon Liquor Corporation leads a social responsibility program, including:
  - A "Get Home Safe" campaign during Rendezvous 2024, highlighting the risks of consuming alcohol when temperatures are below freezing outside;
  - Be A Responsible Server training for Yukoners responsible for serving or selling alcohol; and
  - Annual "Safe Grad" funding, designed to help school graduation planners keep graduates safe from alcohol and drug use during their graduation celebrations.
- In January 2023, the Canadian Centre of Substance Use and Addiction released updated low-risk drinking guidelines, which are supported by the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health.
  - These updated guidelines recommend a weekly alcohol use of a maximum of 2 standard drinks or less to avoid alcohol-related consequences and higher health risks.
- Our government now provides coverage for medications to support people diagnosed with Alcohol Use Disorder through the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program.

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Services**Awareness Campaign:**

- In August of 2023, all community and First Nations government health centres, Blood Ties Four Directions and other partners received educational materials for the public regarding the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and Mental Wellness Substance Use Services.
- In 2023, Mental Wellness Substance Use Services partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions to distribute 200 backpacks containing essentials and informational resources throughout the Yukon. This initiative supported 200 vulnerable individuals with direct access to information on substance use and mental health services, along with comfort items.
- We are supporting the Council of Yukon First Nations with \$50,000 for an anti-stigma campaign.

**Community Outreach:**

- We will continue to support Yukon First Nations governments to improve health and social services in Yukon communities.
- We have supported Blood Ties Four Direction's initiative to increase distribution of take-home fentanyl testing kits in rural Yukon communities.
  - Blood Ties Four Directions provides harm reduction services in Whitehorse through the Outreach Van, and Mental Wellness Substance Use Services staff working in Whitehorse and communities also provide harm reduction supplies and training.
- Expanding Opioid Treatment Services, including safer supply, to communities outside of Whitehorse is an element of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

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- Emergency Medical Services has a Paramedic Specialist Clinic located at 405 Alexander and a Paramedic Response Unit in the downtown core of Whitehorse.
  - The clinic ensures a paramedic is on site at least 20 hours a day and we are working towards expanding this to 24/7.
  - The clinic has a spectrometer to test samples of drugs on site. The spectrometer provides a more accurate detection of benzodiazepines, fentanyl and other contaminants
  - The Paramedic Response Unit operates 10.7 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Both the Paramedic Response Unit and the Paramedic Response Clinic provide Drug Testing Kits and harm reduction supplies to the public.
- The Rapid Access Bike paramedic team provides faster responses in downtown Whitehorse during the summer months.
  - All members of the Rapid Access Bike team are trained to the same level, or higher, as a Primary Care Paramedic.
  - While there will always be an ambulance deployed at the same time as the Rapid Access Bike, the team can provide initial patient care before an ambulance arrives.
  - The Rapid Access Bike team also hands out Naloxone kits, drug checking kits, delivers education about safe injections, and provides general information on safety to the public.
- All Emergency Medical Services ambulances carry drug checking kits and Naloxone kits to provide to the public.
- Emergency Medical Services has distributed over 1,500 drug checking kits across the territory.

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Substance Use Health Emergency**Health and Social  
Services**Naloxone:**

- Naloxone kits, including nasal naloxone, are available, free of charge, at many locations across our territory, including pharmacies, Kwanlin Dün First Nation Health Centre, Blood Ties Four Directions, 405 Alexander, Emergency Medical Services, Community Health Centres, all Yukon Liquor Corporation locations, and from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services locations throughout the territory.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff in communities also distribute Naloxone Kits and have worked with First Nations governments to ensure that kits are widely available.
- Upon request, staff provide Naloxone training to First Nations governments and community partners.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]



**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Hospital Surge**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is working with our partners and bringing together health and social care providers to respond to pressures on our healthcare system through a coordinated, system-wide approach.

**Key messages:**

- As the population grows and ages, there is increasing demand for all acute care services including diagnostics, outpatient and inpatient services. This is a challenge being experienced across the country.
- To ensure the acute care system is able to support those who need it, we are working with our partners to ensure patients are cared for in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources. This includes a system level response to surges in demand for acute care.
- In response to the February 2024 surge at Whitehorse General Hospital, we worked with our partners to respond with a holistic, system-wide approach to providing care and services. This practice was continued during the April surge.
- During the surges experienced at Whitehorse General Hospital between February 7, 12 and April 2024, we worked quickly and collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, physicians and other health and social care providers to support system needs and ensure access to care.
- Some of the immediate actions taken across the system include:
  - extending the hours of the new walk-in clinic,
  - family physicians making more urgent appointments available to their patients,

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- ensuring that patients more suited to be cared for at home, through Continuing Care or in another setting were able to make those transitions as quickly as possible, and
- quickly passing an Order in Council to increase hospital capacity.

**Key Facts:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are co-developing an integrated surge plan for the health system that will prioritize an effective response to future surges, identify contributing factors, and continue working together on quality improvement processes focused on prevention and guided by a home first philosophy.
- Hours at the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic were expanded, subject to staff availability.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association sent a joint letter to physicians during the February and April surge. The letters outlined the steps being taken to address the surge and efforts to increase staffing, and thanked the physicians for their dedication to health care in the Yukon.
- The Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation encourage Yukoners to continue to seek care through the emergency department or their regular healthcare provider when needed.

**Early 2024 Surges:**

- Two surges occurred in the first four months of 2024:
  - On April 3, 2024, the Whitehorse General Hospital experienced a temporary surge in demand for services. The department was immediately made aware.

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- On February 7, 2024, Whitehorse General Hospital had 22 patients without a bed who required admission or were out-of-territory awaiting repatriation.
- There were three key drivers for the February hospital surge:
  - Increased demand in the number of patients seeking care,
  - Increased acuity and complexity of care needs,
  - Reduced hospital capacity to support patients due to factors such as staff shortages.
- The April surge was related to:
  - several patients who were critically ill or required emergency surgical intervention with the Intensive Care Unit already at capacity; and
  - staffing challenges.
- Plans are in place at Whitehorse General Hospital to manage each type of surge due to increased demand in patients seeking care.
- On February 7, 2024, Whitehorse General Hospital experienced:
  - An increased demand for patients seeking care, resulting in an increased number of admitted patients who needed care.
  - Increased acuity and complexity (Intensive Care Unit was full with very sick patients).
  - Staff shortages due to sick calls and an inability to bring in additional staff to support the volume and acuity of patients.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation activated their surge plan, which included deferring planned surgeries, providing inpatient care in the Emergency Department, using the Surgical Daycare department to provide inpatient care, discharging all possible patients and working with partners and calling in additional staff to support patient care needs.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation informed Health and Social Services that additional supports would be required across the system to manage this surge.

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- Formal communications went out to Whitehorse General Hospital staff on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> regarding the need for staffing support and mitigation strategies.
- A joint Incident Command Structure was established to facilitate system-level decision making and communications.
- The Department of Health and Social Services:
  - Leveraged Emergency Medical Services was made available to mitigate pressure on hospital staff. Paramedics assessed patients, provided care as per their medical guidelines, and worked alongside hospital staff to reduce wait times.
  - Expanded the hours of services of the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic for unattached patients as needed and as possible;
  - Explored options to use additional health staff employed in non-direct care positions within the hospital, such as nursing and allied health resources, to support inpatient care at Whitehorse General Hospital;
  - Supported the Yukon Hospital Corporation discharge planning for patients that require an alternate level of care or could be cared for at home, freeing up inpatient beds; and
  - Enabled additional care spaces on an as-needed basis through an Order in Council.
- Housing and Mental Wellness supports were leveraged to support patients after discharge, as available.
- Department officials met with the Yukon Hospital Corporation Incident Command Group to ensure Yukoners are encouraged to access the care that they need.
- A press release was published on Yukon.ca on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, stating that the Government of Yukon was supporting Whitehorse General Hospital during a period of high demand.

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- Moving forward, work is underway to develop a system-level surge plan. This system-level plan will leverage the actions implemented during the surge responses.

**Order in Council:**

- An Order in Council was passed on February 8, 2024, removing administrative barriers to allow Thomson Centre and Whistle Bend Place to be used for the provision of insured hospital services if necessary.
  - The change allows internal movements that could increase the number of potential hospital rooms available in the system.
  - The proposed changes would not expose long-term care residents to increased risk from hospital patients. A 10-bed unit at Thomson Centre could be vacated by long-term care to provide additional hospital beds.
  - More work is needed before the change can be implemented. The plan could be implemented by summer 2024.
- At this time, no long-term care residents have been impacted by the Order in Council.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, Connective, RCMP, local businesses and our community partners to take action to improve health and safety and enhance supports for Yukoners in downtown Whitehorse.

**Key messages:**

- We are committed to creating a vibrant, safe and inclusive downtown area in Whitehorse.
- We released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan in December 2023. This plan will further develop a safe, supportive and thriving downtown Whitehorse.
  - The plan is flexible and responsive, focusing on immediate and long-term solutions, such as increasing housing security, expanding support services and increasing public safety.
- We are actively addressing public safety concerns and supporting downtown business operations.
  - We are discouraging large congregations by creating alternative locations for services.
  - We are expanding service locations with an Outreach Worker at the Whitehorse Public Library.
  - We are providing a warming centre in the Jim Smith building's former cafeteria.
  - We are working with Non-Government Organizations to find new locations for food services.

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- We are increasing oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure residents and businesses feel safe and supported.
  - We have hired Sirius Security to provide security services for businesses in proximity to Alexander Street.
  - We have provided funding for the Council of Yukon First Nations' Moccasin Mobile Outreach initiative.

**Key Facts:**

- We have been meeting with the Council of Yukon First Nations, First Nations governments, Connective, the RCMP, City of Whitehorse, Yukon businesses, and multiple departments and levels of government to hear their feedback.
  - We held a community meeting on November 21, 2023.
  - In the coming months, we will be holding targeted engagement meetings with downtown residents, Non-Government Organizations, businesses, First Nations, and people with lived/living experience.
- The Department of Justice will be leading the action within the Downtown Safety Action Plan on developing a city-wide Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
  - The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan will complement the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and create a framework to explore new innovative initiatives.
- Further assessment in responding to concerns about garbage and area cleanliness is underway.

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**Moccasin Mobile Outreach:**

- On October 27, 2023, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon announced that a mobile downtown outreach service is being planned to enhance safety in downtown Whitehorse.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations launched the Moccasin Mobile Outreach February 1, 2024.
- The service is operated by the Council of Yukon First Nations and staffed by 4-5 Yukon First Nations community outreach workers.
- The intention of this new service is to remove barriers for street-involved people by meeting individuals where and when they need support.
- The service will operate between 8pm and 2am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and will be accessible by the Moccasin Mobile Outreach van and through a phone number.
- Outreach workers will provide individuals a range of services including shelter services, meal services, RCMP and medical services.
- The Government of Yukon is committed to collaborating with Moccasin Mobile Outreach to explore ways to support and strengthen their efforts.

**Sirius Security**

- Sirius Security was hired in November 2023 to patrol the area from Black Street to Strickland Street between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue. Patrols operate Sunday to Thursday from 6pm to 2am and Friday and Saturday from 7pm to 3am.
- The security service acts as a visible deterrent to behaviours and incidents that have created insecurity and safety concerns for neighbours.
- Sirius staff are encouraged to interact with individuals during their tours in a friendly manner, but not in an enforcement capacity.



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- Sirius staff are trained in non-violent crisis intervention, prevention and management of assaultive behaviour and first aid. This includes training in the company's Social Safety Mandate that includes mental health awareness and Yukon-specific de-escalation training.
- Health and Social Services committed to approximately \$300,000 to fund this pilot project until March 31, 2024.

**Decentralized Services:**

- We are continuing to work towards finding longer-term solutions for decentralized service in Whitehorse.
- Moving forward, we will ensure that all locations offering these services will be culturally safe and accessible.
- A warming centre is available at the Jim Smith Building's old cafeteria.
  - The warming centre is available from Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm March 18 to May 17, 2024.
  - The space offers computer and internet access, warming areas, snacks and beverages, harm reduction supplies, period products and washroom facilities.
  - Two onsite workers and one outreach worker are available to ensure a safe and inclusive environment.
  - Between March 18 and April 19, 2024, the warming centre had 660 visits and handed out 151 bus tickets.
  - The Department of Health and Social Services will evaluate the use and outcomes of the Jim Smith Building warming centre and consider this in determining needs for the Fall 2024 as winter months set in.
- We have agreements with Safe at Home and the Council of Yukon First Nations to support new locations for food services until the end of March 2024.

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- The Safe at Home Society is using space at the former High Country Inn as a warming centre. This space offers meals, hot drinks and support services for individuals in the downtown core area between the hours of 9am to 9pm from Thursday to Sunday.
  - This program will not be extended past March 31, 2024 due to renovation in the occupied space.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations will be providing warm take away meals for indigenous families and children a few nights a week at 205 Black St.
- Currently, several organizations offer free meals for Yukoners, including food services for women and children only. These organizations include:
  - 405 Alexander St., Mary House, Boy & Girls Club Yukon, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Sally & Sisters Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council offer meal services for women and children only, and the Whitehorse Food Bank offers hampers for individuals and families.

**Car 867:**

- Car 867 is a mobile crisis unit that responds to mental health emergencies and wellness related 911 calls.
- The unit is staffed with an RCMP officer and a Registered Psychiatric Nurse from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- This specialized joint response includes safety planning, on-site mental health assessments and referrals to appropriate care providers, such as Rapid Access Counselling, the Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team, the Psychiatric Outreach Program and Adult Protection Services.
- The presence of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse allows for a trauma-informed, client-centered assessment of individuals' acute needs.
- Work is underway to recruit a second position to run the unit 7 days a week.

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**Supervised Consumption Site:**

- The Supervised Consumption Site was opened in Whitehorse on September 30, 2021, in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions.
- At the site, clients can access a range of harm reduction and social services including drug testing, counselling, Naloxone, drug use equipment exchange, medical care and training in safer use practices. Clients can also receive referrals to social, medical and mental wellness and substance use support.
- Methods of drug consumption at the Supervised Consumption Site include injection, inhalation, oral and intranasal.
  - Inhalation is one of the most common methods of drug consumption in the territory.
- Our government worked with Blood Ties Four Directions in late 2023 to extend the Supervised Consumption Site operational hours to 7 days a week between 10:30 am and 9:30 pm, including holidays.
- Recruitment for the additional 3.5 FTEs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services will be on-going until the positions are filled. The 3.5 FTEs include:
  - Two licensed practical nurses to support the Blood Ties Four Directions harm-reduction services and provide outreach support to clients outside of the Supervised Consumption Site. This includes supporting 405 Alexander, Withdrawal Management referrals, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services referrals and the Referred Care Clinic Opioid Treatment Services clients who may access or want to access the site.
  - A support worker to provide outreach assistance to the Supervised Consumption Site and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services clients.

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- 0.5 FTE auxiliary on-call licensed practical nurse.
- As of February 20, 2024, there have been 11,346 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site since it opened in 2021.
- Between January 1, 2024, and February 20, 2024, there were 2,780 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site.

**Downtown Community Conversation:**

- A Downtown Community Conversation moderated by Inspire Reconciliation Potential Consulting took place on November 21, 2023.
- This was an opportunity for those living and working downtown to voice their concerns through a moderated conversation with community partners to discuss viable solutions that support a safe and vibrant downtown.
- The Government of Yukon, NGOs, service providers, local businesses, the RCMP, City of Whitehorse, and Council of Yukon First Nations were in attendance.
- Around 100 people attended. Feedback was given from the attendees that more notice of the event would have resulted in a larger crowd.
- Great feedback and suggestions were shared in a respectful space and the suggestion box was full by the end of the evening.
- There was a clear theme of wanting a beautiful vibrant downtown.
- We committed to a follow-up community meeting in Spring 2024.
- We will be creating a What We Heard document following the Spring meeting.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Continuing Care**

**Spring 2024**  
Health and Social  
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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of the Yukon is committed to ensuring that people living in the communities receive the support they need, wherever possible.

#### **Key messages:**

- Long-term care homes offer various levels of care and assistance with daily living to residents as part of our territory's continuum of care.
- We are working collaboratively with our partners, including federal, Yukon First Nations and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, community groups and the private sector to implement the Aging in Place Action Plan, and to ensure seniors and Elders receive the support they need.
- Our government is committed to culturally safe and responsive programming that recognizes cultural and traditional practices and supports spiritual wellbeing for Indigenous residents living in long-term care homes and their families.
- Continuing Care has a robust Quality and Safety team that conducts ongoing assessments of all Continuing Care programs, including the Yukon Home Care Program, to ensure client needs are being met.
- The Regional Home Care team provides home care nurses and home support supervisors in Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City.
- All other rural communities are supported by community liaison coordinators. Community liaison coordinators are occupational therapists and physiotherapists who are assigned to work in communities not supported by a home care nurse. They travel regularly to conduct assessments and hire and supervise home support workers based on client needs in each community.

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- All residents in long-term care can access mental health services. A geriatric psychiatrist visits Whitehorse long-term care homes every two months and provides virtual appointments for residents in Dawson City.

### Key facts:

- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$76.0M** (\$75,957,000) towards the ongoing operations of long-term care residences in the territory.
- There are four long-term care homes in the Yukon: Copper Ridge Place, Thomson Centre and Whistle Bend Place in Whitehorse, and Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson City.
- There are 509.05 FTEs working in the Yukon's long-term care homes.
- There are 257 permanent long-term care rooms, 23 respite rooms and 8 hospice rooms.
- On average, there are a total of 5.5 admissions to long-term care each month.
- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$15.3M** (\$15,258,000) towards the ongoing operations of Home Care in the territory.
- There are 116.45 funded FTEs within the Yukon Home Care Program.
- The Home Care Program received 901 new referrals in 2023 and supported an average caseload of 691 active clients per month across the territory.
- We have budgeted \$76,000 during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years to the Yukon Council on Aging for the Seniors' Information Centre to provide up-to-date information to Yukon seniors on all relevant federal, territorial and municipal government programs and services.

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#### **COVID-19:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Continuing Care branch and Yukon Communicable Disease Control units work closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to respond to any COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control, Continuing Care and the office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health have developed outbreak response guidelines for long-term care to protect residents, staff and visitors.
  - Following the evidence-informed guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Yukon Communicable Disease Control, only residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms are required to remain in their rooms.
  - Residents are monitored daily for symptoms of respiratory illness and tested as necessary.
  - Continuing Care reintroduces continuous masking and limits movement during outbreaks for all staff, visitors, volunteers and contractors.
  - For the duration of an outbreak, residents are restricted to one visitor to help preserve social connections while minimizing the risk to residents, staff and visitors. In end-of-life scenarios, long-term care will support exemptions for additional visitors.
  - These measures remain in place until an outbreak is declared over by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- We aim to strike a balance between maintaining a safe environment and minimizing unnecessary restrictions, protecting the health and wellbeing of staff and residents while respecting individual autonomy.
- We are also providing COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits in long-term care homes for staff as an additional resource.

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#### **Dementia Care:**

- The Shine a Light on Dementia online training program for caregivers was made available in 2022 in both French and English.
- The Yukon plays an active role on the federal/provincial/territorial committee on dementia, which developed the National Dementia Strategy.
- We continue to work with partners such as the Alzheimer Society of Canada to support the Yukon's goals for dementia awareness, stigma reduction and prevention.
- We continue to partner with Alzheimer's Society of BC to offer phone and online resources.
  - This includes the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline to support people and their caregivers on their journey with dementia.
  - First Link can be reached by calling 1-888-852-2579 Monday to Friday between the hours of 10 am and 8 pm.
- We are also receiving support from the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop Yukon specific online dementia care resources with funding for a dedicated staff position, engagement activities and advertising.
- Public Health Agency of Canada funded Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care to provide dementia education to all provinces and territories. They held an event March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre.
- Our work to support Yukoners living with dementia, caregivers and service providers also includes:
  - forming the Behavioural Care Resource Team as a resource for staff who provide care to long-term care residents living with dementia and other mental health diagnoses;
  - providing dementia-focused care at Copper Ridge Place (2 houses) and Whistle Bend Place (1 house) for mobile adults who



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- have dementia and require a therapeutic and secure environment as well as 24-hour nursing monitoring and support;
  - supporting residents with dementia and mild to moderate cognitive impairment in Intermediate and Extended Care levels in all the long-term care homes in Whitehorse and Dawson City; and
  - supporting all clients with dementia and their caregivers in Yukon communities through our Yukon Home Care program.
  - Whistle Bend Place relocated the dementia care house from the second floor of the building to the ground level to support access to outdoor space through independent use of an attached enclosed courtyard.
  - Research shows that gardens can help support the overall emotional wellbeing of people living with dementia. Access to outdoor space is integral to individual health and wellbeing.
  - A project is underway to redesign the existing courtyard to make the outdoor space more accessible with handrails, accessible pathways and materials, raised garden beds and functional seating areas that will provide a higher level of care and quality of life for residents living with dementia.

**Demographic Projections:**

- Over the next 20 years, the Yukon's senior population over the age of 65 will double, and Yukoners over the age of 75 will triple.
- Based on demographic trends, it is anticipated that more Yukoners will seek access to long-term care services in the coming years.
- To adequately support the Yukon's aging population, we are guided by regular projections to inform program planning and implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan.

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#### **Home Care:**

- The Yukon Home Care Program provides a range of supports, including services such as care coordination, home support services, community-based nursing, therapies and regional therapy services to communities across the Yukon.
- Home Care services including acute, chronic, palliative, and respite care and rehabilitation services, are available to Yukoners living in all communities who meet program criteria.
- After an intake assessment, the Yukon Home Care Program team aims to provide access to services within:
  - 1 to 2 days for high-risk clients;
  - 1 week for medium-risk clients; and
  - 2 weeks for low-risk clients.
- Home Care nursing services are available from the Whitehorse office, and available in rural communities from:
  - the Home Care satellite office located in the Watson Lake Hospital,
  - the Home Care satellite office located in Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson, and
  - the Home Care satellite office located in a Health and Social Services building in Haines Junction.
- The Yukon Home Care program has experienced the impacts of the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers and unplanned seasonal illness.
- As of January 22, 2024, the total staffing vacancies across the Home Care program amount to 14.6 FTEs.
  - 12.4 FTE vacancies are in Whitehorse.
  - The remaining 2.2 FTEs are regional vacancies. The permanent vacancies in the regional communities are currently backfilled by AOC support.

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- The Yukon Home Care Program is currently experiencing staffing shortages in Whitehorse specific to home support services. The
- The Home Care Program continues to work towards addressing the situation through ongoing recruitment and retention efforts and longer-term actions and strategies.
- We are prioritizing home support services for people with the most urgent and complex needs.
- Home Care strives to hire home support workers from their own communities.
- The number of home care clients by communities as of January 31, 2024, is as follows:
  - Atlin: fewer than 5 clients
  - Beaver Creek: 12 clients
  - Burwash Landing: 9 clients
  - Carcross: 18 clients
  - Carmacks: 23 clients
  - Dawson City: 37 clients
  - Destruction Bay: fewer than 5 clients
  - Faro: 11 clients
  - Haines Junction: 26 clients
  - Keno: fewer than 5 clients
  - Mayo: 37 clients
  - Old Crow: 19 clients
  - Pelly Crossing: 31 clients
  - Ross River: 11 clients
  - Teslin: 30 clients
  - Watson Lake: 17 clients
  - Whitehorse (and surrounding area): 366 clients

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#### **National Care Standards:**

- Updated national standards for long-term care were released by the Health Standards Organization on January 31, 2023.
  - The standards focus on governance, person-centered care, quality of life, a healthy and competent workforce, and promoting a culture of quality improvement and learning.
- Continuing Care holds accreditation through Accreditation Canada.
  - Thanks to the dedication of staff, partners, stakeholders, governments, health professionals, residents and families, Continuing Care has maintained its accreditation and high standards of care.
  - Past Health Standards Organization national standards have been reflected in some of Accreditation Canada's assessment criteria and it is anticipated that the new standards will also be incorporated.
- The Yukon met 85.5 per cent of all criteria and placed second nationally in a jurisdictional scan of long-term care legislation, policies, directives and standards from the National Institute on Aging released on July 5, 2023.
  - The report highlights that the Yukon upholds person-centered care, meaningful quality of life for residents and high-quality safe care.
  - Continuing Care is actively working on aligning practices to meet all the suggested long-term care standards.

#### **Long-term Care Staffing:**

- The Yukon's long-term care homes have among the highest hours of direct nursing care in the country, with on average 4.38 hours of care provided per day, per resident. Residents are also supported by a team of recreation, rehabilitation and First Nations services workers.
- The high standards of care are made possible through an enhanced staffing level model, which allows long-term care homes to maintain capacity and

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operate at core staffing levels while delivering the full spectrum of services to residents, even in the face of vacancies.

- When unfilled nursing shifts bring the staffing levels below core levels, there are processes in place to share staff across houses and neighbourhoods within each long-term care home to maintain safe working conditions and essential care of residents.
- Across all houses in Whitehorse long-term care homes, unfilled scheduled nursing shifts resulted in essential staffing levels:
  - For a portion of 20 days from October to December 2022
  - For a portion of 4 days from January to March 21, 2023
  - For a portion of 11 days from March 22 to July 25, 2023.
  - For a portion of 29 days from August 1 to November 1, 2023
  - For a portion of 3 days from November 1 to January 31, 2024
- Recruitment and retention efforts are ongoing with retention and signing bonuses available to long-term care nurses.
- We are committed to supporting Yukon nurses who have sacrificed much of their personal lives to their jobs over the past few years by ensuring they receive the hard-earned time off they deserve.

#### **Watson Lake:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are working together to how to support two long-term care beds at the Watson Lake Community Hospital.
- We appreciate residents of Watson Lake bringing forward feedback and concerns about the availability of Continuing Care supports and services in the community.
- We continue to work to assess opportunities to support Yukoners, including through the implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan and Putting People First report.

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- Watson Lake is supported by 1 permanent Registered Nurse/Home Support Supervisor providing care coordination, nursing, and home support work supervision, 1 AOC Registered Nurse, 1 AOC Home Support Worker, and 1 Whitehorse-based Home Care Occupational and Physical Therapist who visits the community two to three times per year.
  - Recruitment is underway for 1 permanent part-time Home Support Worker.
- As of June 30, 2023, there were 522 Yukoners age 55+ living in Watson Lake, representing 35% of the community's population.

### Wait Times for Long-Term Care:

- As of February 20, 2024, there are eight clients on the wait list for long-term care, as well as four additional clients who have deferred admissions but remain on waitlist.
- Communities with residents on the wait list include:
  - Dawson City
  - Whitehorse;
  - Burwash Landing;
  - Haines Junction; and
  - Watson Lake.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Midwifery**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to providing Yukoners with an additional option for safe, accessible, and high-quality maternity care without having to pay out of pocket.

**Key messages:**

- The Yukon Midwifery Program has been experiencing the impacts of the local and global shortage of healthcare workers and has been actively working to address staffing challenges.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program resumed full services and began intake of new clients on February 12, 2024.
- The new Collective Agreement between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Employees Union established a new classification for midwives, which is expected to assist in attracting midwives to work within the existing model of service delivery.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program, along with the entire maternity care community, is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of clients.
- The Yukon's approach to midwifery care is aligned with national standards and best practices, including for client safety.
- We continue to work with local and national partners to address the shortages of health care providers currently impacting the Yukon Midwifery Program and to ensure the program is fully integrated into our health system and offers high quality care for all Yukoners.

**Key facts:**

- The Yukon Midwifery clinic in Whitehorse officially opened its doors on July 7, 2022.
- The first midwife-led birth occurred on November 6, 2022.

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- Between November 6, 2022, and January 20, 2023, a total of 12 clients were supported with midwife-led births, including one home birth.
- On January 26, 2023, the Yukon Midwifery Program temporarily shut down and transferred clients to Solstice Maternity.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program resumed full services and began the intake of new clients on February 12, 2024.
- As of January 10, 2024, there are 2 out of 4 Registered Midwife positions filled with a third Midwife expected to resume services in March 2024.
  - 7 AOC Second Birth Attendants have been hired.
- While the Yukon Midwifery Program was temporarily shut down and unable to provide clinical care and services, Registered Midwives were offering prenatal care visits and full spectrum postnatal care.

**Implementation Plan and Model of Care:**

- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- The implementation plan, model of care, and launch of the Yukon Midwifery Program was based on the recommendations of local and national experts, significant research, and extensive public and stakeholder feedback gathered throughout the engagement process.
- This engagement was essential to ensuring the successful integration of the Yukon Midwifery Program into the Yukon's healthcare system.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program policies, practice protocols and quality improvement processes were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of local and national experts including registered midwives, nurses, physicians and Yukon First Nations. This is accomplished through the following groups:



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- Expert midwifery consultants who provide advice and feedback on system improvements to the program as needed.
  - The Whitehorse General Hospital Midwifery Working Group supported the systems and operational integration of Registered Midwives into Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - MOREOB – Client safety and performance improvement program for interprofessional obstetrical teams funded by the Government of Yukon for Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - We also continue to participate on committees and teams and to attend regular meetings with providers, partners and stakeholders from across the health system to ensure the Yukon Midwifery Program is effectively being integrated into our healthcare system.

#### Midwives Regulation:

- The *Midwives Regulation* is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Yukoners accessing midwifery services. This allows for the highest standard of care.
- Local and national midwifery experts provided advice that the Government of Yukon's *Midwives Regulation* needed to be enacted immediately to transition away from unregulated services.
- Prior to the *Regulation*, only Yukoners who could afford to pay out-of-pocket could access midwifery-type services and only outside of hospital settings.
- Because there were no regulations in place, there were no minimum education, training, or liability insurance requirements for people offering these services.
- Individuals wanting to practice midwifery in the territory are now required to complete formal training as a midwife, to have held a license in another Canadian jurisdiction for a minimum of one year, and to hold insurance to practice midwifery in the Yukon.

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- The requirement for Yukon midwives to obtain one year of experience outside the territory is due to lower birth numbers in the Yukon to ensure our midwives have sufficient experience to support Yukon families.
- Midwives wishing to operate as private practice providers must meet the criteria for practicing in the territory, as set out under the *Regulation*, including being licensed, insured, and having a second attendant appropriately licensed, insured, and available for any home births.
- The *Midwives Regulation* requires that Registered Midwives in the Yukon have insurance of \$10M per incident and \$20M per year.

### Staffing:

- Ensuring the health and safety of our clients relies on a team of Registered Midwives who provide the full scope of midwifery care.
- To provide 24/7 coverage while complying with the Yukon Standards of Practice for Registered Midwives at non-hospital births, there always needs to be two staff from the Midwifery team on-call.
  - To achieve this level of coverage, the program needs to fill all four Midwife positions (one Clinical Manager and three Registered Midwives) and/or hire Second Birth Attendants.
  - The Second Birth Attendant works within their own scope of practice to support out-of-hospital births alongside a Registered Midwife in the Yukon. This on-call role must be a registered medical or health professional in the Yukon.

### Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Pharmacists**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with our health system partners, including pharmacists, to expand access to care and preventative treatments, and to ensuring Yukoners are connected to integrated and person-centered health care services.

**Key messages:**

- Our government is working with pharmacists to integrate the profession into our health system by expanding their scope of practice.
- We continue to work with Yukon pharmacists to address our shared goals, enhance the supports available to Yukoners, and identify additional opportunities for pharmacists to participate in our health system.
- Pharmacists have played an important role in our coordinated response to COVID-19 and the Substance Use Health Emergency.

**Key facts:**

- As of February 2024 there are 66 licensed pharmacists in the Yukon.
- In 2023, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,689 vaccines.
- In 2022, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,265 vaccines.
- A total of 36 pharmacists have an injection endorsement; five pharmacists have a travel vaccine endorsement; and 34 pharmacists have the minor prescribing endorsement.
- Free Naloxone kits are available through participating pharmacies.

**Expanded Scope:**

- We worked with pharmacists to develop the *Pharmacists Regulation* in 2019, which expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists and created new pathways for Yukoners to access services.

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- On June 30, 2022, the scope of practice for pharmacists was expanded further to take advantage of their clinical expertise and training and to align with the services provided in other jurisdictions.
- Expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists is consistent with our work to implement Putting People First.
- Participating pharmacists licensed in the Yukon can choose to:
  - Extend existing prescriptions on all prescription drugs, including controlled substances, up to a maximum of two times;
  - Extend or modify prescriptions for controlled substances such as methadone, when needed in emergency situations;
  - Transfer controlled substance prescriptions within and outside of the Yukon;
  - Accept a prescriber's verbal order to extend or refill a prescription for controlled substances; and,
  - Deliver, along with their delegates, controlled substances in accordance with the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

**Initial Prescribing Program:**

- In December 2022, a new initial prescribing program came into effect, allowing pharmacists to assess and prescribe medications for some minor ailments, smoking-cessation, and some vaccinations.
- The Yukon's professional fees for these services are amongst the most competitive in Canada.
- Participating pharmacies must complete mandatory training before offering services under their expanded scope of practice.
- Individual pharmacies may determine which services they choose to offer.
- Pharmacists can choose to offer services such as publicly funded vaccines, and some travel vaccines.

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## Pharmacists

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- Pharmacists cannot administer vaccines to children under the age of five.
- Travel vaccines are not publicly funded, though certain vaccines used for travel may be used to address other public health needs such as for immunosuppressed groups or as routine immunizations and are publicly funded in specific scenarios.
- Children under the age of five may access travel vaccines through their primary care provider.
- Yukoners of any age can receive travel vaccines through a private clinic in Whitehorse.

### Markup:

- In November 2020, we negotiated a new pharmaceutical markup and cap with local pharmacists, which came into effect in July 2021.
- After implementing these changes, we discovered these changes were not being applied correctly through the billing system. In response, we immediately worked to implement an interim solution in August 2021 to ensure pharmacists were supported.
- These interim solutions remain in place while we work with the software vendor to permanently address the underlying issues with the billing software.
- There is currently no ongoing backlog of outstanding payments to pharmacists. Should additional outstanding payments be identified, these payments are processed and resolved quickly.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Psychiatry**

**Spring 2024**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with psychiatrists to support access to psychiatry services and wraparound supports for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to support access to psychiatric services in the Yukon.
- We have increased the number of resident psychiatrists in the territory to provide more care to Yukoners.
- We continue to work with psychiatrists and health system partners to help ensure clients get appropriate and timely care.

**Key facts:**

- As of January 2024, the Yukon is supported by six resident psychiatrists, a locum child and youth psychiatrist who provides regular services, and other locums as needed.
  - At the Referred Care Clinic, one psychiatrist provides addictions medicine psychiatry on a contract basis one day per week.
  - Four of the resident psychiatrists work at Summit Health Associates, which the Government of Yukon has contracted to provide outpatient and inpatient psychiatric services.
  - We welcomed the fourth psychiatrist to Summit Health Associates in Fall 2023 to expand access to services for Yukoners.
  - This clinic's psychiatrists provide full-time, on-call psychiatric services at Whitehorse General Hospital at all times.

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- There is also a resident psychiatrist contracted by the Government of Yukon who provides services through Soulshine Health in Whitehorse.
- By adding a sixth resident psychiatrist, we have addressed a gap in access to psychiatric care for unattached patients informed by evidence-based decision making.
- There is approximately a one to three week wait time depending on urgency for a client to see a psychiatrist through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- The average wait time at Summit Health Associates is approximately 24 weeks for non-urgent consults. More urgent consults are triaged to be seen earlier.
- As of December 2023, there were approximately 350 patients receiving care at the Summit Health Associates, with approximately 130 awaiting assessments, approximately 200 patients receiving care at Soulshine Health, and approximately 300 patients accessing psychiatric care through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

**Psychiatric Services:**

- As part of our ongoing efforts to improve psychiatric care in the Yukon, we are working to assess current and projected levels of need. We continue to find ways to enhance psychiatric services to ensure people see the right provider in the right place at the right time.
- We aim to improve patient access and flow between general practitioners, emergency departments, psychiatric and outpatient care.
- Some trends in the last three years include:
  - The number of Yukoners accessing psychiatric care has increased from 891 to 1,044.

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### **Psychiatry**

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- The total number of encounters patients have had with a psychiatrist has increased from 4,645 to 5,366.
  - Approximately 19 per cent of all patients and encounters are from Yukoners who live outside Whitehorse.
  - On average, both rural and urban patients have had five encounters with a psychiatrist.
- The top four diagnoses are:
  - Mood disorders (30 per cent of all distinct encounters).
  - Adjustment disorders (14 per cent of all distinct encounters).
  - Anxiety, dissociative and somatoform disorders (14 per cent of all distinct encounters).
  - Schizophrenic disorders (13 per cent of all distinct encounters).
- The Canadian Psychiatric Association supports a psychiatrist to population ratio of approximately 1:8,400. Psychiatric coverage in the Yukon is within this range; however, some patients and care providers have expressed concern with timely access to care.
- We will continue working with psychiatrists and system partners in an evidence-based manner:
  - To reduce wait times and support appropriate referrals;
  - To make access more equitable and measurable;
  - To further integrate psychiatry into the healthcare system with allied health and outreach workers;
  - To develop a consistent threshold for access to psychiatric care based on benchmarks and criteria that include patient presentation, acuity, diagnoses, and length of stay; and



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- To develop consistent remuneration models and an expression of interest process based on a service delivery model in preparation for a transition to Health and Wellness Yukon.

**Accessing Psychiatry:**

- Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or nurse practitioner, the walk-in clinic or by a physician through the Emergency Department.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services triages psychiatric care for its clients based on a clinical assessment and provides access to a psychiatrist for individuals with serious and persistent illness that are part of the Psychiatric Outreach Program, Early Psychosis Intervention Program or Referred Care Clinic.
- High priority clients referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services who require wraparound supports are prioritized. Every effort is made to see clients with acute psychiatric concerns within a two-week period.
  - During the two-week wait time, intensive outreach and mental health clinician supports are provided.
- Private psychiatrists set their own schedules and determine how many clients to take on at a time.
- The new Mental Wellness Unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital is expected to open in 2024. This work is the result of a partnership between the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and community partners.

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**Contracts:**

- Psychiatrists may have questions about entering into a contract with the Government of Yukon.
- Contracts with psychiatrists adhere to Government of Yukon award processes using either an Expression of Interest or direct award and is informed by evidence-based need.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to working with psychiatrists interested in a contract to support service delivery.
- This work involves assessing current service delivery models, understanding gaps in coverage, and determining how we can best work with providers to ensure an acceptable amount of psychiatric care is provided to patients in return for remuneration received.
- We take seriously our commitment to transparency and equity while balancing fiscal responsibility.
- Yukon has a blended model of fee for service and contract, both models play an important role in delivery of care.

**Electroconvulsive Therapy and Ketamine:**

- Our government understands the importance of providing psychiatric treatment options.
- Health Canada has become aware of an increased interest in the off-label use of ketamine for the treatment of different conditions, such as treatment-resistant depression and using various formulations, including compounded products. The risks and benefits of ketamine use for off-label conditions have not been assessed by Health Canada.
- There are clinical trials underway to further characterize the safety and efficacy of ketamine for various therapeutic uses.
- Ketamine is listed as a benefit on the Yukon Drug Formulary but is limited to palliative care services.

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- While off-label use of ketamine for treatment-resistant depression is not eligible for coverage under the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program in the Yukon, we will continue to work with the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to review new and emerging research on its use for the treatment of certain conditions.
- Electroconvulsive Therapy is a treatment for severe mental illness which involves brief electrical stimulation of the brain.
  - Electroconvulsive Therapy is not provided in the Yukon, but out-of-territory treatment can be accessed for eligible Yukoners through reciprocal billing when provided through a publicly funded facility elsewhere in the country.
- Our government will continue to work closely with our partners, including psychiatrists, to continue to offer Yukoners psychiatric treatment options and wraparound supports.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Chronic Conditions**

**Spring 2024**

Health and Social  
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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to enhancing supports for Yukoners living with chronic disease and disability conditions to improve health outcomes.

#### **Key messages:**

- We continue to work with our partners to develop a Type 1 Diabetes Strategy for the Yukon.
- Our ongoing work with Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes, their families, local advocacy groups and service providers aligns with recommendations in the Putting People First report.

#### **Key facts:**

- During the 2024-25 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$1.5M** (\$1,449,957) for the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
- As of February 2024, there are 671 clients accessing various levels of service through the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
  - So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the program has supported a total of 275 new clients.
  - In 2022-23, the program supported 267 new clients.
  - New clients generally require access to a greater number of programs and appointments initially. Once a care plan has been optimized, follow-up support usually involves a visit every 6 to 12 months depending on client needs.
- The services provided by the Chronic Conditions Support Program supports all people with, or at risk of developing, a chronic condition.

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Condition-specific programming is available for respiratory conditions, diabetes, heart failure, and cardiovascular disease.

- As of 2020, data submitted to the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System estimates there are approximately 3,182 Yukoners living with diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2, excluding gestational diabetes).
- There are 74 people with the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and 15 people with the Pharmacare Program enrolled for a continuous glucose monitoring device.

**Chronic Conditions Support Program:**

- The Chronic Conditions Support Program is a patient-centered, collaborative care team that offers individual and group support with nurse educators, exercise specialists, dietitians, and pharmacists. Some of these are certified diabetes educators or certified respiratory educators.
- There are 7 permanent FTEs that support the Chronic Conditions Support Program including 2.0 FTE Chronic Conditions Nurse Educators, 2 FTE clinical exercise specialists, 1 FTE supervisor, 1 FTE Clinical Dietitian and 1 FTE program administrator. They are supported by 1 term Chronic Conditions Nurse Educator, 1 term exercise assistant, as well as by contract dietitians and pharmacists.
- Anyone who has or is at-risk for a chronic health condition can access services by self-referral or through their primary care provider
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers a variety of supervised exercise programs that are in high demand.

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- The Chronic Conditions Support Program continues to work closely with clients to ensure all care needs are met, and that they have access to accurate information regarding ongoing programming options.

#### **Type 1 Diabetes Strategy:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is working with the T1D Support Network to develop and implement a territory-wide Type 1 Diabetes Strategy.
- The Strategy address areas such as
  - accessing health technologies,
  - person centered, responsive, and timely care,
  - education and awareness, and
  - data collection and system improvement.
- Building on the success of a pilot project with the T1D Support Network, our government became the first in Canada to provide Continuous Glucose Monitors for all individuals with Type 1 Diabetes and to offer funding to those with Type 1 Diabetes over the age of 18 to cover their choice of glucose monitoring device.
- We are reviewing a position within the Chronic Conditions Support Program that is focused on supporting Type 1 Diabetes at various points in the lifespan.
- We are involved in a working group that includes the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the T1D Support Network that will review several areas of concern, including discharge planning and potential for outreach and support for Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes.
- We are also working with the department of Education to ensure we are providing the necessary supports for Type 1 Diabetes in Yukon Schools, including the adoption and implementation of Type 1 Diabetes policies.

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**Type Two Diabetes:**

- The current evidence related to continuous glucose monitoring and the health outcomes for people with Type 2 Diabetes is limited. We will continue to actively monitor emerging evidence in this area.
- A number of supports are available to individuals living with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes through the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
  - The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers a Diabetes Wellness Series and various other diabetes group education sessions.
  - Chronic Conditions Nurse Educator Supports are available through this program to offer one-on-one education, case management, access to point of care services that align with guideline care, and system navigation.
  - Exercise Specialist-led exercise programming is also available to clients to build healthy habits and better manage blood sugars.
  - Clinical Dietitian support is offered in one-on-one and group formats.
- All supplies required to manage diabetes such as insulin, syringes, insulin pumps, lancets, test strips and glucometers are covered through Insured Health Services.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Dental**

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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring dental care is accessible for Yukoners as we continue to implement the recommendations in the Putting People First report.

### **Key messages:**

- On January 4, 2023, we launched the Yukon Dental Program to provide dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- The program is intended to complement our current programs and provide eligibility to Yukoners with access to essential dental care.
- Eligible Yukon seniors who are registered through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program can receive annual dental checkups, cleanings, and fillings.
  - Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits clients can receive \$600 annually through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.
- The Yukon Children's Dental Program provides services to:
  - students from kindergarten to Grade 7 at elementary schools in Whitehorse and rural communities with a resident dentist;
  - students from kindergarten to Grade 12 or under the age of 18 at elementary schools in rural communities without a resident dentist; and
  - all children from ages 0 to 5 through the Preschool Dental Program.
- We are pleased to continue to work with dental care providers in the territory to support Yukoners' oral health.



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**Key facts:**

- As of February 2024, a total of 1,757 people have been enrolled in the Yukon Dental Program since it launched in January 2023. Of those enrolled, a total of 1,156 Yukoners have received dental care.
- Applications for the Yukon Dental Program are being processed within 4 to 5 days, with urgent care applications processed on the same day.
- The Government of Yukon will provide up to \$537K over 3 years to Pacific Blue Cross to administer the Yukon Dental Program.
- During the 2022-23 school year, the Yukon Children's Dental Program provided service to 3,175 children in Whitehorse and Yukon communities.
- The Preschool Dental Program serves 300 to 500 children per year.

**Itinerant Dentist:**

- There has not been an itinerant dentist since March 31, 2023, when the contract to serve Yukon communities ended.
- The Yukon Children's Dental Program put out an Expression of Interest for an itinerant dentist for the period of April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2025, with the possibility of a one-year extension.
- This expression of interest has been advertised broadly through the Yukon Dental Association, as well as through national channels. It did not result in any uptake to provide this service.
- Another attempt to secure an itinerant dentist was posted in fall 2023 but did not result in a contract as the bid was 4.5 times higher than the budget. New options are being considered.
- Rural Yukoners can still access dental services in Whitehorse until a new itinerant dentist is recruited.

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- The Yukon Children's Dental Program continues to provide service to newborns to children in grade 12 or under the age of 18 living in rural communities without a resident dentist.
- The previous itinerant dentist provided service to Dawson City, Old Crow, Mayo, Carmacks, Watson Lake, and Faro.
  - Residents of Ross River had access to the itinerant dentist through the Faro clinic.
- Based on services required within the communities, the number of initial and subsequent visits by the itinerant dentist had been meeting the level of need.
- As work continues on contracting a new itinerant dentist, we will assess whether additional community visits and clinic locations are required.

**Yukon Children's Dental Program:**

- The Yukon Children's Dental Program is one of the most generous pediatric dental programs in the country.
- Children have access to publicly funded dental care through the Preschool Dental Program and the Yukon Children's Dental Program.
- Due to the local, national and global shortage of health care providers, the Yukon Children's Dental Program is experiencing staffing shortages.
- The Children's Preschool Dental Program is currently operating 4 days a week.

**Yukon Dental Program:**

- The Yukon Dental Program officially launched on January 4, 2023.
- On July 1, 2023, a new coverage period began, which will provide coverage to individuals through June 30, 2024.

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- The program covers dental treatments necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease and restore chewing and social function. It offers full coverage for preventive care, such as routine dental cleaning.
- To be eligible for the program, the applicant's gross income must be \$60,000 or less for individuals and \$90,000 or less for individuals with 2 children (family of 3).
  - The threshold increases progressively with family size.
  - Yukoners must also be enrolled in the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan and not be eligible for dental coverage under any other insurance program, plan or group.
- The Yukon Dental Program uses line 15000 of the Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency. This is an assessment of each individual's total income.
- Line 23600 is net income, and reflects income split between partners. Some seniors are familiar with the use of line 23600 for the Pioneer Utility Grant, which uses net household income in their assessment and have expressed an issue with this line not being used to determine eligibility for the Yukon Dental Program.
- Health is an individualized matter and using line 15000 of the Notice of Assessment supports the autonomy of the individual. In contrast, the Pioneer Utility Grant addresses the needs of the household.
- In December 2022, the Canada Dental Benefit was launched for children 12 and under. It does not impact eligibility for the Yukon Dental Program.
- Children are eligible for the program if their caregivers meet the income threshold and they are not eligible for the Yukon Children's Dental Program.
- Individuals approved for the program only pay for services that are above the annual limit of \$1,300 or above Yukon Dental Program general

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practitioner rates. The dentist submits the claim directly to Pacific Blue Cross.

- The Yukon Dental Program does not provide medical travel coverage.
  - Medical travel is defined in regulation and only supports access to insured health services when services are unavailable locally.
  - Emergency dental services provided at Whitehorse General Hospital may be eligible for medical travel coverage.
- The eligibility model used for this program considered factors such as administrative capacity, cost and timelines, to ensure the program could begin providing dental benefits to Yukoners as soon as possible.
- As we consider the future evolution of the program, we are committed to conducting further analysis on areas for improvement.
- This work will be done in concert with evaluating the impact of the incoming Canada Dental Care Program on the Yukon Dental Program.
  - The department continues to work with the federal government on how the programs will interact.
- As part of our evaluation plan, we will also be reaching out to Yukoners to hear their feedback on what is working and what could be improved with the program.

### Federal Dental Program:

- A phased launch began in December 2023 for the new Canada Dental Care Plan, opening with applications for seniors aged 87 and above.
- As of March 2024, the program is available to seniors aged 70 to 71 and above, with applications for those aged 65-69 expected to be opened in May 2024.
  - The program is set to launch for children under 18 and people with disabilities in June 2024; and for all eligible Canadians in 2025.

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- In September 2022, the federal government announced they will provide payments up to \$650 per year for each child under 12 in families without private or employer insurance and an adjusted net annual income under \$90,000.
- In April 2023, the federal government outlined plans to develop and administer a national dental program in place of the interim funding model.
- In December, 2023, the federal government announced details of their new Canada Dental Care Plan with phased enrollment beginning in December and coverage beginning as early as May 2024.
- Yukon Government officials continue to work with Health Canada colleagues on the implementation of their new program and impacts to the Yukon public dental programming.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

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### **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to creating an integrated and person-centered healthcare system that operates in a seamless, coordinated way.

#### **Key messages:**

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff and Community Responders are dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the territory.
- Emergency Medical Services has been impacted by the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers.
- Since raising the honoraria, Emergency Medical Services has seen an increase in new volunteer community responders.
- As part of our work to implement Putting People First, we have transitioned Yukon Emergency Medical Services from the department of Community Services to Health and Social Services.
- This transfer is an organizational change intended to align health services across the territory in a way that enables care to be more person-centered to promote seamless care transitions.

#### **Key facts:**

- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$13.0M** (\$13,004,000) for EMS.
- There are 80.8 FTEs and 102 Community Responders providing Emergency Medical Services across the territory.
- Currently, operations including Air Ambulance Services and ground operations are fully staffed in Whitehorse.
- Yukon EMS has one of the highest scopes of practice in the country including Community Responders, Primary Care Paramedics, Expanded

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Care Paramedics, Paramedic Specialists and Critical Care Paramedics and Nurses.

- Emergency Medical Services provides both ground and air transport for patients in communities who require care at Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - The Paramedic Specialist Clinic at 405 Alexander and the Paramedics Response Unit are actively recruiting 1 staff member.
- Emergency Medical Services uses a combination of Government of Yukon Paramedics and local Community Responders in Dawson City and Watson Lake.
- Emergency Medical Services experiences shortages of volunteer Community Responders in all Yukon communities from time to time.
- Emergency Medical Services continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all Communities.
- Coverage in Yukon communities fluctuates based on volunteer participation and availability. Between January 1 and February 29, 2024, coverage was on average 77 per cent across the communities with the exception of Marsh Lake.
  - Marsh Lake is supported by two EMS Stations: in-community and Whitehorse operations,

Community	January coverage	February coverage
Beaver Creek	81%	90%
Carcross	32%	46%
Carmacks	77%	68%
Destruction Bay	91%	100%

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Faro	89%	98%
Haines Junction	97%	96%
Mayo	40%	48%
Pelly Crossing	67%	64%
Ross River	94%	100%
Tagish	19%	38%
Teslin	84%	89%
Dawson City	99%	99%
Watson lake	99%	99%

- As of March 2024, EMS coverage is supported by the following number of responders in each community:
  - Beaver Creek – 9 community responders,
  - Carcross – 9 community responders,
  - Carmacks – 9 community responders, 2 on-boarding
  - Dawson City – 8 community responders, 2.0 full-time and 4 AOC employees, 1 on-boarding
  - Destruction Bay – 11 community responders,
  - Faro – 6 community responders,
  - Haines Junction – 16 community responders,
  - Marsh Lake – 6 community responders, 1 on-boarding (Supported by Whitehorse).
  - Mayo – 5 community responders,
  - Pelly Crossing – 3 community responders, 1 on-boarding
  - Ross River – 5 community responders
  - Tagish – 4 community responders (Supported by Carcross),



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- Teslin – 10 community responders
- Watson Lake – 8 community responders, 4.0 full-time, and 3.0 AOC employees, 1 on-boarding
- Whitehorse – 22.0 full-time, 3.0 part-time, 14.0 AOC, and 6 casual employees.
- There are 4.0 paramedics supporting the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter at 405 Alexander and 2.0 are part of the paramedic response unit.
- As of January 2024, there are 25 staff supporting air ambulance services including 14 FTEs, 5 term positions and 6 AOC personnel.

**Ambulances:**

- In 2024-25, we are budgeting **\$350K** for ambulance replacements.
- These new ambulances will be introduced into the fleet and deployed to communities based on clinical and operational requirements.
- All Emergency Medical Services ambulances are currently fully operational.
- EMS maintains a fleet of 30 ground ambulances and maintains one mobile training unit. The fleet is in a state of readiness at all times.
- Ambulances are deployed throughout Emergency Medical Services stations territory wide. They are moved routinely throughout the territory, based on capacity and need.

**Code Red:**

- Code Reds occur when Emergency Medical Services have been requested and no ambulances are immediately available to respond.
- Code Reds are tracked in Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Dawson City, but not in other communities where ambulance dispatch is done through Community Nursing.

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- Across the three communities there were approximately 19 Code Reds monthly in 2023. The impacts of these instances vary, and Emergency Medical Services continually monitors code reds to ensure mitigation strategies are in place.

**Dawson City:**

- EMS is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Dawson that will set expectations and clarify roles for emergency services within the community. These conversations are ongoing, and no Memorandum of Understanding is in place.
- The intent is to understand and manage existing gaps within emergency service roles across allied providers.
- As of March 2024, EMS coverage has been at 99% since the beginning of the year.
- In 2023 coverage in Dawson varied from around 72% in the summer to 99 % in December.
  - Dawson had 98% coverage in 2021 and 86% coverage in 2022.
- In Dawson City, EMS responded to 256 calls in 2023 and 295 calls in 2022.

**Dawson City Ambulance Association**

- Our government is aware of interest from community members in Dawson City to establish a Dawson City Ambulance Association.
- We understand this group's intent is to provide non-government EMS as a "back-up service". A service of this nature is not necessary.
- A representative from EMS has met with the group to better understand their proposal to encourage their members to support the local Emergency Medical Services team.

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- Further review is required to understand what this organization is seeking to accomplish, its feasibility, legislative requirements, and the legal, ethical and humanitarian risks to responders and patients.
- The Dawson City Ambulance Association released a report entitled “Deployable Dawson City Based Ground Ambulance Coverage 01 January 2022 – 31 October 2023” in January 2024.
- The report asserts a lower level of coverage in Dawson than is reported by EMS. This is due to a change in how EMS achieves full coverage.
- Due to recent organizational changes, two EMS personnel are now required to achieve full coverage. In previous years, including the 2022-23 period addressed in the report, RCMP or Fire Department staff could contribute to coverage by assisting with transportation.

**Watson Lake:**

- In Watson Lake, there are 4 full-time Primary Care Paramedics working seven days a week (daytime), as well as 3 AOC positions and 8 active Community Responders in Watson Lake.
- Due to increased call volumes in Watson Lake, EMS has moved to a new staffing model at the Watson Lake ambulance station, using a hybrid of employees and Community Responders.
- The new staffing model provides funding equivalent to 3.2 full-time positions of additional employee-based coverage, and funding to cover standby costs when community responders are unavailable.
  - These positions provide coverage in Watson Lake for more than 10 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- As of March 2024, EMS coverage has been at 99% since the beginning of the year. Coverage means a local ambulance is staffed at that time.

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- Watson Lake had 98% coverage in 2021 and 97% coverage in 2022. In December 2023 Watson Lake had 99.9% coverage.
- In 2023, Watson Lake EMS responded to 291 calls. Call volume averaged approximately 420 calls per year over the past three years.

**Drug Testing:**

- All Yukon EMS units carry Naloxone Kits and drug checking kits to provide to the public. Emergency Communications Response Officers are trained to deliver Naloxone administration instructions over the phone.
- Yukon EMS has distributed over 3000 home drug checking kits throughout the Yukon. Kits are available at 405 Alexander, through the Paramedic Response Unit in Whitehorse, at all Yukon Liquor Corporation locations and in several communities.
- EMS offers drug checking at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, Paramedic Specialist Clinic

**EMS Air Ambulance Helicopter Use**

- Yukon EMS has a contract with Alkan Air that provides access to aircraft including helicopters for responding to medical emergencies.
- In situations where dedicated aircraft cannot access airstrips or remote locations, Alkan Air provides alternative aircrafts including helicopters.
  - At this time, Alkan Air can propose other aircrafts from their fleet or sub-contract to another aircraft operator as required.
  - The decision to accept or reject a proposed alternative aircraft rests with Yukon EMS based on their expertise.
- When responding to medical emergencies, dispatchers manage flight plans, logistics and communication through a system specifically designed to address the needs of medical transfers.

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- The determination of resources and destination are made based on the patient's care needs.
- This system-based approach enables a standardized, consistent and trackable response by EMS.
- When transporting a patient to the Whitehorse General Hospital, the aircraft will land at the Erik Nielson Whitehorse International Airport. The patient is then transferred to the Hospital by ground ambulance.
  - At this time a helipad is not being considered at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

**Feedback**

- Emergency Medical Services has multiple methods of tracking information or concerns during medivacs. This includes:
- Incident reports are completed on the Electronic Patient Care Reports Platform for any situation occurring during patient care. Reports are then reviewed for safety considerations and addressed monthly at Operational Health and Safety meetings.
- Occurrence reports can be completed by crew for any operational concerns and are submitted to the superintendent, commander or deputy chief of Emergency Medical Services.
- Any concerns from the Yukon Hospital Corporation or physician group can be addressed through the Emergency Medical Services medical director, deputy chief of technical operations or addressed at the patient transfer committee meeting.
- All aircraft concerns are communicated to our provider and addressed as per the contract.
- Any Emergency Medical Services representative may receive feedback on behalf of the Branch. This information is then provided to the appropriate work unit manager or director of Emergency Medical

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Services for action. When appropriate, feedback must be addressed with the initial party before closure.

- We appreciate all opportunities to receive and review feedback from staff and public across all modes of communication to ensure Yukoners are receiving the care they need in a timely manner.

**Medical Transfer Protocol Suite (MTPS)**

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services implemented MTPS in December 2022.
- Prior to MTPS, decisions were made based on the national Canadian Triage Acuity Scale system which is used by acute and emergency departments across the country to prioritize patient care requirements.
- MTPS is designed to address a range of medical transfer needs, from basic to critical care.
- Through MTPS, dispatchers manage flight plans, logistics and communication with the determined destination. This approach enables emergency responders to focus on care and preparations.
- Dispatchers use MTPS as a tool to inform and support logistics and decision-making. Incident information and key questions are used by dispatchers to quickly identify resources required for the appropriate response.
  - This approach then guides dispatchers in providing all post-dispatch and pre-arrival instructions.
- Most medevac services in Canada operate using similar centralized coordinated dispatch systems.
- Priority dispatch, the provider of Medical Transfer Protocol Suite, is the same company that has been used by Emergency Medical Services for over 20 years.

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- This system-based approach enables a standardized, consistent and trackable response by Emergency Medical Services.

**Shortages:**

- At times, incident volume exceeds available resources. This is not unique to the Yukon and does happen with Emergency Services locally, nationally and internationally.
- We have a variety of ways to manage these situations and reduce the impact to patients and prioritize patient care. To ensure coverage, EMS may reposition people and ambulances, call on the nearest units, use an air ambulance or work with the client to figure out alternative transport.
- Our dispatchers are trained to triage calls and deliver medical instructions over the phone before the arrival of an ambulance. Their goal is getting the right resource to the right place at the right time.

**Status of the Special Operation Medical Extraction Team (SOMET)**

- The RCMP are responsible for leading search and rescue in the Yukon. Emergency Medical Services works collaboratively to provide medical supports for emergency medical search and rescue calls.
- The Special Operation Medical Extraction Team (SOMET) under the Fire and Life Safety was disbanded as of December 2023.
  - To streamline operations, supported by Fire and Life Safety, Emergency Measures Organization is working with Yukon Search and Rescue to bring together the volunteers from both organizations, schedule appropriate training, and explore opportunities for utilizing the interest & expertise of SOMET members within the Yukon Search and Rescue structure.

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- Between 2020 and 2024, SOMET took part in 4 responses. The RCMP often opted to utilize Yukon Search and Rescue under its purview to meet their needs.
- In March 2024, a total of 4 FTE paramedics successfully completed joint rescue training with the RCMP to increase capacity to support.
  - As of March 22, 2024, trained paramedics have been deployed once to respond to an emergency under the RCMP response.
- Emergency Medical Services maintains the capacity to respond to remote requests through the air ambulance program.

**Training and Honoraria:**

- Emergency Medical Services offers a variety of training methods and programs to increase recruitment and retention of community responders and to ensure support for community responders.
  - This includes a training centre, mobile training unit, high fidelity training mannequins, an online learning platform, local training nights and certificate courses; in addition to peer support programs and mental wellness and supports with a focus on the psychological health and safety of our first responders.
- Emergency Medical Services also provides accredited programs and certification for Community Responders.
- Emergency Medical Services has two clinical educator positions dedicated to education and training. These positions provide in person and virtual training throughout the territory.
- Emergency Medical Services hosts bi-weekly training nights for Community Responders.
- Emergency Medical Services provides compensation for 4 hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage Community Responder attendance and support biweekly training nights.



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- Community Responders are provided non-operational pay of \$19.08/hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area. This includes an offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books and accommodation.
- Emergency Medical Services provides operational pay ranging from \$21.20 to \$30.74 depending on scope of service.
- Community Responders receive honoraria for the commitment to , Emergency Medical Services provided for on-call services, training and all operational deployment. We have increased the on-call honorarium to \$7.70 per hour from the previous \$3.71 per hour.
- In addition to this funding, Community Responders receive a retention bonus of \$1,000.00 upon completion of 250 hours of on-call duties.
- EMS provides \$110,000 to the Volunteer Ambulance Society to provide funding for additional educational opportunities, awards, recognition and community engagement.

### Community Nursing Support:

- During service reductions or health centre closures, Emergency Medical Services works with local Community Responders to enhance coverage and can expand services by positioning paramedics directly in a community.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners in creating reproductive care plans and expanding access to sexual and reproductive health and gender-affirming care.

**Key messages:**

- We are working to support Yukoners to access sexual and reproductive care and services.
- We remain committed to implementing action items from the 2021 LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan and from Putting People First.
- The Yukon Government has committed to providing support for fertility treatments.
- We continue to work with stakeholders and partners including the federal government, health care providers, the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and Yukon First Nations to implement these initiatives.

**Key facts:**

- Starting in 2023-24, we have provided **\$471K** (\$471,027) over three years to Queer Yukon to hire a health care navigator position to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners by removing barriers and identifying pathways to safe, inclusive, and supportive gender-affirming care.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the Yukon Women's Midlife Clinic are supported by three contracted Nurse Practitioners

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**Birth Control:**

- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program, which is available to lower-income families with children 18 years of age and younger.
- Birth control is covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic provides a variety of conception control products to clients of the clinic.
- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners in accessing sexual and reproductive health care and will continue to assess access to birth control.
- Our government is committed to developing a new program that will provide Yukoners access to sexual and reproductive health care. Developing a new program will require careful planning, research, and engagement with Yukoners and our health system partners.
- The federal government announced a commitment to funding contraception under a new federal pharmacare framework. We support this announcement and look forward to working with federal partners to understand the implications for the Yukon.

**Surrogacy and Fertility Treatments:**

- Policy and program development is underway to make travel for surrogacy and fertility treatment eligible for coverage through the medical travel program.
  - We anticipate Travel for Medical Treatment Regulation amendments to be finalized for approval in Summer 2024.

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- Operational policy is in development to prepare for processing medical travel requests for surrogacy and fertility treatment upon the effective date of the amendments.
- The Departments of Finance and Health and Social Services are exploring funding models to assist Yukoners with the cost of surrogacy and fertility treatments.
- Fertility treatments and procedures such as *in vitro* fertilization are not insured health services and are not eligible for coverage.
- Our government is exploring opportunities to make fertility treatments more affordable for Yukoners, including by working to include eligible Yukoners who travel to access fertility treatments under the Travel for Medical Treatment Program.
- We are working to make these supports available as quickly as possible, while recognizing as initiative of this size will take some time.
- As part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA), we have committed to making fertility treatments and associated travel costs more affordable for Yukoners.
- Our government is also conducting a cross jurisdictional review and analysis on how to make fertility treatments more affordable for Yukoners.

### **Gender-Affirming Care:**

- The Yukon continues to demonstrate leadership, in collaboration with community organizations, in advancing access and coverage for gender-affirming care and in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners.
- We have completed necessary regulatory amendments to allow Yukoners to receive health care insurance coverage for gender-affirming care services that are not insured by other provinces or territories.

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- These changes do not impact other services that are not insured under the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan.
- Yukoners can access a host of gender affirming services including top and bottom surgery, tracheal shave, facial feminization, body contouring, vocal surgery and hair removal.
- For Yukoners seeking testosterone therapy, the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program provides coverage for injectable testosterone.
- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program covers multiple medications for individuals of all ages who are receiving gender-affirming care through hormone therapy.
  - This includes testosterone, estrogen and progesterone, when used as treatments for gender dysphoria.
- Puberty blockers refer to a group of medications for youth that temporarily inhibit puberty by suppressing the production of hormones and preventing development of secondary sexual characteristics.
- Puberty blockers are intended for youth under the age of 18, with persistent and well documented gender dysphoria as determined by a qualified assessor who is a mental health professional who assesses, refers, and offer therapeutic services for children and adolescent as outlined in the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.
- Taking into consideration the mental health and wellness of youth, the qualified assessor, in collaboration with the primary care provider, makes the recommendation to the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program for coverage of puberty blockers.
- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program covers leuprolide acetate as an exception drug for the suppression of puberty related to gender dysphoria.

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- We continue to implement recommendations in the LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan to enhance health equity in the Yukon.
- In June 2022, we supported Yukon counsellors from both government and non-government organizations to attend training from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.
- Parental consent is not explicitly required as part of the application or approval process for coverage through Insured Health Services.

**Facial feminization surgery**

- Facial feminization is a gender affirming procedure performed by plastic surgeons to give the face a more feminine appearance.
- Insured Health Services has provided coverage for individuals seeking facial feminization and will continue to do so. It does not include procedures to reverse the appearance of aging.
- All surgical assessment processes are completed in accordance with the Gender Affirming policies established by Insured Health Service, built from the World Health Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care
- Individuals seeking gender affirming care are encouraged to reach out to their healthcare providers or visit the department's gender affirming care health services website for more information.

**Period Products:**

- Through a funding partnership between our government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Government of Canada, all Yukon schools have been equipped with free period products.
- Free period products are available in many Government of Yukon washrooms and we are in the process of making products available in all Government of Yukon buildings.

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- The Council of Yukon First Nations has provided a supply of period products to several non-government organizations and Yukon First Nations offices and is ensuring these products remain available for distribution.
- Yukon University's campus housing has made period products available in communal bathrooms.
- As of December 15, 2023, federally regulated employers are required to make period products available in their workplaces at no cost.

**Pregnancy Termination:**

- Therapeutic (surgical) and medical (medication) pregnancy termination options are available to Yukoners at no cost.
  - Medication Termination (Mifegymiso) is available in Dawson City, Watson Lake and in Whitehorse via the Opal Clinic.
  - Surgical terminations are performed at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Pregnancy termination options are available up to 15 weeks plus three days of pregnancy. For pregnancies over this threshold and up to 24 weeks, services are available through the British Columbia Women's Hospital and are covered through the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan or by Non-Insured Health Benefits.
- In 2018, our government provided universal coverage of Mifegymiso.
  - Mifegymiso is a Health Canada approved combination product containing mifepristone and misoprostol that are taken in sequence.

**Syphilis:**

- The Yukon is seeing increasing rates of syphilis across the territory.
- Syphilis is spread through sexual contact or other activities involving direct skin-to-skin contact with a syphilis sore or rash.
- Syphilis can cause serious, long-term health harms when left untreated.

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- Worldwide there is also an increase in congenital syphilis, which has been identified in the Yukon.
- Early detection and treatment of syphilis in pregnancy can help to prevent more severe outcomes of congenital syphilis.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Chief Medical Officer of Health are working on a coordinated approach to address syphilis, including:
  - A territory-wide campaign to raise awareness about the growing number of cases and encourage Yukoners to get tested;
  - alerting health care providers to treatment guidelines and screening recommendations;
  - examining new testing options; and
  - organizing a response group through Yukon Communicable Disease Control.
- We encourage all sexually active Yukoners to use protection and make testing a regular part of their sexual health routine.
- Routine screening for people without symptoms involves a blood test, and for those with symptoms may also involve a swab of a sore or ulcer if present.
- Treatment is effective with a well-tolerated antibiotic.
- Yukoners can contact their health care provider, Community Health Centre or Yukon Communicable Disease Control to arrange testing or if they have further questions.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]



# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Insured Health Coverage**

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the health care needs of Yukoners through insured health coverage and benefits that are easy to access, equitable and evidence based.

**Key messages:**

- We are continuously seeking ways to improve insured health coverage to best meet the needs of all Yukoners.
- The Putting People First report recommendations highlight opportunities for improvement in insured health coverage and adjacent services. We are making progress.
- We are exploring opportunities for cost savings to ensure the sustainability of our healthcare system for generations to come. Transitioning patients on biological medications to safe, effective and low-cost biosimilars is one step we are taking to accomplish this work.
- The department is working to reduce the costs associated with reimbursements for drugs on the public formulary. This work is expected to be complete in the first quarter of the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- Our government is working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues on Canada's National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases.
  - This work includes determining how the 3-year funding commitment totaling \$1.4 billion can be used by provinces and territories to support the implementation of the National Strategy.

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Insured Health Coverage**

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**Key facts:**

- Enrollment in the Children's Drug and Optical Plan:
  - 63 people were enrolled in the 2021-22 fiscal year.
  - 55 people were enrolled in the 2022-23 fiscal year.
  - As of February 2024, a total of 45 people were enrolled during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Enrollment in the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program:
  - 1,276 people were receiving benefits in the 2021-22 fiscal year.
  - 1,204 people were receiving benefits in the 2022-23 fiscal year.
  - As of March 2024, a total of 1,198 people are receiving benefits in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Enrollment in the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program:
  - 6,191 people were receiving benefits in the 2021-22 fiscal year.
  - 6,616 people were receiving benefits in the 2022-23 fiscal year.
  - As of March 2024, a total of 6,865 people are receiving benefits in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Extended benefits are provided to status First Nations, Metis, and Inuit through the federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits program.
  - This includes coverage for pharmaceuticals, vision care, dental care, medical supplies and equipment and medical travel.

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#### **Federal Pharmacare**

- The federal government announced new pharmacare measures on February 25, 2024. The draft legislation sets out a framework for a national pharmacare program. In the short term, the federal government will provide coverage for contraception and diabetes treatment.
- Putting People First recommends working with the federal government to support a model of care for a national pharmacare program.
- Department officials are working with federal counterparts to understand what the program means for the Yukon and how these new measures can strengthen our existing Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits programs.
- We are working on gathering more information on the proposed pharmacare plan to make an informed decision on how best to proceed and to prevent duplication among existing programs within Insured Health Services.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program and for social assistance recipients.
- All supplies required to manage diabetes such as insulin, insulin syringes, insulin pumps, lancets, test strips and glucometers are currently covered through Insured Health Services.

#### **Hearing Services**

- Hearing Services provides hearing tests and supports, including,
  - Hearing loss evaluation
  - Newborn hearing screening
  - Hearing-aid consultation and fitting

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- Hearing-aid repairs
  - Assistive-listening device
  - Custom earplugs for swimming, sleeping, musicians and working in noise.
- Services can be accessed in Whitehorse Monday to Friday between 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.
  - The office is closed for lunch from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm.
- In communities, screenings for newborns and kindergarten age children are accessed through community health nurses. For those who are coming to Whitehorse, efforts will be made to co-ordinate a hearing appointment with your schedule.
- There is no referral necessary to access services provided through Hearing Services.
- Hearing Services is currently experiencing a reduction in services due to staffing shortages. We are working to identify options and improve service availability for eligible Yukoners.

#### **Biosimilars:**

- The Government of Yukon has made enhancements to our public drug plan with biosimilars.
- Yukoners enrolled in the Pharmacare or Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits programs taking originator biologic drugs may need to switch to a biosimilar.
- Biosimilars are highly similar but less expensive versions of the original biologic drug with no clinically meaningful differences in safety and efficacy.

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- Switching to biosimilars will result in significant cost savings that will improve the sustainability of the Yukon's public drug plans.
- Eligible Yukoners enrolled in Pharmacare or the Chronic Disease and Disability Program will have six months from the time of listing of the biosimilar to work with a health care provider to switch to a biosimilar included in the initiative to maintain coverage. Exemptions can be made if there is a valid medical reason.
- The biosimilar initiative will expand the use of biosimilars, and these savings can be invested into other health care services for Yukoners.

**The Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan:**

- The Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan provides evidence-based coverage for required hospital and medical services and some dental-surgical procedures.
- Coverage is for eligible Yukon residents. A resident is defined as anyone lawfully entitled to be or remain in Canada, who lives in the Yukon and is not absent for more than six months. This does not include tourists or other visitors to the Yukon.
- Medical Travel services include;
  - Coverage of emergency air and/or ground ambulance transportation services originating within Yukon for eligible Yukon residents. Return transportation is completed by the medical travel program the Yukon resident is eligible to receive this could be provided by Insured Health Services, Non-Insured Health Benefits, RCMP.

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- Coverage for pre-approved non-emergency travel for insured health services that are not available in one's home community for those who meet the program's eligibility criteria.

### **Children's Drug and Optical Program:**

- The Children's Drug and Optical Program helps cover the costs of prescription drugs and eye care for children aged 18 and under. This program is for lower-income families.
- The program is available to provide coverage for services such as prescriptions, eyewear and eye examinations, and physician recommended medical supplies, prenatal vitamins and wart treatments.
- Benefits are administered in accordance with the *Children's Drug and Optical Program Regulation*.

### **Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program:**

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program supports eligible Yukoners under the age of 65 to help cover some costs associated with managing their chronic disease or disabilities.
- The program supports an average of 1,100 clients per fiscal year.
- A chronic disease is defined as a health condition that is marked by long duration or frequent recurrence and is specified in the *Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Regulation*.
- The program provides coverage for approximately 80 chronic conditions, which are determined by regulation.
- As indicated under section 17 of the Regulation, the Director of Insured Health has the authority to designate a chronic condition as eligible for coverage.

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- This process is based on evidence, best practices, coverage in other Canadian jurisdictions, and legislative criteria, including the definition of chronic condition outlined in the Regulation.
- Under this authority, alcohol-use disorder has been designated as a chronic condition. Eligible beneficiaries of this program who are diagnosed with this condition may receive coverage for naltrexone or acamprosate. Both medications have been demonstrated to reduce cravings for alcohol.
- Allergic Disease is not listed as a chronic condition under the program and therefore does not qualify as a benefit under Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit program.
  - As a result, nutritional supplements for reason of allergy and EpiPens are not eligible for coverage under this benefit.
- EpiPens are covered for eligible Yukoners through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program with exception status, and the Children's Drug and Optical Program.
  - The Children's Drug and Optical Program does make allowances for food supplements if prescribed by a primary care provider and approved, as consistent with legislation.
- Both EpiPens and nutritional supplements including hypoallergenic baby formula are also covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services, when required.
- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program is a legislated payor of last resort.
  - If a person receives payment under any other Act or insurance, no amount can be paid through the program, except to the extent that the benefit does not cover the entire cost of service.
- Removal of the deductible would require regulatory amendment.

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- Depending on income level, a client may not have to pay a deductible amount.
- The deductible is waived for palliative clients and those who are on social assistance.
- The *Regulation* provides authorization for the director to reduce the prescribed deductible amount.

### **Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program:**

- This program assists individuals over the age of 65, as well as Yukoners between the ages of 60 and 64 who are married to a Yukon resident who is 65 or older.
- The program is available to support with coverage such as prescription drugs, dental care, eye care, and medical-surgical supplies and equipment.
- Benefits are administered in accordance with the *Pharmacare Plan Regulation* and the *Extended Health Benefits Regulation*.

### **Out-of-territory Treatment**

- Insured Health Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continue to work with Yukoners to ensure they receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care they need, including if that care is out-of-territory.
- In February 2022, Insured Health Services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment centers to support Yukoners to access pre-approved out-of-territory medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care at approved facilities.
- Treatment is supported in Ontario, BC and Alberta through Homewood Ravensview, Edgewood Treatment Centre, Last Door Recovery Centre, and Last Door Addiction Recovery Services.



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- Insured Health Services provides pre-approved coverage for eligible plan beneficiaries to attend out-of-territory facilities Based on established criteria.
  - Mental Health and Wellness Services offer a live-in Withdrawal Management Service and a concurrent disorder treatment program for people living with substance use issues.
  - Detox and sobering services are not Insured Health Services and are not covered through Insured Health Services for out-of-territory medical travel.
- Yukoners who wish to seek treatment out-of-territory should work with their primary care provider who will submit an application to Insured Health Services.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff work with clients to support referrals to out-of-territory treatment and help support return-to-territory treatment plans.

**New Health Care Cards:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is developing new health cards and distribution is anticipated to occur in 2024-25.
- The initial issuance of new cards will be completed with staggered expiration dates. Post the initial issuance, cards will be reissued every five years.
- The new health care cards will look to enhance the security, integrity, and quality of the cards. However, instances of known fraud using the current health care cards are limited.
- Photos will not be included in the initial rollout of the cards; however, the long-term intent is to add photos once this capacity is established.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services will continue to receive monthly migration reports from provinces and territories indicating Yukon card holders who are now receiving health care coverage under another jurisdiction.
- As part of the work on the new health care card we are exploring options to ensure plan beneficiaries continue to meet eligibility requirements.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Medical Travel**

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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to access the services they need, including medical travel.

### **Key messages:**

- Our government continues to expand in-territory programs to ensure that more Yukoners can access care closer to home.
- We understand that some people still need to travel outside their home communities to receive medical services and we are committed to supporting this necessary travel.
- Our program provides support for insured health services that are not available in an individual's home community.

### **Key facts:**

- The current medical travel subsidy is \$166 per day for overnight outpatient services, and \$84 for same day travel and escorts.
  - This amount is adjusted to inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and is calculated as of April 1 of each year.
  - In 2022-23, the medical travel subsidy rate was \$155 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$78 for same day travel and escorts.
  - In 2021-22, the medical travel subsidy rate was \$150 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$75 for same day travel and escorts.
- As of February 13, 2024, during the 2023-24 fiscal year Insured Health Medical Travel has supported:

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Service	2023-24 (as of February 13)	2022-23	2021-22
In-territory medical travel cases	3,897	4,278	4,081
Out-of-territory medical travel cases	3,387	3,179	2,671
In-territory medevacs	383	438	373
Out-of-territory medevacs	442	421	451
Scheduled air flights booked	11,912	11,693	7,523
Subsidy forms processed	9,776	10,156	8,163
In-territory mileage allowances processed	5,909	7,401	3,864

## Air Ambulance Program

- Emergency Medical Services operates a comprehensive air ambulance program to provide emergency medical transportation services to residents and visitors in need of urgent medical care.
- The EMS Air Ambulance program uses various vehicles, including fixed wing aircraft, to transport patients to the most appropriate level of care.
- The current contract is held by Alkan Air for the period of June 25, 2018, to March 31, 2026.
  - The value of this contract is **\$45.4M** (\$45,400,000) over the entire contract period.
- We are beginning the procurement process for air ambulance services. This procurement process is led by the department of Highways and Public Works.

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### **Medical Travel**

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#### **Including Fertility Treatment in Medical Travel**

- Currently, surrogacy and fertility treatment, such as in vitro fertilization, are not insured health services under the Yukon's Health Care Insurance Plan Act and the high cost of these treatments are out of reach for many Yukoners.
- We have committed to making fertility treatments and associated travel costs more affordable for Yukoners.
- Work is well underway to amend the Travel for Medical Treatment Act regulations to provide medical travel coverage for fertility treatment.

#### **Residences:**

- Recommendation 2.6 of Putting People First is to 'create residences as an accommodation option for medical travelers who are low income, those who require an extended stay, seniors, and others who may not feel comfortable travelling outside of their home communities.'
- While we conduct longer term work related to establishing medical travel residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver, we are also exploring alternative short-term solutions.
- In August of 2023 we surveyed Yukoners who had traveled in the previous 18 months for medical services to ask about their accommodations.
- We received more than 1,800 responses to the survey. Results indicated that 27 per cent of those who traveled to Whitehorse stayed with friends or family. In Vancouver, 12 per cent stayed with friends or family.

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- In Fall 2023 we completed a Request for Information to explore opportunities to contract hotels in Whitehorse and Vancouver for Yukoners travelling for medical services.
- The results from the survey and Request of Information will inform how to better support Yukoners who travel for medical services.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to helping Yukoners live happy, healthy lives by providing access to the services and medications they need.

**Key messages:**

- Our government continues to make evidence-informed decisions to support Yukoners to access medical treatments and services.
- As a small, northern jurisdiction, it is not always possible to offer all services in-territory, which is why we are working closely with our partners locally and nationally to review evidence and identify pathways to access care.

**Drugs for Rare Diseases:**

- The Federal Government is working on a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases with a 3-year funding commitment of up to **\$1.5B** (\$1,500,000,000).
- Policy direction is to focus on providing access to new and emerging drugs that Health Canada approves for sale in Canada and are deemed by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to have uncertain clinical benefit and cost-effectiveness.
  - Funding would support interim patient access until further evidence is collected.
- Drugs approved by Health Canada with limited and uncertain clinical evidence are a financial risk for the Yukon Government to cover.
- We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts to find a responsible way to provide early access to some emerging drugs with the federal government's support.

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- The Yukon is a member jurisdiction and participant of both the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health and the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance.

**Hemodialysis:**

- The creation of the Renal Care Working Group will give improved understanding of service delivery options, gaps and needs for those living with renal disease.
  - Officials are developing a workplan to address the needs of the Renal Care Working Group.
  - Initial contact with key external stakeholders, including BC Renal and the Government of Northwest Territories has taken place.
- There are currently 39 people in the Yukon with chronic kidney disease being followed by BC Renal.
- 13 people undergo dialysis treatment at home through either peritoneal dialysis or home hemodialysis.
- BC Renal supports Yukoners who need dialysis or a kidney transplant.

**Spirometry**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has a three-year contract with True North Respiratory valued at **\$3.36M** (\$3,362,000) to deliver spirometry services.
- As of January 31, 2024, True North Respiratory is completing an average of 53 spirometry tests per month.
  - True North Respiratory receives an average of 60 referrals a month.
- As of January 31, 2024, of the 163 active referrals, 15% have appointments scheduled.
- Turnaround times for interpreting the tests by a respirologist are between one and three weeks.



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- Patients requiring full pulmonary function tests for diagnosis and assessment of respiratory disease will be referred out-of-territory.
- Testing in the communities is no longer conducted due to safety requirements. True North Respiratory strives to coordinate appointments with other trips into Whitehorse for clients from communities.

**Oxygen:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services does not currently hold a contract for the supply of oxygen to Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits and Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program clients.
- Immediate access to oxygen is provided through Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits and Pharmacare to hospitalized patients to support discharge. Clinical information to support the use of oxygen must be provided to the program within one month for continued oxygen coverage.

**Trikafta:**

- Trikafta improves the lives of people with Cystic Fibrosis by improving lung function, life expectancy and quality-of-life by reducing the need for hospitalizations and lung transplants.
- Trikafta was added to Yukon's Drug Formulary in December 2021 for people 12 years of age and older with one copy of the Delta F508 mutation.
- All drugs in Canada follow a standard review and approval process, with each step informing the next.
- On April 20, 2022, Health Canada approved Trikafta for people six to eleven years of age who have at least one copy of the Delta F508 mutation
- On August 9, 2022, the Government of Yukon amended the product listing agreement to update the listing criteria of Trikafta.
- On August 9, 2022, Trikafta was modified on the Yukon's Drug Formulary for people six years of age and older with confirmed diagnosis of cystic fibrosis with at least one Delta F508 mutation.

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**Drug Shortages:**

- Due to global supply chain issues and increase in demand for certain medications, intermittent drug shortages continue to persist throughout Canada.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to monitor the situation and will explore options to increase Yukoners' access to medications or alternative products if necessary.
- There is a stable supply and inventory of antibiotics in Canada and the Yukon. However, an increase in demand for antibiotics during the respiratory illness season may lead to antibiotic shortages across Canada.
  - We are working to ensure that the supply of antibiotics remains stable throughout the 2023-24 respiratory illness season.
  - Amoxicillin, Azithromycin, and Cephalexin are commonly prescribed broad-spectrum antibiotic used to treat a wide range of conditions such as respiratory tract infections and pneumonia.
- Early last year and in 2022, Canada experienced historic demand for pediatric ibuprofen and acetaminophen. This did have an impact on the Yukon's supply.
- Currently, the supply in the Yukon is sufficient and we are working to ensure that supply is maintained this respiratory season.

**Ozempic Shortages:**

- As of January 2024, the Ozempic (semaglutide) shortage has been resolved and the manufacturer has removed the notice of the shortage from the drug shortages Canada website.
- Ozempic is given as an additional medication to patients with Type 2 Diabetes who have tried Metformin and a sulfonylurea and are still unable to adequately achieve their blood sugar goals.

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- The use of Ozempic for weight loss is not an indication approved by Health Canada.
- Ozempic is covered under Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits and Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits as an exception drug.
  - Criteria for coverage is Type 2 Diabetes, in addition to metformin and a sulfonylurea for patients with inadequate glycemic control on metformin and a sulfonylurea.
- In the Yukon, access to Ozempic has improved in large part due to the department taking successful steps to conserve supply including;
  - limiting prescription holders to 1 month at a time and;
  - keeping available stock strictly for those with type 2 diabetes.
- The department is not receiving any indication from local pharmacies regarding shortages.
- Patients are encouraged to consult with health care practitioners on available options.
- Some territorial pharmacies are better able to access supply than others and it may help to call pharmacies in advance to enquire if they have stock or if they are anticipating stock replenishment soon.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Land-Based Healing**

**Spring 2024**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting culturally appropriate and safe options for mental wellness and substance use care in the Yukon.

**Key messages:**

- Land-based healing is an important part of mental wellness in the Yukon.
- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy outlines opportunities for our government to work with Yukon First Nations to expand support for land-based healing initiatives and to address areas such as aftercare and the role of a land-based healing treatment centre.
- We are working with the Council of Yukon First Nations to increase support for Yukon First Nations and to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment initiatives.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff in communities routinely support land-based programming in coordination with local First Nations governments upon invitation.
- The department also routinely incorporates land-based healing components into its youth programming and Intensive Treatment programs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

**Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$400K** (\$400,000) for the Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation.
- In the 2024-25 Main Estimates, we budgeted an increased of **\$4.35M** (\$4,347,000) for the Land-Based Healing Program.

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- **\$4.347M** (\$4,347,000) is recoverable through the Working Together federal funding.
- The Land-Based Healing Fund, which was announced in the fall, encompasses a total of \$9 million in funding over three years to March 31, 2026, and provides funding to Yukon First Nations governments and Yukon First Nations-led organizations for eligible projects.
- Land-based infrastructure and programming has been identified as one of the 12 most pressing priorities in the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-spirit+ People's released Priority Action Items for Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations hosted a two-day land-based summit at the end of November in 2023 to collaborate with partners and develop strategic initiatives.

**Land-Based Healing Funding Initiative:**

- In November 2023, the Council of Yukon First Nations and Government of Yukon launched the Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund initiative.
- The initiative will be administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon and funded by the Government of Yukon.
- The initiative aims at enhancing healing and wellness by connecting individuals to traditional teachings on the land through practices like hunting, fishing, trapping and outdoor survival. Land-based healing approaches empower individuals to heal and grow, and support emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- To qualify for funding, land-based healing initiatives should be within the following guiding principles:

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### **Land-Based Healing**

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- Foster connections within communities and promote traditional values for land-based programming.
- Focus on culturally safe programming.
- Incorporate community-based programming that fosters collaborations.
- Improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.
- Build from the strengths and resources of the community to create local expertise.
- Focus on improvement within various determinants of health such as self-determination, cultural values, life skills, connection with land and fostering healthy relationships.
- Contribute to a quality health continuum of care, including prevention, treatment and recovery.
- Eligible recipients include individuals, organizations, Yukon First Nations-led businesses and Yukon First Nation governments, groups, associations and non-profit organizations.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations is staffing two positions to support Yukon First Nations in successfully accessing funding and implementing projects.
- This funding opportunity fulfils one of the 14 initial actions of the 43 overall recommended actions in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and aims to address trauma, grief, and loss experienced by Yukon First Nations.
- The Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund initiative aligns with other key Government of Yukon strategies including Putting People First and the Yukon's Strategy on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People+ and is part of a culturally responsive approach to support diverse land-based activities, including cultural camps and traditional environmental knowledge programs.

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Land-Based Healing**

**Spring 2024**Health and Social  
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#### Programs:

- Our government supports funding for land-based healing in which Yukon First Nations governments and First Nations-led organizations design, lead and implement their own unique programming.
- Our government has a long history of funding the Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation.
  - When requested, we provide clinical supports to the Jackson Lake land-based healing program, including counsellors and nursing staff from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- In partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation's Jackson Lake Healing Camp, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and the Yukon Liquor Corporation supported the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon to hold a weeklong on-the-land camp for families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- Together with the Teslin Tlingit Council we are developing a co-facilitated, land-based healing option in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- We are supporting the Hives for Watson Lake partnership with Liard First Nation, which uses therapeutic and mentorship beekeeping to engage community members in activities focused on harm reduction, mental health, life promotion, suicide prevention and increased community-nature connection.
- Our government worked with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to provide a land-based camp for youth involved with the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Roots of Hope initiative from March 6 to 10, 2023.
  - We are working with other communities to participate in the Roots of Hope initiative.

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- We partnered with the Nelson Project, which supports at-risk Indigenous and non-Indigenous men across the Yukon, for a three-day cultural learning camp from December 13 to December 15, 2023.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team hosted a family camp called Strengthening Family Connections between August 9 and 11, 2023.
  - The camp was hosted on the traditional territory of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.
  - This was an opportunity for families of all backgrounds already connected to the Child, Youth, and Family Treatment Team to experience a camp that they may otherwise not have had an opportunity to participate in.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]



## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Services Communities**

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#### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the importance of community-based mental health services and is working to increase access for all Yukoners.

#### **Key messages:**

- We appreciate the ongoing work done by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' staff to ensure all Yukoners have access to services when and where they need them most.
- There is a network of mental wellness support workers, counsellors and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners in every community.
- We continue to work with communities and Yukon First Nations governments to provide Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to meet the unique needs of each community.
  - We are working with Yukon First Nations to support land-based healing and culture camps across the Yukon.

#### **Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$3.47M** (\$3,468,262) for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Hubs.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services community hubs were created in 2018.

#### **Hub Wait times:**

- At this time, there is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Pelly Crossing, Faro, Ross River and Carmacks as clients can access virtual Rapid Access Counselling.

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### **Services Communities**

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- There is a one-week waitlist for adult referrals in Dawson City, and no waitlist for child and youth referrals.
- There is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Mayo or Old Crow. In-person contacts will depend on the counsellor travel schedule for Old Crow.
- There is no waitlist for services through the Haines Junction/Carcross hub for adult, child and youth referrals.
- There is a one-week waitlist for services through the Watson Lake hub for adult referrals. There is no waitlist for child and youth clients in Watson Lake.
- Regardless of staffing level in communities, clients have access to virtual rapid access counselling via Whitehorse or another hub.

#### **Carmacks hub:**

- The Carmacks hub provides services to Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro, and Ross River.
- The Carmacks hub has 2 community counsellor positions, 1 mental health support worker position, and 1 mental health nurse position that travels from Whitehorse. The counsellors visit Pelly Crossing weekly, Faro and Ross River on a biweekly basis.
  - We are actively recruiting 2 community counsellors.
  - The mental health nurse position for the Carmacks hub is based out of Whitehorse. The nurse can provide support with specialist appointments in Whitehorse and connect with clients virtually as well as through regular travel to Carmacks, Pelly, Ross River and Faro.
- The community counsellors provide support to children and youth, as well as adults.

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### **Services Communities**

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#### **Dawson City hub:**

- The Dawson City hub provides services to Dawson City, Mayo and Old Crow.
- The Dawson City hub has 4 community counsellor positions, 2 clinical counsellor positions, 1 child youth and family clinical counsellor position, 2 mental health support worker positions and 1 mental health nurse position.
  - We are actively recruiting 2 community counsellors.
- An additional clinical counsellor position is dedicated to Mayo. The counsellor in this position lives and works in the community of Mayo full-time.
- We are working with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Government to hire a mental health support worker.
- A child, youth and family counsellor and mental health nurse travel to Mayo on a monthly basis. Child and youth clients in Mayo are also supported by a full-time school counsellor, and the local clinical counsellor is able to support complex clients.
- A mental health support worker and a clinical child and youth counsellor travel to Old Crow on a monthly basis
- A community counsellor is dedicated to Old Crow, and travels there bi-weekly.

#### **Haines Junction/Carcross hub:**

- The Haines Junction hub provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, and Carcross.

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### **Services Communities**

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- In Haines Junction, there is 1 community counsellor position, 1 clinical counsellor position, 1 mental health support worker position, and 1 child youth and family counsellor position.
  - All of these positions are currently filled.
- The community counsellor based in Haines Junction visits Burwash Landing and Beaver Creek biweekly.
- The clinical counsellor based in Haines Junction provides support to Carcross biweekly.
- In Carcross, there is 1 community counsellor position, 1 child, youth and family counsellor position, and 1 support worker position split between 2 staff.
  - All of these counselling positions are filled. 3 of the staff live in Carcross/Tagish and 1 support worker travels from Whitehorse.
- A mental health nurse position is also allocated to the Haines Junction Hub and provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Carcross.
  - The mental health nurse position for the Haines Junction hub is based out of Whitehorse. The nurse can provide support with specialist appointments in Whitehorse and connect with clients virtually as well as through travel to communities as needed.

#### **Watson Lake hub:**

- The Watson Lake hub has 2 community counsellor positions, 1 child, youth and family counsellor position, 2 mental health support worker position, and 1 mental health nurse position.
  - We are actively recruiting 1 community counsellor.

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## Services Communities

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- The mental health nurse position for the Watson Lake hub is based out of Whitehorse and is also actively being recruited.
- The mental health nurse provides support with specialist appointments in Whitehorse and connect with clients virtually as well as through regular travel to Watson Lake and Teslin to provide services in-person.
- Services in the interim for the mental health nurse are provided from the Whitehorse Psychiatric Outreach Program.
- An additional community counsellor is dedicated to Teslin. This counsellor lives and works in the community of Teslin.
- A child and youth clinical counsellor provides bi-weekly services to Teslin. The department works closely with Teslin Tlingit Council to integrate this position into the school and community.
  - Previously, the Watson Lake child and youth counsellor traveled to Teslin on a biweekly basis. This additional position will allow the Watson Lake child and youth clinical counsellor to focus on the child and youth caseload in Watson Lake.

### Community aftercare:

- There is a network of mental wellness support workers, counsellors and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners in every community.
- Services delivered to communities include rapid access counselling, ongoing one-on-one counselling, group counselling and workshops tailored to communities' specific needs, as well as support work, outreach, and harm-reduction services.

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- This network of supports is able to appropriately support Yukoners returning to their home community after accessing mental health and substance use treatment in Whitehorse or outside of the territory.
  - Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services also work with each community to partner with local and First Nations health departments to support aftercare for Yukoners returning home.
  - The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy outlines opportunities for our government to work with Yukon First Nations to explore additional initiatives to address areas such as aftercare.
  - These initiatives will support individuals on a healing journey as well as equip communities with resources to build a support base centered around wellness and hope.

**Roots of Hope:**

- The Roots of Hope initiative by the Mental Health Commission of Canada is an evidence-informed community suicide prevention and life promotion model that aims to build capacity to prevent suicide.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is working to develop partnerships with First Nations governments and community partners to engage in the initiative.
- Recruitment is underway for the vacant Roots of Hope Community Coordinator position.
- The coordinator worked in partnership with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness Department to develop and implement a series of events and initiatives in Dawson City and across the territory.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services supported Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and community partners with a Suicide Prevention Week

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(Nihè dinch'è jì' wètàzul; It is better when you are with us), which took place from September 12 to September 16, 2022.

- Activities included suicide prevention training, harm reduction workshops, film screenings and community conversations about how to work to promote life in the community.
- A week of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training followed this event in October 2022.
- The Roots of Hope Coordinator worked with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness department and a number of youth from Dawson City to host a youth-led retreat from March 6 to March 10, 2023. This retreat aimed to elevate youth voices around the topics of youth mental health, substance use, and the Substance Use Health Emergency in the territory.
- This youth-led retreat is a first step in extending the programs reach to other communities as well as facilitating a continued network of youth leaders in the territory that will focus on wellness initiatives.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Services (Whitehorse)**

**Spring 2024**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing access to mental wellness and substance use services for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services works in collaboration with other government branches, as well as non-government organizations and Yukon First Nations governments.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services are interconnected across the territory to ensure Yukoners receive the support they need.
- We ensure that services provide users with integrated case-management and person-centered care through a trauma-informed and harm-reduction lens.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is committed to ongoing patient journey mapping to help provide a voice for Yukoners who access services, so that together we can identify opportunities for improvement and find solutions for issues.

**Key facts:**

- The Residential Managed Alcohol Program is being developed through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, with funding from the Working Together federal bilateral agreement. It will launch in Spring 2024.
- Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, there were:
  - 206 registered clients enrolled in Opioid Treatment Services,
  - 753 registered clients in Opioid Treatment Services and/or the Referred Care Clinic,
  - 124 people admitted into Intensive Treatment Services,
  - 1,016 people admitted into Withdrawal Management.



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**Services (Whitehorse)****Spring 2024**Health and Social  
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- 4 Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs were opened in 2018, and all communities have access to services through a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hub located in Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction, Carcross, or Watson Lake.
- Rapid Access Counselling is available to all Yukoners – call 1-866-456-3838 or (867) 456-3838 to make a counselling appointment within 72 hours.

**Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team:**

- Whitehorse currently has 11 clinical counsellor positions and 2 clinical supervisors who carry caseloads. There are 4 child and youth support workers who facilitate outreach groups for children and youth. We are also piloting the hire of a youth mental health nurse.
- Counsellors are regularly scheduled in high schools and other agencies throughout Whitehorse.
- We are piloting facilitating outreach groups in elementary schools.
- A peer support program for new birthing parents with Partners for Children is co-facilitated by a child and youth support worker.
- Group programming is offered to support children, youth and families. The programs include topics such as: understanding ADHD, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for adolescents, parenting support, emotional and behavioural regulation, and anxiety and depression.
- Individual therapy, parenting skills and family therapy are provided for children and youth affected by eating disorders.
- A family camp was piloted in 2023 with the intention of facilitating more family camps in the future.

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### **Services (Whitehorse)**

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#### **Adult Counselling Services:**

- Individual and group counselling services are offered through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services at the Sarah Steele building.
- A variety of drop-in group counselling sessions are offered at the Sarah Steele building including;
  - Foundations and Elements: provides education, awareness and strategies on topics such as change, emotions, self-care, understanding trauma, substance use and more.
  - Recovery Group: a support and education drop-in group for individuals at any stage of change with their substance use.
  - Alumni Group: a co-lead group by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff and a participant of the program to support individuals who have recently completed a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' treatment program to continue to maintain their goals.
- Clinicians offer group programs to meet a variety of mental health and community needs: Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Anxiety and Depression Groups, a group for those affected by Trauma.
- Free same-day counselling services are available in person or by phone. This was a commitment under the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement.

#### **Forensic Complex Care Team:**

- In 2019, the Forensic Complex Care team was established, in partnership with the Department of Justice.
- The unit provides individual and group counselling, forensic risk assessments and case management supports for clients involved in the justice system.

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- The team also provides therapeutic services at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Community Corrections and in the communities.

#### **Intensive Treatment Services:**

- Intensive Treatment Programs are available at the Sarah Steele building, which includes therapeutic group activities, community-based programming, culturally focused programs and individual counselling.
- There are three treatment programs located at the Sarah Steele building:
  - The Spruce Program: a continuous intake group-based treatment program focusing on harm reduction, substance use support and healthy living skills. Clients are admitted to the program through the Withdrawal Management Program.
  - The Spruce 2 Program: a live-in treatment program with group-based treatment. This program is an extension of the Spruce program for individuals who require an adapted model of care. Spruce 2 offers timely access intake to a two- to eight-week program, based on the client's needs.
  - The Pine Program: a day program that runs five days a week for five weeks. This program was developed to provide flexibility for parents and other individuals who are unable to attend live-in programming.
    - Due to demand, this program is currently being run at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services piloted two intensive treatment programs at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in fall 2022 and spring 2023. Due to the pilot's success, we have increased this program to four to six times per year for correctional clients.

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**Managed Alcohol Program:**

- Implementing a Managed Alcohol Program is one of the initial 14 actions under the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and a commitment under the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is working to finalize policies and program manuals and working to recruit staff before accepting clients.
- The program will attempt to reduce harms related to alcohol use amongst people living with severe, treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder. This includes reducing instances of emergency services and non-beverage alcohol consumption and increasing social stability.
- This initiative will help protect one of the Yukon's most vulnerable populations and will support public health and resource allocation.
- Our government currently provides coverage for medications to support people diagnosed with Alcohol Use Disorder through the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program.

**Psychiatric Outreach Program:**

- The Psychiatric Outreach Program is a community-based, voluntary program.
- It provides mental health care through nursing, social work, psychiatry and community support services to people with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Services include: support navigating the health and social service system; social and wellness groups; medication support, education about mental illness and treatment options; working with clients' families and social supports; working with other agencies and health care providers; and outreach and life skills support.

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- Early Psychosis Intervention Program is for people under the age of 30 who have received a new diagnosis of bipolar, schizophrenia or psychosis.
- Both programs accept self-referrals or referrals from professional supports, friends and family.

#### **Referred Care Clinic:**

- The Referred Care Clinic is a primary care clinic accessible by referral for vulnerable adults with unstable mental health and/or a substance use issue that do not have a primary care provider and rely upon outreach services to successfully receive care.
- Yukoners may access the Referred Care Clinic with a referral from a psychiatrist or a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services nurse.
- The Referred Care Clinic is co-located with Opioid Treatment Services.
  - Opioid Treatment Services is a low barrier program that does not require a referral. These services support people to manage or reduce their opioid drug use.
  - Safer supply may also be prescribed through Opioid Treatment Services.
  - Referred Care Clinic with Opioid Treatment Services is staffed by up to three general practitioner physicians per day and a psychiatrist one day per week.
  - There are also 15 funded positions, including 1 Registered Nurse Team Lead, 4 Outreach Licensed Practical Nurses, 3 Nurse Practitioners, 3 Community Mental Health Registered Nurses, 2 Social Workers, 2 outreach support workers, and 2 Medical Office Assistants.
  - Actual staffing levels vary and several recruitments are ongoing for clinic staff.

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#### **Supervised Consumption Site:**

- The Supervised Consumption Site was opened in Whitehorse on September 30, 2021, in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions.
- As part of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we have increased funding to support work to expand the operating hours, which are now offered 7 days a week between 10:30 am and 9:30 pm, including holidays.
- Methods of drug consumption at the Supervised Consumption Site include injection, inhalation, oral and intranasal.
  - Upgrades to the Supervised Consumption Site to accommodate inhalation (smoking) as a method of drug consumption were completed in May 2022.
  - Inhalation is one of the most common methods of drug consumption in the territory. Since the inhalation room opened, use of the Supervised Consumption Site has increased significantly.
- At the site, clients can access a range of harm reduction and social services including drug testing, counselling, access to Naloxone, drug use equipment exchange, medical care, and training in safer use practices. Clients can also receive referrals to social, medical and mental wellness and substance use support.

#### **Withdrawal Management:**

- Withdrawal Management Services is a 24/7 medically supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use.
- Services include medical assistance with withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming and referral to ongoing treatment,

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counselling and social work supports, therapeutic groups, and other support services.

- We have implemented phlebotomy in our Withdrawal Management Services, which has reduced hospital transfers and improved patient care.
- We have increased our aftercare programming options to include Alumni Group twice weekly as well as our Beat the Blues community group.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has partnered with a local Indigenous led recovery program to offer programming up to three times weekly for clients wishing to maintain sobriety.
- There are 14 beds available for adults and four beds available for youth.
- Our government has increased funding for Withdrawal Management to hire additional Licensed Practical Nurses. With these additional providers, the program will be able to offer increased detox bed nights.
  - 1 additional FTE and 2 casual Licensed Practical Nurses have been hired.
  - We are working to recruit an additional 3 Licensed Practical Nurses.
- Bed availability is variable as they are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - The number of bed requests does not represent unique individuals.
  - Clients who were delayed a bed are typically provided a bed within 72 hours if they continue to want the service.
  - Youth bed requests are never delayed.
- We increased our bed capacity in 2023 by approximately 7.5%, with 953 admissions in 2022 and 1,017 admissions in 2023.
  - In 2023, we averaged 85 admissions per month.
  - In 2022, we averaged 76 admissions per month.

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- With these additional providers, the program is able to offer increased detox bed nights and provide more comprehensive withdrawal care to continue to keep clients from unnecessarily attending Whitehorse General Hospital.
- When a request is delayed, staff work with the individual to build a safety plan and connect them to other supports and resources such as the emergency shelter and the hospital.
- Withdrawal Management staff can also refer individuals to the Referred Care Clinic and Opioid Treatment Services.
- Withdrawal Management and Treatment Services have added a traditional foods program as part of our efforts to develop a more culturally accessible program.

#### **Mobile Crisis Unit (Car 867):**

- The Mobile Crisis Unit (Car 867) is a program in partnership with the RCMP to provide RCMP and mental health nursing responses for mental health and wellness related 911 calls.
- Staffed with a police officer and a Registered Psychiatric Nurse from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, its duty is to respond to calls for service related to mental health issues and suicide risks.
- They provide a specialized joint response including on-site mental health assessments and referrals to other appropriate care providers, as well as safety planning and working with clients on issues in real-time.
- Currently, this program is being implemented in Whitehorse and assists communities on an ad-hoc basis.
  - From October 31, 2023 to February 20, 2024, the unit responded to 102 calls.
  - Between October 31, 2022 and October 31, 2023, the unit responded to 273 calls.



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- 2 nurses have been hired, and work is underway for services to be increased from five to seven days a week.
- The presence of the mental health nurse within the team has led to effective assessment of the acute needs of individuals and has aided RCMP members in their duties to seek assessment of individuals at the hospital when needed.
  - The nurse can make effective referrals and connections to out-patient social and health services.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note**  
**COVID-19****Spring 2024**  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon continues to respond to COVID-19 and prepare to meet the future public health needs of Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- With the acute phase of the COVID-19 response passing, work is underway to reflect upon lessons learned and opportunities for improvement, including as we look to update our government and departmental Emergency and Pandemic Response Plans.
- Yukoners are encouraged to stay up to date with their seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Office of the Auditor General has acknowledged our government's efforts in successfully managing an effective COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The OAG also identified opportunities for improvement. We have accepted these findings and are committed to acting upon their recommendations.
- We have also committed to undertaking a pandemic-focused review of the *Civil Emergencies Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. We will be looking at the challenges in existing legislation, proposed policy direction and options for further action.
- This review will ensure that our government has the tools necessary to respond to future health emergencies.
- The Government of Yukon is also committed to enhancing our emergency and pandemic response plans.
- We are committed to working with Yukon First Nations and municipal governments to improve all aspects of our health and social services system including our responses to public health emergencies.

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **COVID-19**

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**Key facts:**

- In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we budgeted **\$3.544M** (\$3,544,381) to support the department in building long-term resiliency to remain responsive to COVID-19 and other public health needs.
- Between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2023, a total of 120,593 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the Yukon.

**Vaccination:**

- The 2023 fall included the rollout of the seasonal influenza, and COVID-19 vaccines that were successfully launched on October 16, 2023 according to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).
- Yukoners can also access the seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines through their Community Health Centre or the Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place by appointment or with limited walk-in capacity.
- Long-term care residents were provided in-home vaccines by Continuing Care registered nurse immunizers during the month of October.

**Rapid Antigen Tests:**

- Rapid Antigen Tests are currently not the most relevant method to control the spread of COVID-19.
- The Government of Yukon is distributing rapid antigen tests to communities and pharmacies as needed.
- Health Canada will provide Rapid Antigen Tests to provinces and territories until their stock is depleted.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services is evaluating whether Rapid Antigen Tests will continue to be made available after the federal government ceases their distribution of free tests.
  - We will be working closely with stakeholders including pharmacies to keep them up to date on any decisions made.

**After Action Report:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is currently conducting an internal review of our pandemic response.
- As part of this process, we are developing an After-Action Summary Report that will be used to identify areas of improvement and help inform our updated Pandemic Response Plan.
- Efforts will be made to ensure the Pandemic Response Plan aligns with the pandemic-focused review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*.

**Civil Emergency Measures Act / Public Health and Safety Act Review:**

- Modernizing legislation is highly resource intensive and requires coordination between multiple departments, including Community Services and Health and Social Services, as well as Justice, Finance, and Aboriginal Relations, amongst others.
- The review will be focused on the ability to respond effectively to pandemics.

**OAG Report:**

- The Office of the Auditor General has found that the Yukon's COVID-19 vaccination rollout was effective and well-executed while providing our

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## COVID-19

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government with important recommendations to support future vaccine rollouts.

- The audit's focus was on whether the departments of Health and Social Services, Community Services and the Executive Council Office managed the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in an effective and equitable manner to protect the health and well-being of Yukoners.
- Our government has accepted the recommendations provided by the Office of the Auditor General.
  - A review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* will include focused engagement with Yukon First Nations and municipalities in 2024 and is expected to be released in early 2025.
  - We are working through the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization to improve emergency management capacity with municipalities and Yukon First Nations governments.
  - We will be providing alternatives to online and phone booking options for vaccine appointments, so that vulnerable populations will have greater access.
  - We are reviewing our cultural competency training particularly for those planning and providing front-line immunization services so that we can better meet the needs of First Nations and their citizens.
  - We are open to collaborating with First Nations to establish data sharing agreements. This would allow us to better co-ordinate our efforts in an emergency.
  - We have implemented a new electronic Inventory Management System that adds real-time inventory counts across all facilities that store publicly funded vaccine products.

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#### **Council of Yukon First Nations Report:**

- On June 6, 2023, the Council of Yukon First Nations released a report on how our government and Yukon First Nations worked together during the pandemic response.
- The report highlighted aspects of a positive working relationship and acknowledged gaps in our partnership, including concerns about the equity of vaccine distribution, the availability of plain-language documents and information sharing.
- We are working to address these concerns to ensure equitable access to vaccines in the future, committing to ensure health information is delivered in clear and accessible language and engaging with interested First Nations. None are awaiting finalization of data-sharing agreements.

#### **Masking Requirements:**

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health has not recommended a continuous masking requirement in the Yukon or in any health care facilities as part of the population-level response to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Healthcare facilities may recommend masks to be worn if there is an outbreak.
- In the case of an outbreak, other measures may be implemented to control the spread of a respiratory virus. This is not limited to COVID-19 and applies to other respiratory viruses, such as influenza.
- Patients are asked to wear a mask if they have respiratory symptoms when seeking healthcare. Staff and visitors should stay home when sick.
- In areas not affected by an outbreak, and if asymptomatic, wearing a medical mask serves primarily to protect the wearer and remains a personal choice for staff, visitors, and patients.

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- The mask and hand hygiene stations remain in place at the entrances to long-term care homes. Additional personal protective equipment is available in areas affected by outbreaks.
- Staff and visitors are asked to continue to perform hand hygiene upon entering a long-term care home or a healthcare facility, and stay home when feeling sick, even when symptoms are mild.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health continues to closely review evidence related to respiratory illness and measures to protect against the spread of illness.
  - For areas not affected by an outbreak, wearing a medical mask is a personal choice.

**Wastewater Monitoring:**

- The One Yukon Coalition is a not-for-profit organization working in partnership with all levels of government to foster awareness and readiness for current and future public health emergencies. This includes the Yukon's wastewater monitoring program.
- One Yukon's wastewater monitoring program is expanding to support a network of communities. Monitoring is currently taking place in Whitehorse and Haines Junction and discussions are underway with other communities.
- This program is dedicated to the collection and sharing of data with Yukon communities and First Nations.
- The Department of Health and Social Services participates in weekly calls with the Public Health Agency of Canada, National Microbiology Laboratory and One Yukon to discuss test results.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Vaccinations**

**Spring 2024**  
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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to access services and to expanding preventative treatments by promoting and offering access to vaccines.

### **Key messages:**

- Immunizers continue to deliver vaccines across the Yukon to meet our public health needs.
- Through ongoing investments in preventative treatments and vaccines, we are supporting the health and wellbeing of Yukoners.
- By expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists, we are supporting the integration of the profession into our health care system and increasing the number of providers able to provide vaccines to Yukoners.

### **Key facts:**

- In 2023, Yukon health care providers administered an estimated 38,929 vaccines.
  - This includes an estimated 1,568 Shingrix vaccines.
- In 2022, Yukon health care providers administered an estimated 53,075 vaccines.
- In 2021, Yukon health care providers administered an estimated 106,466 vaccines.
- Between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2023, a total of 120,593 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the Yukon.
- Recommendations and information about all publicly funded vaccines can be found online on Yukon Immunize.



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### **Vaccinations**

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#### **Access to vaccines:**

- As of September 27, 2023, the Whitehorse mass vaccine clinic has relocated from the Yukon Convention Centre to the NVD Place Mall.
  - This move is part of the government's efforts to integrate COVID-19 supports into ongoing health service operations.
  - The clinic is a satellite location for the Whitehorse Health Centre, and its new name is Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place.
  - The clinic offers walk-in vaccination for flu and COVID-19 and appointments for publicly funded vaccines for people aged five and older.
- Routine publicly funded vaccines will continue to be offered through Whitehorse Health Centre - 9010 Quartz Road, with a primary focus on clients under five years of age.
- If an individual visits the Emergency Department with an injury, they will be assessed for a tetanus vaccine, which can be provided through the Emergency Department, if required.
- The HPV vaccine is publicly funded for all Yukoners between the ages of 9 and 26, HIV positive individuals, and high-risk individuals.
- The HPV vaccine can be administered at a participating pharmacy without a prescription, through a Community Health Centre with an appointment, or to Grade 6 students during routine school-based clinics.
- Vaccine prioritization is informed by the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, staffing capacity, and the evolving demand for COVID-19 vaccines.
- Pharmacists can choose to offer services such as COVID-19 vaccines, publicly funded non-COVID vaccines such as Shingrix, the HPV vaccine, and the seasonal influenza vaccine, as well as some travel vaccines to Yukoners over the age of five.

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**COVID-19 vaccines:**

- The COVID-19 vaccines will be federally funded until the 2025-26 fiscal year at which time Provinces and Territories will be responsible for providing publicly funded COVID-19 Vaccines to target populations.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is formulated to combat the Omicron XBB variant and is approved for individuals as young as six months.
- According to the bi-weekly respiratory surveillance report for the week ending March 9, 2024, approximately 8 per cent of the Yukon population has had a bivalent COVID-19 vaccination as their most recent dose. The highest bivalent coverage is in the 70+ age group.
- The bi-weekly respiratory surveillance reports for week ending March 9, 2024, approximately 18 per cent of the Yukon population has had an XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccination as their most recent dose. The highest XBB.1.5 coverage is in the 70+ age group.

**Flu vaccines:**

- Between October 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023, a total of 10,280 flu vaccines were administered.
- The Health Status Report 2022 reports that a proportion of Yukoners who received a dose of influenza vaccine dropped from 36% during the 2020-2021 respiratory season to 29% in the past two seasons.
- During the 2023-24 vaccination campaign, we are offering the Fluzone Quadrivalent vaccine and Flumist, as well as the Fluzone High Dose Quadrivalent vaccine for long-term care residents and individuals over the age of 65.
- Booking appointments,

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- Yukoners can book appointments in Whitehorse online at Yukon.ca. This includes a link to participating pharmacies.
- Residents in rural communities can make an appointment by calling their local health centre.
- Yukoners can also walk into the nearest health centre. Walk-ins are available but may result in higher wait times.
- Long-term care residents can access vaccines provided in-home by continuing care peer immunizers.
  - Whistle Bend Place provided vaccinations on October 16 and 17, 2023.
  - Copper Ridge Place provided vaccinations on October 18 and 19, 2023.
  - Thomson Centre provided vaccinations on October 20, 2023.
  - Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson provided vaccinations during the week of October 16, 2023 by public health nurses.

**Measles:**

- On February 23, 2024, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada published a statement on the Global Increase in Measles.
- Global health authorities are reporting a 79 per cent increase in global measles cases in 2023 compared to 2022, due in part to a decline in measles vaccinations during the pandemic.
- Measles is a highly contagious virus that usually causes mild disease; however, some infections can be quite severe.
- Two doses of measles-containing vaccine is considered "complete" for anyone born in Canada after 1970.

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- The first dose is administered after the first birthday. Usually, the second dose is administered between the ages of four and six but may be administered as early as 15 months. A longer duration between doses is thought to offer greater protection.
- Measles vaccines (MMVR & MMR) are funded by the Yukon Immunization Program and can be accessed through Community Health Centres and in Whitehorse at the Whitehorse Health Centre.
  - If an individual was not vaccinated as a child, an adult may access the vaccine with coverage under the Yukon Immunization Program.
  - Community Health Centres maintain a stock of measles vaccines available by appointment which can be made over the phone.
- Travelers going to countries where the health system may not provide adequate treatment for measles are advised to ensure that they are up-to-date on all vaccines, including measles.
- As of April 2, 2024, there are no known cases of measles in Yukon.
- According to the Yukon Health Status Reports 2022, the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine had the highest vaccine coverages of any vaccine in Yukon's two-year-old population and is 4% below the Yukon Immunization Program's goal of 95% coverage.
- The Yukon Immunization Program aimed for 95% coverage of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine among seven-year-olds. In 2022, the Yukon achieved 84% coverage.
- A social media post went out on Government of Yukon channels in late February encouraging Yukoners to get vaccinated against measles.
- At this time, the Chief Medical Officer of Health has not altered his recommendation and notes that those who are eligible for vaccination

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should be fully immunized to protect themselves and to reduce risk to infants who are not eligible for immunization.

- In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of measles the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Yukon Communicable Disease Control would be notified by the fastest means possible for immediate action.
- On March 21, 2024, Health Canada reported a shortage of the Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccines will affect only private travel clinics due to the increase in the rise of cases across the country and around the world, and an increase in demand.
- The Government of Canada states that individuals who are not eligible for a publicly funded vaccine and hoped to get one through a travel clinic or pharmacy will likely need to wait about one month. The MMR vaccine will remain in stock for public supply.
- This shortage will only affect private clinics and not public clinics. The public immunization programs will continue to have access to a supply of the MMR vaccine.
- Currently, Yukon is confident in their supply of the MMR vaccine and will report any concerns as the situation locally and nationally changes.
- The Yukon's preparation and planning efforts include an assessment of current stocking levels and access to additional supply if needed.

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**RSV vaccine:**

- As of February 26, 2024, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has not provided guidance on the delivery of RSV vaccines.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Yukon Immunization Program are closely monitoring next steps with our national partners and other jurisdictions to determine if an RSV Vaccine may be offered in the Yukon for Fall 2024.

**MPOX (Imvamune):**

- Between July 23, 2022 and December 31, 2023, a total of 40 doses of Imvamune have been administered.
- Imvamune has been used as a pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccine to reduce transmission and prevent serious illness from MPOX.
- Imvamune is available for high-risk populations for pre-exposure prophylaxis at the Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse Health Centres. Yukoners who meet the eligibility criteria may call ahead to book an adult immunization appointment.

**Shingrix:**

- In January 2021, Shingrix became a publicly funded vaccine for individuals aged 65 to 70.
- In December 2021, we expanded the eligibility for Shingrix based on evidence to include Yukoners aged 65 to 79.
  - Between December 2021 and December 31, 2022, a “catch-up” program was offered to all individuals over the age of 65, so that they had an opportunity to access Shingrix.
- Publicly funded Shingrix vaccines are available for eligible Yukoners through local pharmacies and Community Health Centres.

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- Yukon is one of the few jurisdictions in Canada offering coverage for seniors alongside Ontario and Prince Edward Island, and coverage for First Nation Elders in British Columbia.
- Shingrix is also available for private purchase through pharmacies for individuals that do not fall within the age of eligibility.

#### Travel vaccines:

- Travel vaccines are not publicly funded in the Yukon, though some vaccines used for travel are used to address other public health needs such as for immunosuppressed groups or used as routine immunizations, and are publicly funded in specific scenarios.
- The Whitehorse Travel Health Clinic is temporarily closed from February 4, 2024 to May 25, 2024. During this time, the Whitehorse Health Centre is available for travel vaccines for children under the age of 5.
- Travel vaccines can be administered by participating pharmacists. Individuals seeking travel vaccines are encouraged to reach out to their local pharmacy to determine if they are provided.
  - Pharmacists cannot administer vaccines to children under the age of five.

#### Youth and childhood vaccines:

- Community Nursing delivers routine publicly funded vaccines to children under the age of five and has maintained access to core infant series primary vaccinations.
- While some primary vaccinations may be delayed, these vaccines are being administered as close to the recommended period as possible.

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- There are currently no delays or catch-up needs for infant series primary vaccinations or routine vaccinations for children and school-aged youth.
  - These vaccinations are provided on specific days and time for these age groups, and include vaccinations such as polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophilus influenza B, HB, rotavirus, Tdap, varicella, pneumococcal conjugate, meningococcal c conjugate, and measles, mumps and rubella.
  - School-based clinics are being offered once again during the 2023-24 school year.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]



# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Public Health Programming**

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon provides and supports evidence-based, targeted health promotion and illness prevention programs and activities. We work to increase public awareness, support healthier decision-making and lifestyles, and create and promote supportive environments.

**Key messages:**

- As part of our commitments under Our Clean Future, the department of Health and Social Services is tracking climate-related illnesses and has compiled training resources for healthcare providers on the health effects of climate change.
- Environmental Health Services administers public health inspection programs in a number of program areas including Public Drinking Water, Food Safety and Sewage Disposal. These programs are designed to ensure consistent standards are applied in these areas to keep Yukoners healthy.
- The Government of Yukon offers support services for those wanting help to quit smoking or vaping through a program called Quitpath.
- Environmental Health Officers provide education and conduct inspections of various facilities to ensure food safety, drinking water quality, and appropriate methods of sewage disposal to protect the health of Yukoners.
- Permits and applications are issued and approved based on evidence-based review and investigations following current regulatory requirements in these areas.

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### **Public Health Programming**

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**Key facts:**

- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Environmental Health Services completed approximately 750 Environmental Health Inspections.
- Cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada. Lung cancer is the most prominent cancer and is the leading cause of cancer death in Canada.

**Climate Change Health Effects**

- We are working to track and mitigate the health effects of climate change as part of our commitments under Our Clean Future.
- The work establishes clean air spaces in communities to mitigate the effects of wildfire smoke. We have one person working on Our Clean Future goals.
- We have compiled resources for health care professionals to identify climate change-related health impacts.
- The Government of Yukon compiles progress on the actions. Progress is openly available on the Our Clean Future website.
- Efforts are underway to distribute air quality sensors to have better data for the whole territory.

**Vaping and Smoking Cessation Programs**

- The Quitpath smoking cessation program offers free personalized one-on-one coaching from a Whitehorse quit coach.
- The program provides hands-on tools and a guide for an individual to become nicotine-free and offers 24 weeks of free nicotine replacement products. These include nicotine patches, gum, lozenges and inhalers.
- The Quitpath program offers evidence-based information, tips and tools to assist an individual to successfully quit smoking or vaping.

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- There is extra or alternative support that is available through the Smokers' Helpline on weekends and early mornings. They offer an online quit program and live web-chat services.
- Little evidence is available on the long-term health effects of vaping compared to smoking.
- Nicotine is not benign, with both addiction, health effects, and serious impacts on the youth brain.
- Nicotine plays an important role in broader substance use. It is well established that nicotine plays an underlying role in contributing to opioid, cocaine and alcohol use.
- Youth who smoke or vape are particularly susceptible to an increased risk of opioid, cocaine, and alcohol addiction.

**Canadian Partnership Against Cancer**

- The Government of Yukon is working with Yukon First Nations to develop First Nation specific, self-determined cancer priorities. Since 2018, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer has funded the Yukon First Nation Cancer Care Project, which aims to develop a Yukon First Nation Cancer Strategy, facilitate discussions on cancer and identify priorities for action.
- The Yukon First Nation Cancer Care Project continues to partner with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and other key stakeholders to implement project specific initiatives to improve the experience and outcomes for Yukon First Nations and their families experiencing cancer.
- As of January 2024, we have 1 project manager and 1 new cancer epidemiologist through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

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**Eclipse Nordic Hot Springs:**

- On May 12, 2022, Eclipse Nordic Hot Springs was granted a two-year exemption from the *Public Pool Regulation* under the *Public Health and Safety Act*.
- Work is underway to extend the exemption until a permanent regulatory solution is in place.
- Environmental Health Services continues to work with Eclipse Nordic Hot Springs to discuss pool design, public health and safety needs, regulatory requirements, and next steps.

**City of Whitehorse Water Treatment System:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Environmental Health Services is responsible for ensuring water treatment adheres to the *Drinking Water Regulation* under the *Public Health and Safety Act*.
- As the City of Whitehorse develops plans for the future of water use and treatment, Environmental Health Services will support the City to ensure the supply is safe with upgrades established over a reasonable timeline to ensure compliance with Regulations.
- Environmental Health Services and the City continue to review findings related to the classification and treatment of the water supply.
- We recognize the required upgrades will take time to complete and additional information on timelines will be available once the design phase begins.
- Should future testing results indicate immediate action is required, Environmental Health Services with the support of the Chief Medical Officer of Health would issue appropriate direction, public advisories and outline next steps.

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**EHS concerns**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is aware of a complaint related to a recent Environmental Health inspection and potential impacts on staff.
- To ensure the privacy of those involved, we cannot speak to specific details.
- The department has taken steps to mitigate these concerns and is continuing to take steps to ensure the health and safety of employees.
- Occupational health and safety and human resource processes are in place and staff have been contacted.
- We will continue to work with staff to provide support and identify next steps, as necessary.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to implementing the 56 recommendations of the Aging in Place Action Plan, and to continuously improving supports for Seniors and Elders to age in place.

**Key messages:**

- The vision of the Aging in Place Action Plan is to ensure that Yukoners can access the supports they need to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own home or home community for as long as possible regardless of age, income or ability level.
  - This includes working with individuals and their loved ones to offer person-centered care and find appropriate solutions so Yukoners are supported to remain in their homes and communities.
- As we continue to advance this important work, we are building upon the programs, services and supports offered by the Government of Yukon and our partners, as well as ensuring alignment with other recommendations such as those in the Putting People First report.
- We continue to work collaboratively with partners, including First Nation governments, municipal and federal governments, the private sector, non-government organizations, and community groups to implement Aging in Place and achieve our common goals.
- I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee for their ongoing contributions and guidance as we work towards these goals.

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**Key facts:**

- Released in 2020, the Aging in Place Action Plan includes 56 recommendations and was informed by extensive public engagement with over 1,200 people from across the Yukon.
- The first Aging in Place Annual Report was released on March 28, 2022.
- The second Aging in Place Annual Report was released on May 10, 2023.
- The third and final Aging in Place Annual Report is anticipated to be published in Spring 2024.
- A total of 29 actions (52%) are operational, 26 actions (48%) are in progress, and 1 has been incorporated into other actions.

**Progress:**

- Our government recognizes that while some initiatives could be considered complete, they are described as operational because we are committed to continuously improving services and supports for Seniors and Elders.
- Moving forward, we intend to integrate the work of implementing the action items across lead departments.
- Some of the operational action items include the following:
  - Established an Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee is complete, but the work of the committee is ongoing.
  - Integrated intergenerational programming with pre-school aged children and long-term care homes to bring children and Seniors together.
  - Through the Home Repair Program, the Yukon Housing Corporation provides funding to homeowners to repair or upgrade

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their residence, which includes a grant of up to \$30,000 to retrofit homes to address mobility concerns.

- Launched the Rural End-of-Life Funding program in September 2021 to provide support to Yukoners in rural communities who need end-of-life care services that cannot be provided through Yukon's Home Care Program or by other care providers.
- Through the Home Health Monitoring services, Yukoners can access health monitoring and support from home, as well as access one-on-one virtual consultations with health care providers through video conferencing.
- Implemented the Shine a Light on Dementia program, available in on-line format to provide education and training to support caregivers.
- Connected Seniors with technology literacy training in partnership with Yukon Learn.
- Finalized a new agreement to recruit Seniors for the tutoring program offered by Learning Disability Association of Yukon and entered into an agreement with l'Association Franco-Yukonnaise to provide senior-specific information and programming to French speaking Yukoners.
- Developed a program to update demographic projections annually beginning in 2023 to inform planning for the future of long-term care delivery.
- Expanded and supported Home First and reablement approaches through the hiring of a Transition Liaison Coordinator, as well as through a review of primary care and the Yukon's hospital system.
- Opened the Wind River Hospice House at Whistle Bend Place in June 2020.



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- Successfully embedded a Palliative Approach to Care model in all Whitehorse long-term care homes.

**Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee:**

- The Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee is an opportunity for Yukon Seniors and Elders to collaborate with government on matters relating to the implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan.
- The Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee includes representatives from Yukon First Nation governments, Seniors and Elders representation from Yukon Housing Corporation, one or more members from the City of Whitehorse and chaired by an Assistant Deputy Minister from the Department of Health and Social Services.
- The committee met four times a year over a three-year period.
- Committee members bring the perspectives of the population that their organization serves, as well as their own insights, perspectives and experiences while working with committee members to support the implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan.
- The committee provided input and guidance to the development of the Aging in Place Annual Reports, and reviewed final drafts to ensure information meets the needs of Seniors and Elders.

**Aging with Dignity Agreement:**

- On March 12, 2024, the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada announced the signing of the Aging with Dignity Agreement.
- The Yukon Aging with Dignity Agreement is providing an estimated total of \$12M (\$11,980,000) in financial support over five years, through to 2027-28.

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- The agreement will support Home and Community Care with \$2.7M (\$2,680,000) over four years, from 2023-24 to 2026-27.
  - The agreement will support Long-term Care with an estimated \$9.3M (\$9,300,000) over five years, from 2023-24 to 2027-28.
  - Annual budget allocations may be adjusted depending on the increase in population or increases in care needed within the territory.
- The Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada entered into this agreement where they will acknowledge reconciliation between Indigenous peoples, recognizing their right to a fair and equal access to quality and culturally safe health services, free from racism and discrimination.
- The Yukon and Canada acknowledge the importance of supporting health data infrastructure, data collection, and public reporting, and will continue to work together to improve the collection, sharing and use of de-identified health information, to help improve transparency on results and to help manage public health emergencies.
- Federal funding supports care coordinator resources within the Home and Community Care Program to oversee the Rural End-of-Life Care funding program.
  - This funding is specific to Yukoners in rural and remote communities outside of Whitehorse and assists individuals to hire their own support so they can self-manage the care they need. This helps them remain in their home community instead of having to leave their home to receive support in Whitehorse.
- In the Yukon, more people now have access to home and community care, thanks to a resourcing program model that includes rapid response home care roles and hiring of home support workers through rural community enhancement initiatives in almost all rural and remote

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communities in the territory. This effort helps people stay in their communities and increases the support for those with complex care needs.

- Program enhancements include improvements to communications equipment and technology. These enhancements have increased access to professional supports for clients across the rural and remote landscape.
  - Access to reliable internet access in remote regions can be a challenge, and we will continue to focus on adjusting and resourcing models of care to support the best health outcomes for Yukoners.
- All programming is done within the context of the Quintuple Aim and its evolving iterations - an approach to a health system that seeks to simultaneously improve client experience, improve health outcomes, better manage costs and system effectiveness, provide better experiences for care providers, and optimize the overall healthcare system to establish health equity.
- Improvements to the Rural Community Home Care program are helping Yukoners to age in place. This is achieved through the development of Home Care Community Profiles and service planning recommendations, in partnership with Yukon First Nations' health programs, local health centres and primary care providers for each of Yukon's 15 home care catchment areas.
- Federal funds will be used to support the human resource and travel requirements to complete community service planning, as well as the implementation costs for community initiatives (e.g., increased access to in-home respite for caregivers) by increasing funding for home support workers in communities based on the assessed needs.

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- This increased funding helps support new home support workers, or increased hours for existing home support workers, when a community has an increased need for this service.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Seniors Housing**

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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Seniors and Elders to access a full continuum of housing options that are adequate, suitable and affordable.

### **Key messages:**

- Housing affects health. We want to ensure all Seniors and Elders have access to safe and suitable places to call home.
- Yukon Seniors and Elders deserve to age with dignity and comfort in their own home or home community, for as long as possible.
- Seniors' Supportive Housing options enable more Yukoners to live independently for longer, reduce pressures on long-term care, and close gaps in the seniors' housing continuum.
- The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are collaborating on Seniors' Supportive Housing to meet a growing need in the housing continuum.

### **Key facts:**

- According to Canadian Institute for Health Information, over the next 20 years, Canada's Senior and Elder population aged 65 and older is expected to grow by 68 per cent.
- In the Yukon, the population of those over the age of 75 is expected to triple over the next 20 years.
- The Government of Yukon is leasing 26 affordable Seniors' Supportive Housing units at Normandy Living for 20 years, which are available to eligible Yukoners through the Yukon Housing Corporation's Rent-Geared-to-Income program, which in this case includes a services-geared-to-income component.

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### **Seniors Housing**

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#### **Normandy Living:**

- Normandy Living is a privately-owned modern five-story building in Whitehorse. It offers a range of inclusive Seniors' Supportive Housing rental options including studio, one bedroom and two-bedroom homes.
- Normandy Living offers support services such as meals, weekly housekeeping, laundry services, programming and 24/7 security.
- Eligibility for the 26 affordable units at Normandy is based on income testing and results of a Clinical Frailty Scale assessment.
- We provide funding for an additional 4.0 FTEs for Home Care staff to support eligible residents of Normandy to access services and supports.
- Yukon Housing Corporation tenants pay 25% of their income towards rent and 40% towards services including meals, housekeeping, and laundry.
- Yukon Housing Corporation pays the cost of rental and services for the affordable units and recovers a portion from clients.
  - On average, clients pay \$1,420 a month for services and rent combined.
- The costs associated with Normandy Living is roughly 20 per cent of the cost of housing individuals in long-term care homes.

#### **Accreditation:**

- Normandy Living has successfully received accreditation with the non-profit Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities Canada for a period of three years (2023-2026). Normandy Living demonstrated conformance to the Commission's standards, and their commitment to offering measurable, high-quality programs and services.
- Accreditation is an ongoing process of assessing health and social services organizations against national standards of excellence.
- It is used to identify what is being done well and what needs to be improved.

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### **Seniors Housing**

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#### **Vimy Heritage Housing Society:**

- Vimy Heritage Housing Society continues to work with partners to complete the project design, the capital plan and to secure the capital funding required to proceed with a 73-unit Seniors' Supportive Housing project in Whistle Bend, with parking and green space.
- Our government is supporting this project through a commitment of land and approximately \$700,000 in capital funding to date, with further options available from Yukon Housing Corporation's application-based funds.
- The society was formed in 2013 as a non-profit society with a vision to create a sustainable supportive independent living rental housing facility for Yukon seniors.

#### **Old Crow Elders' Complex**

- The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government currently operates the Elders' complex in Old Crow. Health and Social Services does not have a role in the Elders' complex.
- The rooms in the Elders' complex are considered homes that Elders could reside in and receive the same programs and services that they would receive in an independent home.
- The complex has eight single-bedroom assisted-living units, one unit for a live-in caregiver, a kitchen and a laundry room.
- This facility supports Elders to remain part of their community and receive the personal care services needed without having to move to Whitehorse to access the needed services.

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### **Seniors Housing**

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#### **Whistle Bend Place Courtyard**

- Whistle Bend Place relocated the dementia care house from the second floor of the building to the ground level to support access to outdoor space through independent use of an attached enclosed courtyard.
- The current design and landscaping of the Whistle Bend Courtyard poses a risk of falls and other injuries.
- A project is underway to redesign the existing courtyard to make the outdoor space more accessible with handrails, accessible pathways and materials, raised garden beds and functional seating areas that will provide a higher level of safety and improved quality of life for residents living with dementia.
- Research shows that gardens can help support the overall emotional wellbeing of people living with dementia. Access to outdoor space is integral to individual health and wellbeing.

#### **Payment Methods at Long-Term Care Homes**

- Continuing Care long-term care homes currently accept several methods of rent payment – cash, cheque, debit and credit card. We have a large number of residents and their families who choose to provide us with post-dated cheques for the year. This gives them security in knowing that the rent payments won't get missed.
  - Another option we provide is to have people complete a Credit Card Pre-Authorization form, which allows us to charge a person's credit card at the beginning of each month and thereby alleviates the burden on the resident, family, or financial decision maker, knowing that the rent is being paid automatically.



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- Current payment options could be a concern for some residents living with dementia. If found incapable of managing their finances, they would be unable to use a credit card or sign predated cheques.
- For the last while, we have also been working on implementing a Pre-Approved Debit payment method. This will allow residents and families to have the convenience of having their rent payments withdrawn from their bank account at the beginning of each month automatically. A system like this would make payments easier for a lot of people, in particular those whose financial decision makers don't live in the Yukon.
- We expect to have this method of payment set up and running by June 1, 2024.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Disability Services**

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the wellbeing and inclusion of people with disabilities.

**Key messages:**

- Our government recognizes the importance of inclusivity in our health and social services system.
- The Department of Health and Social Services offers a variety of supports for children and adults living with disabilities, depending on need.
- We appreciate the important work advanced by our partners, including all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and community members to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- We are committed to expanding supports available to those impacted by a disability in alignment with the recommendations in the Putting People First report and best practices.

**Key facts:**

- As of February 2024, the Disability Services Unit had 266 children and 138 adults receiving services, with an additional 15 individuals with pending intake assessments.
- We currently fund eight non-government organizations to support individuals with disabilities, including:
  - Autism Yukon, Connective, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society – Yukon, Inclusion Yukon, LDAY Centre for Learning,

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Opportunities Yukon (formerly Challenge Disabilities), Options for Independence, and Teegatha'Oh Zheh.

- The Yukon Supplementary Allowance is paid to every Yukoner who is eligible for assistance and excluded from the labour force. This includes people who are 19 years old or older with a severe or prolonged disability that is reasonably expected to prevent them from working for the next year, as well as people who are old enough to receive Old Age Security.
  - In 2023, an average of 55 per cent of social assistance cases (521 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
- The Yukon Home Care Program delivers home-based health-related support for Yukoners based on assessed need, including Yukoners with disabilities who meet program eligibility criteria. Services include acute, chronic, palliative, respite care, and rehabilitation.
- Yukoners with disabilities who cannot be supported to live at home may be eligible for long-term care. Eligibility is assessed on an application basis.

#### **Individualized Supervisory Care (Caregiver Benefit):**

- In November 2022, we updated the In-Home Child Care financial support and renamed it Individualized Supervisory Care supports.
- Individualized Supervisory Care offers financial support for parents of children with disabilities, including financial support to families to hire in-home childcare when the child's disability prevents them from attending daycare.

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- For school aged children, this funding option is only approved for use outside of regular school hours as the *Education Act* mandates provision of Education to school-age children.
- Individualized Supervisory Care includes an option for a parent to provide individualized supervisory care to their own child.
- For this to apply, funding recipients must demonstrate that the care provided is beyond what is expected of a typical parent-child relationship.
- In early 2022, we launched the Yukon COVID Caregiver Program to provide financial supports to parents who could not work due to caring for a child with a severe disability who was unable to attend daycare due to an increased health risk should the child contract COVID-19.
  - This ended December 2022, with the launch of the Individualized Supervisory Care financial support.

### **Disability Services Redesign and Putting People First:**

- We are collaborating across Health and Social Services to determine how best to implement the vision of Putting People First and meet the needs of Yukoners living with disabilities.
- The following Putting People First recommendations relate specifically to the design and delivery of Disability Services but will be addressed as part of cross-departmental collaboration on better meeting the needs of Yukoners living with disabilities:
  - 5.12 – Combine Adult Disability Services and Child Disability Services into one needs-based program and develop a new eligibility and assessment framework for services.
  - 5.13 – Expand the mandate of adult programming to cover a broader range of disabilities and create new services, as appropriate, to meet the needs of this expanded adult service population.

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- We are also working on other Putting People First recommendations to better meet the needs of those with disabilities.
  - 5.11 – ‘Increase the disability top-up amount to \$325, to reflect inflation since 2005, and index disability income to inflation going forward’ is being pursued as part of the rate review of Social Assistance and modernization of Income Support Services.
  - 5.10 – ‘Create a separate, stand-alone disability benefit for those with permanent disabilities,’: we are working closely with the federal government as they develop the new Canada Disability Benefit, including consideration for how this proposed benefit may impact the Government of Yukon’s response.
  - 5.14 – ‘Provide self-or family-managed care funding to enable adult Yukoners to live at home for longer’ is a quality improvement initiative with Continuing Care.

### **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder:**

- The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Interagency Advisory Committee released its Yukon FASD Action Plan in September 2019.
  - The committee includes people living with FASD, their families, non-governmental organizations, Yukon First Nations governments, the Government of Yukon and other representatives from across the territory.
- This plan is part of our commitment to support healthy pregnancies, expand maternal and pre-natal community-delivered supports, and to work across departments and collaboratively with community partners to harmonize supports for people with FASD.
- In 2019, we committed **\$500K** per year to support the implementation of the action plan. Projects funded since 2019 include:

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- low-barrier counselling services to people living with FASD,
- recreational activities for people with lived experience with FASD, providing opportunities for inclusion and respite for caregivers,
- a partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations to provide a First Nations FASD Action Plan Coordinator; and,
- a variety of activities to promote FASD Awareness Day annually on September 9 to raise awareness and prevention strategies.
- We recognize that aging parents require additional support when supporting adult children living with FASD. As we implement the Putting People First report, we are looking broadly at ways to expand support to these families.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is collaborating with the federal government, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

**Key messages:**

- We appreciate the work of the dedicated Family and Children's Services staff to support all children and families in the Yukon.
- Our government has heard that child welfare reform is a top priority for all governments across the territory.
- The Government of Yukon is dedicated to improving the lives and health of children, youth, and families.
- We are working to ensure that children receive the care that's essential for their wellbeing and are protected from harm.
- We continue to work closely with all levels of government, Yukon First Nations, and non-government organizations to improve child welfare services for families and children in the territory.

**Key facts:**

- We have provided an increase of **\$22K** (\$22,000) in the 2024-25 Main Estimates to support the purchase of operational transportation equipment to be used for delivering services in Old Crow.
- As of December 31, 2023, there were 87 children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
  - 95 per cent of these children identified as Indigenous.
  - 61 per cent of these children identified as Yukon First Nation.

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- As of December 31, 2023, there were 108 children residing with extended family members, as opposed to being in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
  - 94 per cent of these children identified as Indigenous.
  - 80 per cent of these children identified as Yukon First Nation.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we provided a 16.5 per cent rate increase for community and extended family caregivers. The rates are:
  - Whitehorse: \$46.86 per day
  - Rural Communities: \$50.16 per day
  - Old Crow: \$86.40 per day
- The Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations are collaborating on the Caregiver Strategy to recruit, retain, train, and support caregivers.

### **Family and Children's Services Annual Report 2020-2022:**

- The Family and Children's Services Annual Report 2020-2022 was released in April 2023.
- During the reporting period of this annual report, the department worked closely with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to update the *Child and Family Services Act*, which came into effect on November 30, 2022.
- Keeping families together is a priority for this government. Within the Family and Children's Services branch, we have made significant progress in our efforts to do this.
  - Over the course of five years, the percentage of children requiring out-of-home care staying with extended family doubled. In 2022, approximately 61 per cent of children in out-of-home care were placed with extended family, compared to 28 per cent in 2017.



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- This change is part of the shift towards placing children and youth with extended family, corresponding to a 40 per cent drop in the number of children and youth in the care of the Director. Similarly, there has been a 24 per cent decrease in the number of children and youth placed in foster homes, dropping to 53 in 2022 from 70 children and youth in 2017.
- We have doubled the number of families served by the Family Resource Unit, growing to 269 in 2021 from 135 in 2017 by changing the eligibility criteria to provide more services to children, youth and families. This unit delivers low-barrier universal services on a voluntary basis to all families in the Yukon with children from 0 to 19 years of age to support them in enhancing their parenting capacities.
- We continue to work with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in out-of-home care.

**Coroner's Inquest on Kaiya Stone-Kirk:**

- We recognize the death of Kaiya Stone-Kirk as a tragic event.
- On October 13, 2023, the Director of Family and Children's Services responded to the Chief Coroner to accept the 7 recommendations made by the Jury. These included:
  - To create a safe sleep policy, on April 4, 2022, we implemented the safe sleep policy to provide formal guidance to social workers on how to support safe sleep spaces for children two years of age or younger.
  - To develop and incorporate policies related to the stock of safe sleep equipment maintained in Family and Children's Services offices. We have implemented processes for internal communication among staff and management regarding the stock of safe sleep equipment in

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each office and allocated the necessary funding to maintain this stock.

- To provide mandatory in-person training on the safe sleep policy. In December 2023, we delivered a series of safe sleep spaces policy trainings to child protection social workers, caregiver resource workers and other support staff that deliver frontline services. Additional training sessions will be offered to Transitional Support Services staff and any other staff who did not have the opportunity to participate in earlier offerings. This training will be offered annually.
- To create policies on Extended Family Care Agreements that speak to safety plans in place for short-term urgent situations. When the *Child and Family Services Act Policy Manual* was reviewed in November 2023, we identified policies pertaining to extended family caregivers as a high-priority item. In the next three to six months, we will discuss any proposed policy revisions with the Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- To develop a course in collaboration with First Nations that must be completed by caregivers who work for Family and Children's Services. Along with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we are exploring various training programs designed by Indigenous organizations for caregivers. Once we have selected an appropriate training program, it will be jointly presented to Yukon First Nations for input.
- To support Yukon First Nations in developing a roster of people in each community to provide temporary care to a child during an emergency/urgent situation. With input from Yukon First Nations, we have created a policy that allows for individuals to provide temporary care to a child in such situations. Any individual that delivers such

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care under this policy will receive financial resources and support services from Family and Children's Services.

- To support Yukon First Nations in establishing resources in their communities for temporary care of children in emergency situations. As a part of the Caregiver Strategy, Family and Children's Services is in discussions with interested Yukon First Nations on how to support the development of community-specific placements for children. These discussions are ongoing.
- To consider Yukon First Nations community safety officers when RCMP services are required. We will work Yukon First Nations and the RCMP to address this recommendation.
- Family and Children's Services social workers continue to provide information and resources, as well as safe sleep spaces, such as pack and play mattresses, to all parents and caregivers with children two years of age or under receiving child and family services. These workers also discuss safe sleep strategies and conduct visual inspections of sleeping surfaces during home visits.
- Our Family Resource Unit has safe sleep conversations with expectant parents and delivers training to parents and caregivers on safe sleep practices.

### **Federal Compensation and Welfare Reform:**

- On January 4, 2022, Agreements-in-Principle were reached between the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and counsel for the Moushoom and Trout class actions with the Canadian government.
- On July 26, 2023, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal approved a revised deal between the Assembly of First Nations and Canada over compensation for First Nations children on reserve and in the Yukon.

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- The parties continue to negotiate and work towards child welfare reform across the country.
  - The Agreements-in-Principle commits \$43B to remedy discrimination against First Nations children across the country and to support long term child welfare reform across Canada.
  - The compensation agreement is \$23.4 billion, approved as of July 26, 2023, to be provided to First Nations children and families on-reserve and in the Yukon as compensation for the harm they suffered due to Canada's discriminatory provision of child and family services and failure to properly apply Jordan's Principle.
  - Deloitte is responsible for establishing the claims process, which is expected to open by late August 2024. We are working to ensure that compensation does not impact any territorial benefits and is working to support claimants for those who may need help.
  - The long-term child welfare reform settlement agreement has not been finalized. We are continuing to work with Yukon First Nations and the federal team to understand the implementation of long-term reform measures in the territory.
- The *Federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children Youth and Families*, came into force on January 1, 2020.
- This Act affirms the rights and jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples in relation to child and family services.
  - The Act binds provinces, territories and any Indigenous group that enacts its own legislation in the area of child and family services.

### **Young Offenders Facility Perimeter Breach**

- On August 22, 2023, two young persons in the Young Offenders Facility escaped from custody and breached perimeter of the facility.
- RCMP located both young persons quickly and charged them with offences related to the escape from custody and perimeter breach.

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- These two young persons were transferred from Northwest Territories Corrections on August 17, 2023, due to wildfire emergency and evacuation orders.
- Young Offenders Facility staff followed all policies and procedures.
- In response to this incident, Family and Children's Services provided use of force training to staff; made immediate capital requests to secure updated institutional grade doors and additional protective gear; implemented a new electronic monitoring system to support safety and security of the facility; is exploring the possibility of setting up cells with bathrooms to contain high-risk young persons; and is updating policies and procedures to ensure best practices are followed.

**Staffing:**

- We currently have 58 per cent of social worker positions filled and recruitment efforts are ongoing.
- We have staffed four of the 10 new child protection social worker assistant positions created to support social workers with administrative duties.
- Staff retention is difficult due to vacancy numbers and inability to support long periods of leave and temporary assignment requests.
- Since child protection staff are also responsible for after-hours support provided by Family and Children's Services, the remaining staff are now required to take on more after-hours shifts.
- We are prioritizing high-risk child protection referrals where a child is at immediate risk of harm, along with high-risk families and children or youth in out-of-home care.
- Child protection supervisors have taken on additional cases to support frontline child protection social workers.
  - These additional cases have limited the supervisors' support and guidance they would normally provide to their assigned child protection social workers.

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- Yukon First Nations and the Council of First Nations have expressed concerns in the First Nations Health and Social Development Commission meetings that not all children, youth and families are receiving the services they are legally entitled to.
- Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations provide culturally relevant primary and secondary prevention programs but do not provide protection services at this time.

**St. Elias Adult Group Home staff transfer**

- The St. Elias Adult Group Home is closing in Spring 2024 to transition the space into a residential Managed Alcohol Program.
- St. Elias was purpose-built to offer live-in programs to individuals with cognitive, mobility or medical needs. The 10-unit residence is all on one storey, minimizing fall hazards and allowing clients to be monitored. It has large common areas, recreational spaces, and an outdoor space. The design of the building allows residents to live independently with help and support onsite.
  - Experience running the managed alcohol program at St. Elias will contribute to the design of future sites and inform the phased implementation of smaller managed alcohol programs proposed in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- This transition is being managed with a strong commitment to the wellbeing of both residents and staff.
- All impacted St. Elias employees at the group home will be transferred to an alternative position within their current branch of Family and Children's Services, ensuring that no employee will lose their job as a result of this change.
  - These positions meet the transfer requirements under the *Public Service Act* section 119.

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- Offer letters for these alternative positions will be issued once the final move date is confirmed.
- Current residents of the group home are being moved to better designed, smaller and more home-like environments.
- It is our view that residents will be best supported by a move to homes that meet modern best practices, moving away from a medical model to a social model that emphasizes removing societal barriers and enabling full participation.
- Moving the residents has the additional benefit of making St. Elias available for a Managed Alcohol Program, but the decision to move residents was made to improve the overall well-being, autonomy, and quality of life of the residents.
- The new facilities will be run by Opportunities Yukon. Opportunities Yukon will be advertising for their vacant positions in the new homes. St. Elias staff can choose to apply if interested.
- This approach reflects the government's appreciation for the staff's contributions and its dedication to ensuring continuity of care and support during this period of transition.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Food Security and Programs**

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### **Government priority:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to closing the gap for low-income Yukoners. This includes promoting nutrition and access to food across the territory.

### **Key messages:**

- As part of our response to Putting People First and Our Clean Future, we are looking at ways to support food security throughout the territory and close the gap for low-income Yukoners.
- We recognize that some Yukoners face financial and access challenges in meeting core needs like food and shelter.
- Our government collaborates with many organizations who deliver food aid to Yukoners.
- We are working with Women and Gender Equity Directorate on enhancing emergency meal and food provisions for Yukoners in need of food aid.
- We are also working with the Yukon Energy Food Security Network to address gaps in emergency meal and food provisions for all Yukoners in need.
- We recognize that food insecurity in the Yukon extends beyond emergency needs and that this work responds to one part of the Yukon's food security efforts.
- As part of this work, we are committed to incorporating input from organizations, including equality-seeking organizations, about the most effective ways to provide programs and services, address gender-based violence and advance equity in all Yukon communities.



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- The department offers a variety of supports, including delivering Social Assistance and Yukon Seniors Income Supplement programs to assist eligible Yukoners with meeting basic needs including food, and offers several Healthy Eating Programs.

**Key facts:**

- In response to growing inflationary pressures, in the 2022-23 fiscal year we committed **\$100K** (\$100,000) to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. This was to support the Yukon Food Network to help coordinate food security initiatives in communities.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Meals on Wheels provided 23,154 meals in Whitehorse and to the surrounding area and 4,129 meals in Dawson City and to the surrounding area.
  - Whitehorse served an average of 95 clients per month and Dawson City served an average of 18 clients per month.
- During the 2021-22 fiscal year, Meals on Wheels provided 21,094 meals in Whitehorse and to the surrounding area and 4,837 meals in Dawson City and to the surrounding area.
- On July 5, 2023, the Government of Canada issued a one-time Grocery Rebate to provide financial support for low- and modest-income Canadians and families.

**Nutrition Programing:**

- The department has many nutrition programs running across the territory, some of which are connected to food security and food literacy programing.
- The department's Health Promotion Unit has received 5-year funding for the 2021-22 to 2025-26 fiscal years through the Public Health

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Agency of Canada (Yukon Northern Wellness Project) to work with Yukon communities and other partners to support equitable access to food literacy initiatives in rural communities and support on-going local efforts within the Yukon.

- The Health Promotion Unit also supports school food programs across the territory by providing \$132,000 in funding to the Yukon Food for Learning Association.
  - Additionally, the department provides \$8,000 to the Recreation & Parks Association of the Yukon to fund healthy snacks through the Rural Healthy Eating Active Living Leader Program.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, 20 projects were supported by food literacy grants. These provided food literacy opportunities for over 300 Yukoners with over 200 individuals from rural Yukon.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, 15 projects were supported by food literacy grants.

**Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- The Sally and Sisters program is administered by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. It addresses the immediate food security and support needs for women and children in Whitehorse, offering them a place to gather, get support and enjoy a healthy meal in a safe and sober environment.
- The Government of Yukon will support the Sally and Sisters program with \$168,000 during fiscal year 2024-25.
- Our government is exploring options for future food aid programs with community partners to address any unintended gaps and changing needs.
- There continues to be other community food aid support available to Yukoners in need.

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- At 405 Alexander three meals and one late snack a day are offered for homeless and street-involved Yukoners, with dinner for overnight shelter guests only.
- Lunch is available at Mary House on Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.
- Lunch for women and children on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, a snack bag on Wednesdays and a bagged lunch on Fridays at Sally and Sisters, and on Wednesday at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. Dinner for women and children is also offered on Friday and Saturday at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.
- Boys & Girls Club Yukon provides youth-only dinners Tuesday to Saturday at 306 Alexander Street.
- The Food Bank Society of the Yukon hamper is available in Whitehorse on Tuesday and Thursday with family-only pick-up each Wednesday morning. Communities across the Yukon receive a shipment of Hampers each month that are then distributed.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations will be providing warm take away meals for indigenous families with children on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays out of the former cell phone central store on Black St. This program runs from January 23, 2024 to March 31, 2024.
- Safe at Home provides bagged meals twice a day for lunch and dinner between the hours of 9 am to 9 pm from Thursday to Sunday. This program will not be extended past March 31, 2024 due to renovation in the occupied space.
- We have three Transfer Payment Agreements where recipients provide meals to seniors.
  - In Whitehorse, Association Franco-Yukonnaise, in collaboration with Les EssentiElles provides seniors with low-cost meals at community

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### **Food Security and Programs**

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kitchens six to eight times a year with around 10 servings per kitchen being provided to each participant.

- In Haines Junction, St. Elias Seniors Society is providing weekly and monthly lunches and dinners to seniors in partnership with Champagne-Aishihik First Nations Elder Care.
- In Watson Lake, Signpost Seniors provides a weekly lunch for seniors, as well as several dinner socials throughout the year. For seniors who are unable to attend lunch can be delivered to them.

#### **Food Bank Society of the Yukon:**

- Our government collaborates with many organizations who deliver food aid to Yukoners such as the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Food Bank Society of the Yukon, and the Boys and Girls Club Yukon, amongst others.
- The Food Bank Society of the Yukon is an important partner providing emergency food to support Yukoners.
  - The Food Bank society of the Yukon hamper is available in Whitehorse on Tuesday and Thursday with family-only pick -up each Wednesday Morning.
  - Communities across the Yukon receive a shipment of hampers each month that are then distributed.
- The Department of Health and Social Services does not have a funding agreement with the Food Bank Society of Yukon, though we did work with the organization to provide support during the COVID-19 response.
- We are currently exploring opportunities to support food security throughout the territory and close the gaps for lower income Yukoners.

#### **Meals on Wheels:**

- Meals on Wheels provides food to clients experiencing under nutrition, social isolation, dementia or physical and health limitations that affect their access to nutritious food.

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## Food Security and Programs

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- Frozen meals are available to clients living in Whitehorse, or within a two-hour travel time from Whitehorse, as well as in Dawson City and those living within a two-hour travel time from Dawson City.
- Meals on Wheels provides clients with up to seven lunchtime meals per week.
- Meals can be delivered to clients or picked up at either Whistle bend Place or McDonald Lodge.
- In Whitehorse and the surrounding area, clients pay \$3.00 per meal (actual meal costs over \$5.00 per meal). In Dawson City and the surrounding area, clients pay \$2.50 per meal.
- To receive Meals on Wheels, referrals may come from health care professionals including Physicians, Home Care staff, Community Nurse Practitioners, Social Workers, or the Assessment and Admission Coordinator.
- Clients may also self-refer to the program by contacting the Assessment and Admissions Coordinator.
  - In Dawson City, self-referrals can be made directly to the Home Care Nurse or McDonald Lodge Manager.
- A review of the Meals on Wheels program is currently underway with recommendations on the program expected by the end of March 2024.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Housing and Homelessness**

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives such as the Housing Action Plan for Yukon, Safe at Home: A Community-Based Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, and the federal Yukon Reaching Home program.

**Key messages:**

- We are working in partnership with Yukon First Nations, other governments and NGOs to address homelessness in the territory.
- Our government is an active participant in multiple initiatives aimed at ending and preventing homelessness, including the Housing Action Plan Implementation Committee, the Housing and Homelessness Taskforce, and the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board.
- We are working to increase access to housing and support services for Yukoners.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment and efforts to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.

**Key facts:**

- The 2024-25 Main Estimates, we have provided an increase of **\$650K** (\$650,000) to support women's transition homes in the Yukon.
  - This includes **\$250K** (\$250,000) for the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society in Whitehorse, **\$250K** (\$250,000) for the Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake and **\$150K** (\$150,000) for the Dawson Shelter Society in Dawson City.
  - This is recoverable through the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.

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### **Housing and Homelessness**

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- Safe at Home reports that on January 22, 2024, there were 155 people on the By Name List actively experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse. Forty-four of them were children.
  - The majority of those experiencing homelessness are using temporary shelter such as couch surfing, shelters, hotels/motels, public institutions like corrections and treatment centers or are in transitional housing.
  - 80 per cent of those on the By Name List are experiencing chronic homelessness. This means approximately 124 individuals have been homeless for at least six months or have been homeless 18 out of the previous 36 months.
- Safe at Home counted 197 individuals experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse through the fourth Point-in-Time Count during a 24-hour period on April 18, 2023.
  - This is a coordinated research effort to develop a one-day snapshot of homelessness in Whitehorse to help understand the challenges facing homeless individuals and families.
- From April to September 2023, there was an average of 67 stays per night in all shelters across the Yukon.
- Between January and June 2023, Community Outreach Services provided intensive case management focused on meeting basic needs, including housing, to an average of 49 unique households per month.

#### **Emergency Shelters:**

- We provide funding to support shelters in Whitehorse, including 405 Alexander, Kaushee's Place and Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Youth Emergency Shelter in Whitehorse.

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## Housing and Homelessness

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- We provide funding to support shelters in Yukon communities, including Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Jëje Zho in Dawson City and the Dawson Women's Shelter.
- Our government continues to support the development of an Indigenous women's shelter in the Yukon led by the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- There are 107 emergency shelter beds available in the territory.

Shelter	Community	Beds
405 Alexander	Whitehorse	54
Kaushee's Place	Whitehorse	15
Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Youth Emergency Shelter	Whitehorse	11
Help and Hope for Families	Watson Lake	11
Jëje Zho	City of Dawson	11
Dawson Women's Shelter	City of Dawson	5

### Hotels:

- Some Yukoners rely on or choose to live or stay in hotels.
- Between April and August 2023, an average of 2.4 per cent of social assistance clients had a hotel stay each month. This figure has been decreasing from 8.5 per cent in 2020-21 and 8.1 per cent in 2021-22.
- Seasonal fluctuations with the Yukon's hotel availability and affordability commonly occur due to increased tourism in the summer.
- Safe at Home Society has created a task force to provide opportunities for community dialogue regarding housing and homelessness, including the role that hotels and motels play in our housing continuum.
  - Health and Social Services is a participant in these discussions.



## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Housing and Homelessness**

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#### **Housing First:**

- Housing First is a modern approach to addressing poverty and has proven to be cost-effective. Its focus is to provide unhoused people access to permanent homes without pre-conditions such as sobriety.
- The Government of Yukon is undertaking a Housing First project in Watson Lake. This housing initiative is being led by the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake Mayor in Council.
  - The 10-unit Housing First residence addresses a supportive housing gap identified in a 2020 Housing Needs Assessment of Watson Lake and meets a recommendation made in the Auditor General of Canada's performance audit on the state of housing for vulnerable Yukoners.
  - The project will provide housing for up to 10 individuals experiencing homelessness who face barriers in finding stable housing.
  - The residence will have 8 studio apartments, 2 one-bedroom apartments, common areas and space for staff offices.
  - The complex was designed with input from the Liard First Nation Chief and Council, the Town of Watson Lake Mayor and Council, and local community members.
  - Construction began in 2023 and the anticipated completion date is fall 2024.
- We are planning an evaluation of the Housing First model in 2024.

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## Housing and Homelessness

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### Housing with Services Stock:

- The housing with services stock includes beds and units funded by the Department of Health and Social Services. It does not include Yukon Housing Corporation, Grey Mountain affordable housing stocks or long-term care beds.
- There are 19 units for second stage housing for women and their children fleeing violence in the territory.
- Supportive housing units are subsidized non-market housing options that provide residents with various supports and services, depending on the needs of the individual and structure of the program. There are 57 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.

Location	Number of units
405 Alexander	20
Wood Street Housing First	16
Cornerstone Community Building	21

- There are 61 housing units or beds available in Whitehorse for those with disabilities.

Location	Number of units
Max's Place	3
Granger Haven	4
Options for Independence	14
Aurora House	3
Aspen group home	5
Residences for Yukon Review Board clients	2
Approved caregiver homes for adults with disabilities	21

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Housing and Homelessness**

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- The residents currently at St. Elias will be moving into two new group homes following the opening of the Managed Alcohol Program in that space. The Tay Street group home opened February 5, 2024, and will house four clients, three of which are from St. Elias. A second home is opening in May for the remaining five St. Elias clients.

#### **Office of the Auditor General Report:**

- On May 25, 2022, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report on housing in the Yukon.
- The department accepted all the recommendations and is working with Yukon Housing Corporation and housing partners to address them.
- The department is actively in conversation with the Yukon Housing Corporation regarding enhanced collaboration and coordination of housing and services.
- In May 2022, the department and the Yukon Housing Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding to serve as a framework for cooperation on affordable housing and housing with services in the Yukon for the purpose of providing vulnerable Yukoners with adequate, suitable and affordable housing.
- On August 22, 2022, we released a draft Action Plan with the Yukon Housing Corporation.
- This was followed by a Work Plan produced jointly by the department and the Corporation. It was released publicly and shared with the Office of the Auditor General in late November 2022.
- Health and Social Services is committed to addressing the recommendations in this report. This includes:
  - # 62. The Department of Health and Social Services should, in consultation with housing partners, undertake regular and comprehensive needs analysis, including a review of the use of hotels

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### **Housing and Homelessness**

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as temporary accommodation, and take appropriate action to meet client needs.

- #64. The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that agreements with third-party providers are comprehensive and are monitored for key deliverables.
- #79. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that there is governance and oversight in place by effectively working together and with other housing partners to demonstrate meaningful progress, resolve problems, and achieve results.
- #87. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should work together and with housing partners to identify gaps and improve information systems to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to support decision making and to report on the planning, delivery, and results related to housing in Yukon.
- #91. The Department of Health and Social Services should establish appropriate performance indicators as well as conduct regular program and housing provider evaluations to assess and report on the achievement of desired results.
- As of December 2023, progress on implementation includes:
  - Amending the prioritization system for the rent-geared-to-income housing program ensures that all eligible Yukoners have equal access;
  - Developing a social support branch quarterly housing report to inform programs and services improvements;
  - Updating third-party agreements for targeted, efficient service delivery and improved monitoring, ensuring better accountability and responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable Yukoners;

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### **Housing and Homelessness**

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- Publishing the Housing Action Plan three-year progress report for 2019 to 2022; and
  - Collaborating with the Safe at Home Society to develop emergency housing options in downtown Whitehorse.
- In alignment with commitments made to respond to the OAG report, we are working with Yukon Housing Corporation to develop models and standards around needs assessments for a consistent approach to housing vulnerable people.

#### **Safe at Home Society's Conversion of the High Country Inn (The Hearth):**

- Our government appreciates the ongoing work of the Safe at Home Society to alleviate the pressures of homelessness experienced by Yukoners on the By Name List.
- In February 2023, the Safe at Home Society began providing short-term supportive housing at the former Coast High Country Inn.
- Safe at Home opened a Warming Centre in January 2024, operating Thursday to Sunday, 9 am to 9 pm, at the former High Country Inn. It offers warm drinks, food, and can accommodate up to 20 people at a time for safe shelter.
- Our government is supporting Safe at Home's 67-unit supportive housing project to transform the former Coast High Country Inn into safe and affordable housing. The units will be allocated to individuals on the By Name List, a real-time list of those currently experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.
  - The supportive housing model for the project is driven by a Housing First and harm reduction approach that promotes self-determination and dignity.

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- The housing project, recently named “The Hearth” is anticipated to be open in 2026.
- Our government entered into an agreement with the organization to provide funding and an expectation to fill 20 units (bachelor suites).
- As work continues on this important initiative, we have worked closely with the Safe at Home Society to plan for the winter months.
- Individuals currently accessing housing through this initiative will be supported to maintain their tenancy through the winter months. We are also pleased to note that the number of available units has increased to a total of 26 units that offer housing for 28 individuals.
- The Safe at Home Society offers tenants access to a variety of 24/7 on-site supports, including help locating permanent housing.

**Temporary housing:**

- We are aware that a small number of individuals moved into tents after leaving the High Country Inn.
- Efforts are in place to support people in their choices, which may include tenting rather than staying at a shelter or couchsurfing.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and community partners continue to work closely with people that are looking for permanent or temporary housing.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has funded itinerant supports with the Safe at Home Society to assist clients as they transition to their chosen housing and to ensure they remain connected for continued support.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Income Supports  
(Social Assistance)**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working to alleviate poverty and reduce cost-of-living impacts on low-income Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We recognize that some Yukoners face financial challenges in meeting core needs such as food and shelter.
- Our government, along with community partners, have programs and services available to help alleviate poverty.
- We continue to explore ways to support Yukoners most affected by rising inflation.
- Our government started engagement on the Yukon's social assistance rates in late summer 2023 with clients on Social Assistance.
- Reviewing Yukon social assistance rates is part of our work to address recommendations in the Putting People First report related to closing the gaps for lower-income Yukoners.
- As part of the Aging in Place Action Plan for Yukon, the department is preparing a more in-depth review of income supports for seniors to ensure they have funding and services that help meet their needs.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment to helping to alleviate poverty for Yukoners.

**Key facts:**

- In 2023, there was an increase in the Consumer Price Index of 6.4% in Whitehorse. As of November 1, 2023, there was a 6.4% increase to basic assistance rates.

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- In 2022-23, there was an average of 911 social assistance cases (households) monthly, comprising an average of 1,278 recipients (individuals).
  - An average of 52.7% of social assistance cases (481 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
- In 2023-24, there was an average of 910 social assistance cases (households), comprising an average of 1,274 recipients (individuals).
  - An average of 54.8 per cent of social assistance cases (521 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
- In 2022-23, there were 1,352 unique Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients and 2,264 unique Pioneer Utility Grant recipients.
- From January 2023 to January 2024 there was a monthly average of 1,215 Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients.
- As of January 19, 2024, there were 2,245 Pioneer Utility Grant payments issued for 2023.
- So far in 2023-24, the total average number of clients receiving social assistance is 910, including 777 in Whitehorse and 133 in communities.

**Guaranteed Annual Income:**

- Putting People First recommendation 5.7 states that the government design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and potential other partners such as the federal government and researchers.
  - We are holding discussions with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition on work needed to advance a possible pilot project.
  - A project of this nature will take time to develop and enable.



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- The Department of Health and Social Services has conducted preliminary research regarding a guaranteed annual income program.
    - As part of this work, we reviewed British Columbia's Final Report on Basic Income, which suggested that emphasis should be placed on improving existing social programs.
  - Our current priority is preparing for a review of our income support programs to ensure services effectively meet the needs of clients.

**Inflation:**

- Social assistance rates for shelter, food, fuel and utilities, and clothing are indexed to inflation using the Consumer Price Index for Whitehorse, annually.
- The increase takes effect in November each year. In 2023, the Consumer Price Index was 6.4%.
  - The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement was also increased by 6.4%, effective as of November 2023
  - Increases to the Yukon's social assistance rate over recent years include a 1.9% increase in November 2021 and a 5.7% increase in November 2022.
- Financial assistance through Yukon's Social Assistance program varies by family size and residence location.
  - As of November 1, 2023, the amount of assistance provided to a single person living in Whitehorse, for food, clothing, and incidentals is \$484 per month.
- The maximum rate for shelter varies by family size.
  - For a single person, the maximum monthly amount, based on 2023 shelter rates, is \$676.

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- The maximum rate for fuel and utilities varies by season, family size, and location.
  - For a single person living in Whitehorse, the maximum monthly rate in the winter (November through March) is \$604
- The provision of discretionary aid as defined in the Yukon's *Social Assistance Regulation* may be an available option for those currently receiving social assistance in situations of transient need.
- People who are ineligible for assistance through the *Social Assistance Regulation* may be eligible for Emergency Aid to alleviate an immediate health or safety risk.
- As part of inflation relief measures, we included a \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients until more comprehensive rate enhancements are in place.

**Pioneer Utility Grant (PUG):**

- The Pioneer Utility Grant assists Yukon seniors with the cost of heating their home – whether owned or rented.
- Yukon seniors aged 65 or older in the year of the grant can apply.
  - Applications are accepted between July 1 and December 31.
  - Eligible applicants receive one payment, typically within a month of application.
  - Eligibility for the grant is based on income, marital status and residential address.
  - If you receive another housing subsidy or subsidized housing, you are ineligible for Pioneer Utility Grant.
  - The difference paid to couples and singles is because couples may have more utility expenses than singles.

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- The Pioneer Utility Grant increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index and calculated prior to the July application intake.
  - The maximum amount available for the Pioneer Utility Grant in 2023 is \$1,253.56 in Whitehorse and \$1,337.48 outside Whitehorse.
  - The grant amounts are based on income, which cannot exceed \$130,923 for a single person and \$184,635 for married or common law couples.

**Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement:**

- All Canadians aged 65 years and older are eligible to receive Old Age Security.
- In addition to Old Age Security, eligible seniors will receive Guaranteed Income Support.
  - This income support provides a monthly non-taxable top-up to the Old Age Security. Guaranteed Income Support is income-tested and intended for people in the lowest income bracket.
  - The Government of Canada calculates the individuals' monthly Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement based on their Guaranteed Income Supplement amount and notifies the Government of Yukon of eligibility.
- Approximately 1,200 Yukoners are receiving Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement payments.
- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in October each year.
- Following the 2023 Consumer Price Index adjustment of 6.4%, the maximum monthly payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients is \$307.08.
  - The next adjustment will occur in October 2024.

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- To address the high rates of inflation, temporary monthly inflation relief payments were targeted to Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients between April 2023 and March 2024.
  - These temporary additional payments were 38.75% of the Income Supplement, which is comparable to the average increase of 37.13% of costs for fuel and energy between October 2021 and October 2022.
  - The maximum monthly inflation relief payment was \$119 per month.
- In September of 2022, the Yukon government announced a range of measures to support those most impacted by inflation. This included one-time payments to recipients of social assistance, the seniors' income supplement, and the pioneer utility grant.
- Between April 2023 and March 2024, we renewed the temporary monthly inflation relief payments for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients.
- In total Yukon provided an additional \$944,116.11 in inflation relief to approximately 1533 unique Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement (YSIS) clients during 23-24 fiscal year compared to \$174,210.16 issues in 22-23 fiscal year. The individual payments ranged from \$1 to \$119, with an average of about \$56/month per client.
- The exact amount each client receives is based on their overall income, with the maximum monthly inflation relief payment for eligible recipients being \$119 per month, however as the amount you receive is scaled to income most recipients received far less than this amount.
- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement includes an escalator that automatically increases the rates annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in October each year.

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- Accordingly, in both 2022 and 2023, base YSIS payments have been adjusted upwards by the Consumer Price Index, in 2022 it was 5.7% and in 2023 it was 6.4%. Following the 2023 Consumer Price Index adjustment of 6.4%, the maximum monthly payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients is now \$307.08, whereas in 2021 it was \$267.96.
  - The next adjustment will occur in October 2024.
- Yukon has been slowly reducing its inflationary measures as the situation has settled, and as the automatic escalator built into YSIS has had time to adjust base rates upwards we will not be renewing the temporary inflation relief payments we introduced first in 2022.
- The last inflationary payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement was issued March 13, 2024, and will no longer continue after March 2024.

**Rising Rental Costs:**

- We are committed to implementing coordinated access to housing for Yukoners who are homeless or precariously housed.
- The shelter allowance for clients receiving social assistance varies by household size and location and is indexed to inflation.
- Recipients may also qualify for additional assistance for fuel and utilities.
- According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' October 2023 Yukon Rent Survey, the Yukon's median rent was \$1,350 for all building types.
- We are aware that there are Yukoners, including those in receipt of social assistance, who may be living in hotels for extended periods due to lack of alternatives.
- Living in a hotel is considered 'provisionally accommodated' as it is temporary and lacks security of tenure.

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(Social Assistance)**Health and Social  
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- The department is participating in the Housing and Homelessness Taskforce, chaired by Safe at Home Society, to consider opportunities to better meet the needs of provisionally accommodated and homeless Yukoners.

**Social Assistance Rate Review:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services began engaging with social assistance clients in September 2023.
  - The focus of this initial engagement is on rates which prescribe (or authorize) the amount of assistance eligible Yukoners may receive from the Government of Yukon. This includes assistance rates for shelter, utilities, clothing, food and other needs.
  - The review includes examination of the Yukon Supplementary Allowance rate for those excluded from the workforce due to disability or age.
  - In December 2023, the department met with Crown Indigenous Services and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nation governments to discuss the rate review.
  - In January 2024, we met with non-governmental service providers to discuss and receive feedback on the social assistance rates,
  - As of March 2024, we are working with our First Nations partners for additional survey results.
- The Yukon's social assistance rates are among the highest in Canada and are indexed to inflation; however, we continually monitor the program and rates.
- We are finalizing a plan to respond to the Putting People First recommendations related to income supports.

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- This includes action towards recommendation 5.11 to increase the Yukon Supplementary Allowance for those excluded from the workforce due to disability or age to reflect inflation and continue to index Yukon Supplementary Allowance to inflation going forward.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****MEDITECH Expanse and Digital Health Strategy**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to advancing health care technology across the territory and improving our health care system for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We continue to work with stakeholders including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, physicians and other health care professionals using MEDITECH Expanse (previously referred to as the 1Health project) to support the delivery of patient-centred care across our health system.
- We appreciate the adaptability and hard work of all the Yukon's health and social service providers as we optimize the use of Meditech Expanse.
- Yukoners are at the core of these important changes to our health care system, which serves to improve the delivery and efficiency of care.
- The ongoing implementation of MEDITECH Expanse supports a more seamless care experience for Yukoners as they navigate our health care system.
- We are working to develop a Digital Health Strategy to inform where future investments should be made, ensure the transition and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon is supported and set the path for digital transformation in the Yukon.
- Mandatory cyber security training for all Health and Social Services employees will be implemented in spring 2024.



**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****MEDITECH Expanse and Digital Health Strategy**Health and Social Services

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**Key facts:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation was the first to go live with MEDITECH Expanse in June 2021, transitioning from primarily paper to electronic charting.
- Continuing Care currently uses the GoldCare system for patient charting.
- Community Nursing is primarily paper based.
- Our remote setting, reliance on out-of-territory specialists and pandemic experience has increased the need for and use of digital health services.

**MEDITECH Expanse:**

- MEDITECH Expanse is an important component of an integrated health information system that can connect health records across care settings.
- MEDITECH Expanse is a core system which integrates lab, diagnostic imaging, acute and other clinical information across multiple care settings, supporting a comprehensive health record for Yukoners.
- MEDITECH Expanse is live at Whitehorse General Hospital, Dawson City Community Hospital and the Watson Lake Community Hospital.
- Continuing Care and Community Nursing can use the MEDITECH Expanse for liaising and registration purposes, and have access to the Lab Information System for printing lab labels and receiving lab results.

**Digital Health Strategy:**

- A Digital Health Strategy is required to inform where future investments should be made, ensure the transition and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon is supported and set the path for digital transformation.

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### **MEDITECH ExpansE and Digital Health Strategy**

Health and Social Services

- A digital health strategy can help us work through challenges and support work on improving access and capacity, connecting services and systems, creating efficiency, and strengthening our partnerships in the delivery of care.
- In February and March 2023, we engaged with digital health stakeholders across government and in the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as people with lived experience on a Digital Health Strategy for the Yukon.
- A Digital Health Strategy Steering Committee has been established and the Committee is working toward the creation of Yukon's first Digital Health Strategy.
- The department engaged further with physicians in fall of 2023. We will also speak to Community Nursing, NGOs and First Nations governments.

#### **System Security:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services participates in the Federal, Provincial and Territorial cyber security meetings on a weekly basis.
- The Department has weekly, quarterly, and sometimes daily, updates to our systems and contracts in place with cybersecurity partners.
- The department has been working to develop a security structure and associated policies, including an anti-phishing campaign to prevent bad actors from accessing our systems.
- A new security system called DriveLock has been successfully implemented to safeguard and manage USB storage devices. We will soon be enabling a mandatory annual cyber security training module for all departmental employees.

#### **Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Hospital Corporation**

**Spring 2024**  
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### **Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the needs of Yukoners through the Yukon's three hospitals, and to increasing access to timely, safe, high quality, and culturally safe services.

### **Key messages:**

- The Government of Yukon works with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are identified and met.
- We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an important partner as we move forward with the direction laid out in the Putting People First report.
- Yukon hospitals are identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to care: building competency and capacity at all levels, diversifying the workforce and leadership, managing flow and occupancy to ensure the right patient is in the right bed at the right time, and continuously assessing policy, programs and services to support equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Yukon hospitals are committed to Truth, Reconciliation, decolonization and undertaking Indigenization initiatives.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are holding regular joint executive meetings to ensure coordination and collaboration.

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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is focusing on recruitment and retention. The areas of highest interest are allied health, nursing, and information technology/informatics.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an active participant in the Health Human Resources Steering Committee and has internal strategies that include developing staff from within through internal education and mentorship programs, partnering with academic institutions such as Yukon University to support the entry of new staff to clinical professions and supporting new graduates to enter the Yukon Hospital Corporation's workforce.
- As the population grows and ages there is increasing demand for all acute care services including diagnostics, outpatient and inpatient services. This is a challenge being experienced by every province and territory across the country.
- To ensure the acute care system is able to support those who need it, we are working with our partners to ensure patients are cared for in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources.

**Key facts:**

- As of February 2024, there were 515 FTEs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including:
  - 460.0 FTEs at Whitehorse General Hospital
  - 30.0 FTEs at Watson Lake Community Hospital
  - 25.0 FTEs at Dawson City Community Hospital.
- At the end of the third quarter of 2023-24, the Yukon's three hospitals had supported 34,349 emergency department visits (28,970 at Whitehorse General Hospital, 2,642 at the Watson Lake Community Hospital, and 2,737 at the Dawson City Community Hospital).

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- In 2022-23, the Yukon's three hospitals supported 41,743 emergency department visits (36,326 visits at Whitehorse General Hospital; 2,735 visits at the Watson Lake Community Hospital; and 2,682 visits at the Dawson City Community Hospital).

**Capacity**

- Whitehorse General Hospital is seeing growth in all service areas leading to higher patient volumes, increased patient needs, and increased complexity of care and acuity. The Yukon Hospital Corporation expects these trends to be sustained through next fiscal year and beyond.
- Safe and excellent care continues to be the priority for the Hospital Corporation, with a focus on preserving access to specialized acute care services such as emergency, critical care, surgical, and maternity care.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation has experienced sustained growth across services year over year. The following are some specific examples for Whitehorse General Hospital for the time period of February 2023 to February 2024:
  - 16% growth in inpatient days
  - Hospital occupancy pressures rising from 87% in 2023 to 101% occupancy in 2024
  - 2% growth in Emergency Department visits
  - 5% growth in number of surgical procedures completed
  - 9% growth in Laboratory visits
  - 35% growth in Chemotherapy services
  - 24% growth in demand for Medical Rehabilitation services
  - Increase in overall total imaging exams

**Session Briefing Note**  
**Hospital Corporation**

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- Weekly volumes vary based on patient needs and staffing requirements.

Imaging volumes over the past three months were:

	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024 (projected)
Mammography	266	321	280	300
CT	506	568	605	650
MRI	155	272	212	297
Ultrasound	516	718	518	838
X-ray	1,710	1,912	1,947	1,960

Surgical volumes over the past three months were:

	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024 (projected)
General Surgery	35	34	24	41
Endoscopy	104	106	121	140
OB/Gyne	40	52	59	33
Orthopedics	33	43	54	42
Other	82	78	80	69

- Dawson City and Watson Lake hospitals have similarly experienced a growth in the number of inpatient days and outpatient visits.
- The ability of a healthcare system to rapidly adapt and expand its capacity is paramount to effectively respond to increased demand and emergent situations.

## Session Briefing Note

### Hospital Corporation

Spring 2024  
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#### ***Clostridium difficile* Outbreak**

- *Clostridium difficile* is a bacterium that lives in the gastrointestinal tract and is the most frequent cause of healthcare-associated infectious diarrhea in Canada.
- Due to a higher than normal occurrence of *Clostridium difficile* infections in inpatients at the Whitehorse General Hospital, the Chief Medical Officer of Health declared an outbreak on the Hospital's medical unit on April 10 with the goal of reducing transmission and limiting further impact.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation staff worked quickly to respond with the following measures:
  - enhanced environmental cleaning twice daily on medical and surgical units;
  - patient-dedicated equipment;
  - staff education regarding *Clostridium Difficile* transmission and control measures and hand hygiene;
  - staff self surveillance;
  - surveillance for early detection and control of further cases;
  - daily meetings with Chief Medical Officer of Health, Yukon Communicable Disease Control, and Yukon Hospital Corporation team; and
  - Yukon Communicable Disease Control and Yukon Hospital Corporation Infection Prevention and Control will review the transfers of symptomatic patients.

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- There were no other restrictions to admission and discharge to the medicine unit, likewise no visitor restrictions. Everyone was reminded about proper hand hygiene practices.

**Ernst and Young Report:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to financial responsibility and ensuring that taxpayer funds are being used effectively to expand hospital services, address wait times, and increase access to care for Yukoners.
- In order to understand the financial needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation engaged a third party, Ernst and Young, to conduct a review of governance, financial management and internal controls at the Corporation.
- We appreciate the work of Ernst and Young and the important recommendations they have provided to enhance processes and ensure funding needs are well understood moving forward.
- In response to the review, we are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and have implemented many of the recommendations through the Transfer Payment Agreements, as well as with frequent, transparent communication with the Hospital's leadership team.
- Ernst and Young's review provides valuable preparatory insights to improve fiscal governance as we move towards the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon.
- Our government looks forward to continuing our ongoing work to improve financial processes with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and remains committed to working together to identify and meet funding needs.



# Session Briefing Note

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**Hospital Corporation**

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## Funding Breakdown between 2023-24 Supplementary Budget 2 and 2024-25

- The funding allocated for Yukon Hospital Corporation reflects the Corporation's anticipated budget for 2024-25.
- Changes in funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation in **2024-25 mains** compared to **Supplementary Budget 2** are driven by a combination of increases and non-renewal of time-limited funding.
- These figures do not include capital funding for construction of the new Mental Wellness unit.
- There is a total of **\$1.9M (\$1,959,000)** in increases:
  - **\$1.2M (\$1,200,000)** in core funding;
  - **\$300K (\$300,000)** for First Nations Health;
  - **\$405K (\$405,000)** for expected wage increases and bonuses;
  - **\$54K (\$54,000)** for 1Health, previously included in the department of Health and Social Services' Corporate Services budget.
- There was a total of **\$16.3M (\$16,335,000)** in one-time funding in 2023-24:
  - **\$7.6M (\$7,580,000)** for an operations and maintenance deficit from 2022-23;
  - **\$936K (\$936,000)** to offset operations and maintenance budget used for capital expenditures;
  - **\$300K (\$300,000)** for breast cancer screening, which we anticipate being added to core funding going forward.
  - **\$5.2M (\$5,200,000)** for 2023-24 operations and maintenance pressures.
    - These pressures are largely attributable to costs for Agency Nurses, which are anticipated to be lower in 2024-25.
  - **\$2.3M (\$2,319,000)** for pension solvency funding.
    - No solvency requirement is anticipated for 2024/25.

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**Accreditation:**

- Yukon's hospitals participated in the Accreditation survey process in May-June 2023. The three hospitals received accreditation with nearly 92 per cent compliance to the standards and practices assessed.
- Accreditation is a process where peers from Canada's health system visit the Yukon's hospitals to look at policies and processes and observe practices and patient interactions to assess compliance with national standards and required practices.
- Our hospitals strive for the best care every time (but also recognizing that we can always improve) – and Accreditation supports this by providing information to support ongoing, continuous quality improvement efforts.
- YHC's lab has not participated in a lab-specific accreditation, which is a separate, voluntary process that is offered by Accreditation Canada and other organizations. Participation in lab-specific accreditation is part of a longer-term plan.
- The 2023 final report is posted on [www.yukonhospitals.ca](http://www.yukonhospitals.ca) and can be accessed by following the links to Quality & Performance and then Accreditation.

**Discharges:**

- As a standard practice, Yukon hospitals do not discharge inpatients during the night; however, the hospital cannot prevent an individual from leaving outside of daytime hours.
- In some cases, individuals who arrive by Medevac are assessed at the Emergency Department and released.

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- Patients who receive care in the Emergency Department are released once their care needs are complete. This can happen at any hour of the day.
  - Efforts are made to put discharge plans in place to support the ongoing needs of patients.
- Several supports are available to patients who may require assistance when preparing to leave the hospital.
  - The First Nations Health Program provides 24-hour, culturally safe assistance to patients who identify as First Nation, Inuit or Métis, including by supporting discharge planning, helping clients to access transportation back to their community or accommodation, and assistance with navigating hospital services.

**Emergency Room:**

- Our emergency departments are open every hour of every day to provide care for everyone.
- Most visits to the emergency department are appropriate for this setting. In some cases, a small number of visits may be appropriate through other care settings.
- Emergency departments are a vital part of some patients' care journeys, including some visits that are less urgent but are still appropriate uses of the emergency department.
- On average, outpatient Emergency Department visits across all hospitals lasted just over two hours from patient arrival to discharge.
- Patients arriving at the Emergency Department who required inpatient admission were cared for in the Emergency Department for an average of ten hours from arrival to transfer to inpatient unit.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has not been required to close the emergency departments at any of the three hospitals in the Yukon.

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#### **Mental Wellness Unit:**

- Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, we budgeted **\$27.8M** (\$27,770,000) to build the new Mental Wellness Unit (formerly referred to as the Secure Medical Unit or the Short Stay Psychiatric Unit). Yukon Hospital Foundation has committed \$2M to the \$29.8M budget.
  - In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) for capital for the Mental Wellness Unit.
  - A total of \$10M (\$9,990,000) of the project's overall funding is recoverable through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation broke ground for the new unit in June 2023 following some delays while new design work was completed to address changes to building code requirements.
- The new Mental Wellness Unit is planned to have 12-beds once fully operational.
- The current Secure Medical Unit location is being assessed and may be redeveloped into additional inpatient beds in the future.

#### **Staffing:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation's technical and support staff represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada voted to approve a strike mandate at the end of February 2024.
- On March 1, 2024, the Yukon Employees Union announced that they reached a provisional deal.
- This deal is still subject to:
  - The Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees new mandate approval.
  - Funding commitment from Yukon Government.

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- A ratification vote by Yukon Employees' Union Local Y025.
- The Canadian health care system is experiencing a shortage of technical and specialized positions, including nurses. The Yukon Hospital Corporation is also dealing with some vacancies within our hospital system.
- A vacancy is defined as a regular, indeterminate position (permanent) that is not filled by a regular, indeterminate employee – whether or not filled temporarily. The Yukon Hospital Corporation tracks regular indeterminate vacancies because it ensures our hospitals focus on our long-term needs.
- At the end of the third quarter of 2023-24, there were 24.5 permanent nursing vacancies throughout our three hospitals for a nursing vacancy rate of 15 per cent.
  - 14.5 at Whitehorse General Hospital;
  - 6 at Dawson City Community Hospital;
  - 4 at Watson Lake Community Hospital.
- The majority of the vacant positions are being filled by temporary employees and, when this is not possible, with short-term agency nursing staff.
  - A vacancy does not necessarily mean a shift is going unfilled or that short-term needs are not being met.
- A greater number of positions are posted on the Yukon Hospital Corporation's website than are vacant, as the website also includes casual-on-call opportunities, temporary (term) positions, or new additional positions.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has never had to mandate an employee to work at the Watson Lake or Dawson City Community Hospitals.

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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working with our government and other health system partners to address the health human resource crisis and develop strategies to support Yukoners to grow into health care careers.

**Surgical Services planning**

- We recognize that surgical care is essential for the expanding population of the territory.
- Demand for surgical services has increased at a more rapid rate than previous data modelling suggested. We are working to support this increase and plan for a comprehensive and sustainable future, with improved efficiency of service delivery and patient safety.
- Starting in 2012, Yukon Hospital Corporation developed and followed a Strategic Master Plan. The plan includes expansions and improvements to its surgical services facilities.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working on health infrastructure planning for the entire health system, including but not limited to the Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation completed a needs assessment with the support of a physician consultant and is taking steps with the government's support to expand surgical services capacity to meet the growing need in the territory.
- The new Mental Wellness Unit is nearing completion and is anticipated to be operational in Fall 2024.
- The Hospital Corporation delivered a report on the comprehensive plan to the Department of Health and Social Services in January 2023.

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- The comprehensive plan is to:
  - expand services in priority order to meet current and future service needs;
  - improve efficiency of service delivery and patient safety; and
  - ensure placement of expanded services do not hinder future development of other services.
- The plan identified capital development needs through 2035, including the new emergency department and an expanded surgical services wing.
- Surgical services planning includes a needs assessment, greater orthopedic surgical capacity and a construction business case.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association to expand access to in-territory services and specialist programs.

**Key messages:**

- We continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association and physicians to address Yukoners' timely and appropriate access to speciality services closer to home and reduce the need for out-of-territory medical travel.
- We continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's visiting specialist programs to provide pathways to some specialist services in the Yukon.
- Managing hospital occupancy and ensuring patients receive care at the right place and at the right time remain a daily priority.

**Cardiology:**

- Cardiology services are provided by visiting specialists.
- Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by three visiting cardiologists who provide eight visits per year, and two visiting pediatric cardiologists who offer two visits per year.
- In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, 1,517 patient appointments were provided through the cardiology program.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is expecting to see the same or slightly more patients in the cardiology program this fiscal year compared to last fiscal year.
  - In 2022-2023 fiscal year, a total of 1,638 patient appointments were provided through the cardiology program.



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- There are a number of variables that impact patient appointments completed in each fiscal year, including timing of visits in the calendar year (including virtual visits) and number of residents that accompany the specialist on their visit.
- Wait times fluctuate based on the frequency of visits by the visiting specialist. The wait time to access a visiting cardiologist is approximately six months. The target is three months.
- As of March 31, 2024, there were 291 individuals on the wait list to access these services.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation triages referrals for cardiology services with those with the highest need supported first.

**Hospitalist Model and Inpatient Services:**

- In partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Chief of Medical Staff and the Yukon Medical Association, the Government of Yukon has been working to support a request to formalize the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Over the last several years, inpatient care was provided by family physicians supporting their own patients and a Doctor of the Day model to provide inpatient care to unattached patients.
- The “Doctor of the Day” program at Whitehorse General Hospital has been in place since 2008. The model of care was developed at a time when growing demand for inpatient services necessitated a shift from the existing model, which had the second on call physician in the Emergency Department providing care for unattached patients and the patients of physicians who did not have active hospital privileges.

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- In 2020, one physician undertook to trial a hospitalist type model at the Whitehorse General Hospital, and with our government's support, it has since evolved to a three-person model to support inpatient care as additional family doctors have now handed over care for their patients to the physicians who are providing hospitalist services.
- The changing ways physicians practice and increasingly complex health care needs necessitate a shift in how inpatient care is provided, and we are supportive of that shift.
- In partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association, an Expression of Interest has been sent out to local physicians to solicit interest.
- We are also working with our partners to share this Expression of Interest across the country to fully resource the hospitalist program.
- Once fully operational, the hospitalist program will contribute to a health care system that values people and achieves overall wellness goals for Yukoners and will:
  - be driven by patient experience, in that it will be person and family centered, accessible, integrated and safe;
  - focus on population health and address health equity;
  - make best use of available resources so that it may be efficient and effective; and
  - foster a positive work environment and maintain a robust healthcare workforce.
- We anticipate this program will support the continuous availability of physicians, particularly during the daytime, to provide inpatient care and consultation with allied health providers. Changing the model will also

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reflect the ways physicians are practicing in the Yukon and in other jurisdictions.

- Moving forward, these changes are also expected to assist in attracting locums and other physicians to the territory in the long term to provide hospitalist services and clinical services.
- Part of this effort is to ensure physician compensation is fairly and equitably set within the local and national market, and health system resources are managed effectively.
- We remain committed to working with physicians, the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure this new model of inpatient care is properly resourced and able to continue to provide stable and high-quality in-patient care to Yukoners.
- The Government of Yukon is committed to this program and appreciates the collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon Medical Association to advance this and other critical physician initiatives forward.
- Introducing Hospitalists is an important advancement for Yukon's health system and a direct support to stabilize primary care.

#### **Infusion Services:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation contacted residents of Dawson City notifying them that they will have to travel to Whitehorse to receive treatments and infusions for some chronic medical conditions as of November 1, 2023.
- Dawson City Community Hospital will continue to offer Iron Infusions, Phlebotomy and Port-a-Cath flushes.
- The reduction in services is to support the safety of patients during more complex or specialized procedures.

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- Providing complex infusions requires a planned and appropriately resourced program due to the way they are ordered, administered, and monitored.
- It is a requirement that specially trained nurses administer complex infusions, which is difficult due to current staffing challenges.
- Complex infusions require closer observation and monitoring, which is difficult in an environment where the nurses are focused on covering emergency, inpatient and some general diagnostics services in a remote hospital setting.
- Specialized infusions will continue to be provided at the medical day care clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The medical travel program is available for patients who require infusion services provided in a publicly funded facility such as Whitehorse General Hospital.

**Mammography:**

- Yukon Hospitals provide both Diagnostic and Screening Mammography services (mammograms).
- Yukon Hospitals follow national guidelines for breast cancer screening.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 2,400 Mammograms.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 3,512 Mammograms.
  - This represents a 50% increase in exams completed this fiscal year compared to last fiscal year.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25 Yukon Hospital Corporation is projected to complete 4,500 mammograms.

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- This represents nearly 100% increase in mammograms compared to 2 years ago.
- Currently, breast cancer screening wait times are exceeding national targets.
- Diagnostic Mammograms aim to be completed within 7 days of referral and are being completed within target.
- Annual & High-Risk Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 12 months. As of December 31, 2023, Annual and High-Risk Screening Mammograms are being completed within 14 months.
- Routine Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 24 months. As of March 31, 2024, Routine Screening Mammograms are being completed within 31 months.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation has begun providing breast density scores directly to patients as of January 2024.

**MRI:**

- Yukon hospitals follow national guidelines in triaging MRI referrals to ensure those with the highest need are supported first.
- To ensure appropriate utilization of this specialized service, based on Yukon's population, Yukon Hospital Corporation should be completing 3,100 MRIs per year.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 3,198 MRI exams.
- In the 2023-24 fiscal year, 2,659 MRI exams were completed.
  - This is shy of the 3,100 target, due to the health human resource challenges in MRI.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to complete 3,200 MRI exams.

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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is using agency MRI technologists to maintain this service and is actively trying to recruit the 2.0 FTE vacant MRI technologist positions.
- Urgent MRI cases aim to be supported within seven days and are being completed within this target.
- Semi-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 30 days as possible. As of March 31, 2024, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 46 days.
- Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 90 days as possible. As of March 31, 2024, these are being completed within 199 days.

**OBGYNs:**

- Obstetric-Gynecologists are based at an independent clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital with care accessed through a referral.
- The Yukon is currently supported by two resident Obstetric-Gynecologists.
- The Obstetric-Gynecologists, Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are working collaboratively to implement service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets plan.
- Access to services is based on level of need.
- Wait times for non-urgent services are approximately 10 months.
- When necessary, medical travel is available to Yukoners in communities who need to access these services in Whitehorse.
- Reproductive and prenatal services are also available through a number of general practice physicians.

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- We are working in collaboration with contract OBGYNs to enhance service delivery through provisions in our contracts. This includes specific actions to reduce and control wait times:
  - Wait time of less than one month for urgent referrals.
  - Make a meaningful effort to reduce wait times for non-urgent referrals to less than six months.
  - Work with representatives of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to implement service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets, based on Ontario model, within 6 months of contract initiation.
  - When three Specialists comprise the OBG Group, work with the department and Yukon Hospital Corporation to adjust clinic and/or OR scheduling as needed to support meeting wait time targets.
- We have also made it a requirement for quarterly wait time reports to be sent to the Department.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has committed to a third Obstetric-Gynecologist position in the territory to support timely and appropriate reproductive and maternal health care for Yukoners.

**Ophthalmology:**

- In 2019, we implemented a two-year plan which successfully reduced wait times from 37 months to 9 months for cataract assessments. This plan was extended to support managing wait times.
- We are meeting our target of completing cataract assessments within four months.
- In 2022 a funding agreement with Insured Health and Hearing services was established allowing for up to 600 cataract surgeries per year.

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- The Yukon Hospital is working towards meeting the target of completing cataract surgery within six months. At this time, surgeries are being completed within nine months.
- During the 2021-22 fiscal year, a total of 450 cataract surgeries were completed.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, a total of 545 cataract surgeries were completed.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 583 cataract surgeries were completed.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is expecting to complete 600 cataract surgeries this fiscal year, representing a 10% increase over last year.

**OR Capacity:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to plan for the future of Surgical Services at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- In the fall of 2022 Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the support of an independent expert, undertook a full review of Surgical Services and developed a plan to support surgical services sustainability.
  - Planning has been focused on implementing a sustainable human resources strategy that would support up to 3,900 surgical procedures per year. This was a 3% increase in volume from the 3,800 procedures completed in the prior two fiscal years. Through increased funding provided by our government to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the budget for the Surgical Services program was increased in 2023-24 in alignment with this proposal.
- Demand for surgical services continues to increase. In 2022-23, 3,841 surgeries were completed. Our projections suggest we will complete 4,000 surgeries in fiscal year 2023-24 (5% increase over last fiscal year).



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- Vacancies in OR Registered Nurse positions (4.75 of 12.75 positions vacant) create additional pressures as these are filled using higher cost travel nurse or agency nurse resources.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to work towards a sustainable surgical service supported by permanent staff. Efforts are being made to recruit and retain OR staff as well as develop OR Registered Nurses from within through a mentorship program.
- In December 2023, the Government of Yukon announced we would be providing additional funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to support the current level of surgical services.
- Whitehorse General Hospital currently has 58 total inpatient beds. Of these beds, 17 are for surgical care. Managing hospital occupancy is an ongoing challenge to ensure there are beds available for surgical patients. This includes ensuring there is capacity to support post-operative care for unplanned surgical patients.
  - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, there were 18 elective surgeries deferred due to lack of inpatient bed capacity.
  - In the 2023-24 fiscal year, there were 14 surgeries deferred due to inpatient bed capacity.

**Orthopedics:**

- Last year, this government budgeted \$107M for the Yukon Hospital Corporation in the 2023-24 main estimates. In this year's main estimates, we've increased that amount to a total of \$115.5M.
- The Yukon is currently supported by two resident orthopedic surgeons with additional coverage provided by locums.
- In 2022-23, a total of 104 joint replacement surgeries were completed in-territory.

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- In 2022-23, there were 28 joint replacements completed out-of-territory. This compares to 71 joint replacement surgeries completed out-of-territory in 2018-19.
- Yukon Hospitals have met, and exceeded, the services levels agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding:
  - The Memorandum of Understanding includes 100 total joint procedures. In 2023-24, a total of 107 total joint procedures were completed (55 total knee replacements and 42 total hip replacements).
  - The Memorandum of Understanding includes 480 total surgical procedures (all types). In 2023-24, a total of 568 orthopedic procedures were completed.
- As of the third quarter of 2023-24, the cast clinic has supported 2,229 visits.
  - In 2022-23, a total of 2,480 visits to the cast clinic were supported, which was more than any year prior.
- As of January 8, 2024, there were 284 individuals on the wait list for a total knee or hip replacement.
- In addition to scheduled orthopedic surgeries, they also provide urgent and emergency consultation and surgeries.
  - The orthopedics program is seeing increased demand for urgent/emergency surgeries. This means that available surgical time for orthopedics is increasingly being used to support non-planned surgeries.
- Total joint replacement wait times (request for surgery until surgery completed):
  - 16 months for total knee replacement surgery.
  - 21 months for total hip replacement surgery.

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**Pediatricians:**

- Yukon pediatricians provide a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to child health that addresses social determinates and child equity.
- This approach has resulted in parents reporting that they are able to build more trusting relationships with pediatricians and receive care that is more consistent.
- This approach has also helped reduce the number of children who need to travel for pediatric services by 93% since its implementation in 2017.
- The pediatric group provides:
  - 365 days of on-call coverage to Whitehorse General Hospital;
  - Availability Monday to Friday at the pediatric office for consults and follow-up;
  - Community outreach to rural communities (residents of Beaver Creek and Burwash Landing attend Haines Junction);
  - Support for neonatal and pediatric medevac;
  - School-based clinics including the Independent Learning Centre; and,
  - Clinics at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre with the Council of Yukon First Nations.

**Rheumatology:**

- Rheumatology services are provided by a visiting specialist. Wait times and wait lists fluctuate based on the frequency of visits.
- Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by a visiting Rheumatologist, who provides 8 visits per year.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, a total of 470 patient appointments were provided.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 454 patient appointments were provided.

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- For the 2024-25 fiscal year, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to provide 450-475 patient visits.
- As of March 31, 2024, there are 48 new patients on the wait list to access these services, and 253 patients that are awaiting booked appointments.
- The wait time to access a visiting rheumatologist is approximately 14-18 months. The target is 6 months.
- As of Dec 31, 2023, there are 104 new patients on the wait list to access these services, and 206 patients that are awaiting booked appointments (up from 47 new patients the previous year).
- Yukon Hospitals is working with the visiting Rheumatologist and exploring options to increase access to this service.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note**  
**Corporate Note – Budget Highlights**

**TAB#71**  
**Spring 2024**  
Finance

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**Recommended response:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners and communities while delivering strong, sustainable fiscal management.
- The Yukon's economy is returning to normal with inflation falling, tourism rebounding, and growth in wages leading to higher consumer spending.
- This budget will benefit all Yukoners by providing significant investments in health care, education, and housing, and will ensure that Yukoners have opportunities to thrive in a vibrant and sustainable economy:
  - An additional \$15.3 million in funding is included to support the operations of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and another \$30 million is directed towards our Insured Health services system.
  - \$4.4 million will help increase the number of educational support staff and wellness professionals in our schools and create a learning environment that is inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of our students.
  - \$101 million in capital is dedicated for land development, housing, education and health care.
  - This year's budget also delivers on our commitment to environmental stewardship, demonstrated through more than \$55 million allocated to support existing and new actions identified in *Our Clean Future*.

**Session Briefing Note****Corporate Note – Budget Highlights**

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**Embargoed until day of budget tabling**

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- Through Budget 2024-25, the government will continue to lay the foundation for the territory's new health authority. We will also provide funding to implement the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* in coordination with our partners.
- This budget includes strategic investments in infrastructure, particularly in housing for the most vulnerable. Investments in housing include projects in Watson Lake, Mayo, Faro and Dawson City and funding support for various affordable and community housing projects.
- Like in previous budgets, Budget 2024-25 continues to build relationships and further reconciliation with Yukon First Nations.
- Revenue growth continues to accelerate alongside record levels of recoveries. The Yukon's strong financial position continues to improve as we look towards the future.

**Additional response:**

- The Yukon government is delivering on its commitment to grow a strong and resilient economy while ensuring robust, sustainable fiscal management.
- A strong surplus will serve as a prudent fiscal management tool and demonstrates the ability of the government to address unforeseen events without going into a deficit.

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Corporate Note – Budget Highlights**

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- The fiscal summary includes a \$50 million contingency for unforeseen pressures and emergencies. Including a contingency has been a proven method to offset the cost of expected but undefined expenditures that arise throughout the fiscal year while limiting their impact on the territory's fiscal position.

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**Context—this may be an issue because:**

- The 2024-25 Main Estimates will be debated during the March 2024 legislative session.
- 

**Background:**

- The 2024-25 Main Estimates include a projected surplus of \$119 million and net debt of \$488.8 million.
- Total revenue is expected to be \$1.69 billion in 2024-25. This is an increase of \$115.8 million, or 7.4 per cent, from the 2023-24 Main Estimates.
- Gross O&M spending is forecast at \$1.6 billion, reflecting a \$141.4 million or 9.7 per cent increase over 2023-24 Main Estimates. Approximately 12 per cent is recoverable from Canada and other partners, making the net impact \$88.6 million, or a 6.7 per cent net increase over 2023-24 Mains.
- Forecast capital expenditures total \$484.0 million with recoveries of \$171.3 million. Although gross capital expenditures are consistent with the previous year (\$483.8 million in 2023-24) increased recoveries result in a 2.1 per cent decrease in net capital expenditures from the 2023-24 Main Estimates.

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- There are 5,484.5 FTEs in the 2024-25 budget, which is an increase of 152.8 FTEs from 2023-24. Growth primarily for CASA Education commitments (61.0) and Health Human Resources commitments (11.5) as well as Putting People First (28.5).

**Approved by:**

February 28, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Finance

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Approved



## Session Briefing Note

### Corporate Note – Fin/HPW 2023-24 Supplementary Overview

**HPW TAB#1**

**FIN TAB#28**

**Spring 2024**

**Embargoed until day of budget tabling**

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#### Recommended response:

- The changes outlined in the Supplementary Estimates No. 2 highlight the government's commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of Yukoners and communities. The government will continue to make important investments to support our healthcare system, enhance public safety, and provide needed infrastructure across the territory.
- The 2023-24 Supplementary Estimates No. 2 forecasts an overall net increase of \$32.1 million in spending. This includes:
  - A \$61.0 million increase in gross O&M spending, with an offsetting increase of \$29.4 million in recoveries, and
  - Other than a small transfer of \$143,000 in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, there is no change in overall gross capital spending, and a small decrease of \$397,000 in recoveries.
- Changes in the Supplementary Estimates result in a revised forecast surplus of \$1.7 million and year-end net debt of \$444.5 million.
- The ability to remain in a surplus position despite an increase in spending is largely owed to significant infrastructure investments:
  - Infrastructure investments, which are mostly tangible capital assets, impact net debt when they are realized. However, as they are anticipated to provide benefits over many years, their

## Session Briefing Note

### Corporate Note – Fin/HPW 2023-24 Supplementary Overview

**HPW TAB#1**

**FIN TAB#28**

**Spring 2024**

**Embargoed until day of budget tabling**

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impact on the surplus/deficit position is recognized over their expected life.

#### O&M

- In O&M, the most significant increases are for programs and initiatives in the Department of Health and Social Services:
  - \$25.6 million is required for Insured Health Services for physician claims, hospital claims, pharmacare and medical travel.
  - More than \$12 million in O&M spending will increase funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for unanticipated costs, which are partially a result of a global shortage of health care providers and work done to retain our valuable nurses.
- Some other significant items in the supplementary estimates include:
  - \$6.7 million to sustain initiatives aimed at strengthening justice and community safety within our territory.
  - \$4.1 million to cover costs for new teachers, educational assistants, learning assistant teachers and mental health and wellness counsellors, as well as Yukon University and Governance increases.
- The 29.4 million increases in O&M recoveries are mostly comprised of a \$25 million recovery expected to be received for work completed and underway at the Minto Mine, this year.

## Session Briefing Note

### Corporate Note – Fin/HPW 2023-24 Supplementary Overview

**HPW TAB#1**

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**Spring 2024**

**Embargoed until day of budget tabling**

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#### Capital

- In Capital, there is no significant change in overall expenditures, but there are increases in several projects which are offset by decreases in other areas:
  - Most of the increases are for the Dempster Fibre project, which will receive an additional \$18.4 million to support faster than anticipated progress during the year. This project will provide Yukoners with more reliable access to the internet as well as necessary redundancy.
  - There is also a \$14.6 million increase for the Nisutlin Bay Bridge Replacement project and a \$7.9 million increase for the Whitehorse airport taxiway improvements and runway replacement.
  - Finally, there will be an \$5.8 million increase is required for the Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre replacement and the Old Crow 10-unit mixed-use housing project.
- These increases are offset by a number of decreases in other capital projects to reflect revised timelines:
  - The most notable decrease is a \$21.3 million reduction for the Skagway Marine Service Platform project, which has been moved to 2025-26.

## Session Briefing Note

### Corporate Note – Fin/HPW 2023-24 Supplementary Overview

**HPW TAB#1**

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**Spring 2024**

**Embargoed until day of budget tabling**

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- There is also an \$8 million decrease in Northern Carve Out funding, which is being deferred to 2024-25.
- Delays in some of the community projects under the infrastructure development funding will also see an additional \$7.7 million decrease in capital.

#### Additional Response:

- Revenues for 2023-24 are expected to decrease by \$14.9 million, mainly to reflect lower forecasts for tobacco and corporate income tax revenues and quartz mining royalties.

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#### Context—this may be an issue because:

- The 2023-24 Supplementary Estimates #2 is tabled in the spring session and will be the subject of debate.

#### Approved

Signature on file	February 29, 2024
_____ Deputy Minister, Finance	_____ 
Signature on file	February 28, 2024
_____ Deputy Minister, HPW	_____ Approved

## Session Briefing Note

### Carbon Pricing (Corporate Note)

**TAB#73**

**Spring 2024**

Environment & Finance

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#### Recommended response:

- Since its introduction in 2019, the Government of Yukon has been supportive of carbon pricing as a policy to help us reduce emissions and move toward our ambitious climate targets.
- The Department of Environment and the Department of Finance work closely to ensure that we take a balanced approach to carbon pricing in the territory, one which considers the need to reduce emissions as well as the fair return of carbon pricing revenues to Yukoners.
- Our two departments work together to coordinate with our federal counterparts to assess the implications of carbon pricing in the territory and to ensure the needs of the territory are recognized in national policy.
- This includes retaining control over how revenues are distributed back to Yukon individuals, municipal governments, Yukon First Nations and businesses.
- It also includes excluding carbon price from electricity generation or aviation, in recognition of the unique constraints of our northern jurisdiction.

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Carbon Pricing  
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

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**Additional response:**

- Carbon pricing is just one tool in our toolkit to address the climate emergency.
- We continue to implement Our Clean Future to reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions and, more broadly, to reduce the impact of the carbon levy on Yukoners.
- In December of last year, we announced 42 new actions under Our Clean Future as part of the third Our Clean Future annual report outlining the progress we have made on the strategy.
- Although we have made progress on many of our commitments, there is still significant work required to meet our target of reducing our emissions by 45 per cent by 2030
- Our government continues to stand by carbon pricing as sound, evidence-based policy on climate change, but we share concerns about equity; specifically, for those Yukoners who do not use heating oil for their homes.
- The policies in Our Clean Future, as well as carbon pricing, are intended to incentivize Yukoners to make the switch to low carbon energy sources, like electric heating or heat pumps. Despite this change to the federal carbon levy, Yukoners continue to lead the way to support this low carbon transition.

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Carbon Pricing  
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

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- Ensuring that we utilize every policy lever at our disposal, including carbon pricing, is essential to meet our goals.
- Together, we are finding solutions to reduce our emissions while strengthening our economy and supporting our industry partners.

**Third response:**

- The Yukon's carbon rebate is revenue-neutral. We are committed to both reducing carbon emissions in the territory and to returning all the federal government's revenues to Yukoners.
  - Returning proceeds to individuals, municipal governments, Yukon First Nations, and businesses is a critical part of our approach to carbon pricing in the Yukon.
  - We are returning 100 per cent of the federal carbon levy to these four rebate groups who receive more, on average, than they pay in carbon pricing levies.
- 

**Context—this may be an issue because:**

- In October 2023, the federal government announced a temporary 3-year exemption for home heating oil from the federal carbon price, with the intention of helping Atlantic Canada in particular.
  - While Atlantic Canada welcomed this change, the exemption has received considerable backlash. Most provincial governments (except for British Columbia) have called for extending the carbon price exemption to all home-heating fuels (including natural gas).
-

**Session Briefing Note****Spring 2024****Carbon Pricing  
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

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- Critics also argued that the exemption undermines the credibility of the carbon tax, and may weaken the incentives to switch to lower carbon heating options.
- 

**Background:**

- The federal Draft Regulations Amending the Fuel Charge Regulations stipulate that all heating oil will be exempt from the fuel charge starting November 8, 2023, until April 2027.
- This means that light fuel oil consumption in all buildings, including residential, commercial, and institutional, will be exempt from the fuel charge.
- Nearly half (49.2% in 2022) of Yukon homes use oil-based heating.
- In Yukon, individuals, businesses, placer/quartz mining operations, Yukon First Nations governments and municipal governments are all eligible for a rebate for carbon pricing.
  - Individuals who live outside of Whitehorse receive a remote supplement, which was recently increased from 10 to 20% (and is now in line with the federal remote supplement for backstop jurisdictions including Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan).

**Approved by:**

_____	March 1, 2024
Michael Prochazka, Deputy Minister of Environment	Date approved
_____	February 26, 2024
Deputy Minister of Finance	Date approved



## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Inflation and Affordability**

#### **(Corporate Note)**

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

**Recommended:**

- Inflation has continued to improve in recent months, but all Yukon households continue to see their budgets stretched by elevated prices, with lower-income households often feeling the worst effects.
- The Government of Yukon continues to track inflation and its impact on Yukoners, so that we can take steps to ease the burden.
- As inflationary pressures continue to lessen, efforts to make life more affordable for Yukoners and to help industry are shifting from short-term assistance to measures with the potential to provide longer-term benefits, such as actions to improve home affordability.

**Additional response:**

- This year's Budget continues to support Yukoners by making sure they can access essential services at prices they can afford.
  - The Budget includes massive investments to advance affordable housing projects across the Yukon. From the Housing First Project in Watson Lake, the Ryder Apartments in Whitehorse, and the Korbo Multiplex in Dawson, the Yukon government will be taking action to build more affordable homes for Yukoners, especially those in vulnerable situations.
  - There is also over \$42 million in continued funding for early learning and child care in this Budget. This includes funding for the universal child care program, which has reduced child care fees to less than \$10 per day on average.

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Inflation and Affordability**

#### **(Corporate Note)**

---

**Spring 2024**

Finance

- We are also making life more affordable and leading the nation with our Yukon-wide dental program, which will see \$5.4 million in continued funding for 2024-25.
- To make sure that more people have the option of staying home when they are sick, we have extended the Temporary Paid Sick Leave and included the necessary funding to do so in this Budget. We have also extended the Interim Electrical Rebate, which will provide welcome relief from power bills to Yukoners across the territory.
- These are just a few examples of the many programs and initiatives that will continue to support Yukoners this year.
- The Yukon's minimum wage has also been responsive to price changes, as its annual change is tied to inflation in the year prior. After growing 6.8 per cent in 2023, the minimum wage is scheduled to grow a further 4.9 per cent to \$17.59 per hour as of April 1, 2024. The new minimum wage would represent the second highest wage in Canada, behind only Nunavut's minimum wage of \$19.00 per hour.
- Higher inflation impacts various Government of Yukon programs through indexation, including:
  - Subsidies for medical travel
  - The Yukon Child Benefit
  - Social Assistance Payments
  - Student Financial Assistance
  - Seniors' benefits
  - The Pioneer Utility grant

## Session Briefing Note

### Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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Spring 2024

Finance

- o The Comprehensive Municipal Grant Regulation
- o The minimum wage
- o Residential rent caps
- o The tobacco tax rate

**Context—this may be an issue because:**

- Inflation has fallen from historical highs but remains elevated in Canada and in the Yukon.
- While improved, energy prices remain elevated, and food and shelter costs continue to be prominent drivers of overall inflation. These are all areas where higher prices are more obvious to consumers.
- Housing affordability has been a concern in the Yukon for several years.
- After more than a year of local inflation being among the highest in Canada, growth in the Whitehorse CPI trended down throughout 2023 and was once again below the national inflation in the last three months of 2023 [and the first two months of 2024](#).
- Higher earnings were reported across most industries in 2023, and several industries reported earnings growth more than 2023's average inflation of 4.9 per cent. Even as some industries had earnings gains outpace inflation, earnings growth of 2.8 per cent in the industry total fell short of the overall increase in prices in 2023.

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Inflation and Affordability**

### **(Corporate Note)**

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

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#### **Background:**

##### **Inflation – Recent performance and outlook**

- Early in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, some price pressures were slower to materialize in the Yukon than in other parts of the country, as inflation for Whitehorse was amongst the lowest in Canada in the first half of 2022.
- Robust price growth in the CPI components of food, shelter and recreation, education and reading material were key drivers of overall inflation in 2023.
- Actions taken by the Bank of Canada to rein in inflation by cooling the Canadian economy appear to be having the desired effects. The national labour market has softened, consumer spending has slowed, and real GDP has leveled out. Following ten increases in the overnight rate since March 2022, discussion among many analysts has shifted towards the timing of rate cuts.
- The Bank's efforts to tame inflation look to have set the stage for a soft landing for Canada, as inflation is trending down without an accompanying sharp downturn in economic activity. Weaker energy prices and improving supply chains have also helped contribute to a much-improved national inflation picture.
- Prior to the recent period of elevated inflation, prices in the Yukon had generally tracked close to the national trend. After averaging 3.9 per cent in 2023, the Bank expects national inflation to fall to 2.8 per cent in 2024 and 2.2 per cent in 2025. As price pressures continue to recede, a similar story is expected locally with growth of the Whitehorse CPI forecast to fall from 4.9 per cent in 2023 to 3.0 per cent in 2024 and 2.5 per cent in 2025.

# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability

### (Corporate Note)

**Spring 2024**

Finance

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#### PROGRAMS AND OTHER MEASURES THAT SUPPORT AFFORDABILITY

Projects under the Five-Year Capital Plan supporting housing affordability (Yukon Housing Corporation)

- The **Old Crow 10-Plex Mixed-Use Housing** facility will be completed and will be ready for residents to start moving in by March 2024.
- Construction of the **10-plex Housing First Project in Watson Lake** began in the summer of 2023. It is scheduled to be completed in the fall 2024.
- Construction of the **Faro and Dawson Duplex** projects started in summer 2023 and are scheduled to be complete in early 2024.
- The **Korbo Multiplex in Dawson** is in the design phase. This project will deliver approximately 34 new housing units.
- The old **Ryder Apartments in Whitehorse** was demolished in December 2023 and plans are underway to replace it with a new multi-family affordable housing complex. The project is in the design phase and is anticipated to deliver over 45 new units.

Universal Child Care Program (Education)

- Universal child care is available to all Yukon families using licensed child care spaces. The universal child care program has reduced fees to less than \$10 per day on average for families across the Yukon.

Dental Care program (Health and Social Services)

- The Yukon's Dental Program was launched in 2023 and provides \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to Yukoners without dental coverage. The program will cover dental treatments necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease, treat cavities, and restore chewing and social function. It will also offer full coverage for preventive care, such as routine dental cleaning.

# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

### Paid sick leave program (Economic Development)

- On April 1, 2023, Economic Development launched the Paid Sick Leave Rebate. The program will run for two 12-month blocks:
  - April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024; and
  - April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025
- The Paid Sick Leave Rebate is a temporary program that offers up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to employees and self-employed Yukoners that earn less than the average private-sector wage of \$33.94/hour. The program includes all illnesses (and injuries not covered by any other Act, benefit, or program). The program is available to employees regardless of whether their employer offers paid sick leave, though employees must use all paid sick leave available to them through their employer before they are eligible for the Paid Sick Leave Rebate.

### Yukon Child Benefit (Finance)

- The Yukon Child Benefit provides monthly payments to modest and low-income households who have children under 18. The maximum benefit per child is now tied to inflation, starting in the 2023–24 budget year.

### Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement (Health and Social Services)

- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement provides a monthly income supplement for eligible Yukoner senior's receiving Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) from the federal government. This amount is adjusted for inflation in October each year.

### Inflation Relief Rebate and Interim Electrical Rebate (Yukon Development Corporation)

- The Inflation Relief Rebate, a \$50 rebate that is automatically applied to electrical customers' bills, was a temporary measure to address inflation. The Inflation Relief Rebate was most recently applied to all ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy bills for November and December 2023 and January 2024.



# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

**Spring 2024**

Finance

- The Interim Electrical Rebate continues to provide residential electrical customers with a maximum rebate of \$22.62 per month based on the electricity they consume, up to 1,000 kilowatt hours (up to \$271.44 per year). This affordability measure has been extended to March 2025.

### Other Government initiatives

#### Initiatives under Health and Social Services:

- Engagement on the Yukon's Social Assistance rates started in late summer 2023 with clients on Social Assistance.
- While the review is underway, the department is providing a \$100 monthly increase to eligible Social Assistance recipients.
- To offset inflationary cost of living increases and provide sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of children placed in their care, the department is providing a 10 per cent increase to monthly payments to caregivers of children in out of home care, on top of the annual indexed increase.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a 16.46 per cent rate increase for community and extended family caregivers was provided. The rates are as follows:
  - Whitehorse: \$46.86 per day
  - Rural Communities: \$50.16 per day
  - Old Crow: \$86.40 per day

#### Comprehensive Municipal Grant (Community Services)

- The Comprehensive Municipal Grant is how the Government of Yukon directly funds municipal governments. This core funding supplements municipal resources and pays for vital services, like the provision of fresh drinking water, the collection of solid waste and recycling, recreation programming and other services as required under the Municipal Act and other legislation.

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Inflation and Affordability**

### **(Corporate Note)**

**Spring 2024**

Finance

- The high inflation seen in 2022 (6.8 per cent) will increase the grant payments to be provided in April 2024. This will result in a \$2.3 million increase for Yukon municipalities with overall contributions of over \$24.5 million for fiscal year 2024/25.

#### Energy retrofits and funding to improve efficiency and offset costs (Energy, Mines and Resources)

- Our energy programs are successfully encouraging Yukon residents and local businesses to reduce their energy use, save money and choose low carbon options to live and move.
- Energy efficiency rebate programs are available for the transportation sector, renewable heating sector, and the construction sector focusing on high efficiency buildings.
- For existing homes, the Energy Branch offers the Good Energy rebate program for high performance heating systems and upgrades to thermal enclosures including insulation and windows, and high-performance new homes. Taking these measures will save homeowners money on their energy costs.
- Between January 1, 2018, and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, 221 high-performance retrofits to residential, commercial and institutional buildings have been completed across the territory.
- Innovative programs like the Better Buildings Program that offer up-front funding, combined with our Good Energy rebates, make energy retrofits more accessible and affordable for Yukoners.

#### Support to the forestry industry (Energy, Mines and Resources)

- To help increase the supply of firewood, over the past two years the Yukon government has offered an incentive to timber harvesters. In 2022-23, the Government of Yukon distributed \$315,000 to 33 Yukon businesses. The program has contributed to an increase in timber harvest volumes.



## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Inflation and Affordability**

#### **(Corporate Note)**

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

- In fall 2023, the Government of Yukon and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency combined financial contributions to launch the \$200,000 Forestry Support Program. The program is helping to enhance operational safety and resilience by allowing commercial harvesters and retailers to purchase or repair things like harvest equipment, vehicles, trailers, and personal protective equipment.
- We have distributed over \$170,000 through this program and anticipate exhausting the funds by the application deadline of March 31, 2024.

#### Temporary Landlord Assistance Program (Economic Development)

- Vacancy rates in the local rental market remain very low. The Government of Yukon is committed to encouraging landlords to remain in the residential market. To help support this, the department of Economic Development introduced a temporary Landlord Assistance Program in November 2023.
- The program is available to all Yukon residential landlords who rent out accommodations to which the Yukon's Residential Landlord and Tenant Act applies and who rented out accommodation in 2023. The program provides a one-time, per-unit payment of \$338 for 2023.

#### **Government initiatives indexed to inflation**

- Higher inflation impacts various Government of Yukon programs through indexation, (indexation is updated each April unless otherwise noted), including:
  - Comprehensive Municipal Grant Regulation (with a one-year lag)
  - The minimum wage
  - Subsidies for medical travel
  - Pioneer Utility grant
  - Residential rent caps
  - Seniors benefits (updated each October)
  - Social Assistance Payments (updated each November)

# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

- o Student Financial Assistance (updated each school year)
- o Tobacco Tax is updated each January
- o Yukon Child Benefit (July)

**Covid-19 and other temporary inflation relief measures no longer in place:**

### **Tourism and Culture:**

#### **COVID-19 Business Relief Programs**

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Yukon acted quickly and decisively by implementing one of the most robust business relief programs in the country. This began with the Yukon Business Relief Program (YBRP) in 2020, which was open to any business from any sector that experienced at least a 30 per cent revenue loss due to the pandemic.
- In that same year, Tourism and Culture (T&C) also launched the Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan (TRRP), which was reviewed and endorsed by the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board (YTAB) and industry.
- The Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan committed \$15 million over 3 years to support the tourism sector and was focused on 4 key themes:
  - o Providing tourism sector leadership;
  - o Rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism;
  - o Supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and
  - o Refining the brand and inspiring travelers to visit.
- Through the TRRP, various financial support programs were rolled out during the course of the pandemic to sustain the tourism industry and prepare it for the eventual reopening of borders, including:
  - o Tourism Accommodation Sector Supplement (TASS);
  - o Tourism Non-Accommodation Sector Supplement (TNASS);
  - o Culture and Tourism Non-profit Sector Supplement;

# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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**Spring 2024**

Finance

- Great Yukon Summer (GYS) program;
- Great Yukon Summer Freeze program;
- ELEVATE program; and
- A top-up to the Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund (TCMF).

### Health and Social Services:

- a one-time \$150 payment to social assistance recipients;
- a one-time payment of \$150 to Yukon Seniors Income Supplement recipients;
- a one-time 10 per cent additional payment to Pioneer Utility Grant recipients;
- a 6-month extension of \$500 per month to caregivers of children in out of home care; and
- a commitment of \$100,000 to Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to continue to support food security across the territory.

**Approved by:**

March 19, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Finance

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved

**Session Briefing Note**  
**Our Clean Future**  
**Implementation**

**Spring 2024**

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

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**Recommended response:**

- We recognize the urgency of the climate emergency and launched Our Clean Future in September 2020 to map our route forward.
- The Government of Yukon continues to make significant progress on implementing Our Clean Future. In December 2023, we released the third Our Clean Future annual report outlining the progress we made responding to climate change in 2022.
- The report announced the addition of 42 new actions to help us reach our climate goals. These new actions are a product of the important work of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council, the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, Navius Research and the findings in the Climate Risk Assessment report.
- The 42 new actions implement 15 recommendations from the Yukon Climate Leadership Council and three recommendations from the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change.
- Additionally, several of the new recommendations put forward by the Yukon Climate Leadership Council align with existing Our Clean Future actions.
- We will continue to work together to advance our efforts to reduce emissions as we assess our progress year-to-year, consider new research and the input of others, and increase our resilience to climate change.
- We have also revised 19 existing actions to better align with our efforts to reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions and build a climate resilient territory.

**Session Briefing Note**  
**Our Clean Future**  
**Implementation**

**Spring 2024**

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

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**Additional response:**

- As we continue to address climate change it is important for us to look back on our progress as we diligently work towards our objectives.
- We legislated greenhouse gas emissions targets and associated reporting through the Clean Energy Act in 2022.
- We installed electric vehicle chargers in every road-accessible community in the Yukon, enabling zero-emissions travel throughout the territory. (See EMR BN #29)
- We launched the five-year Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership in 2023 which will enhance the agriculture sector's resiliency and adaptation to climate change.
- In collaboration with the Yukon's public utilities, we met our target to install seven megawatts of renewable electricity capacity through the Micro-Generation program by 2030. (See EMR BN #38)
- We launched the Better Buildings Program to offer affordable financing for energy retrofits to Yukoners' homes and buildings in 2022.
- We established a geohazard mapping program to understand risks from climate change to the Yukon's transportation corridors.
- We advanced emergency preparedness as we progressed the Community Wildfire Protection Plans for Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake, Beaver Creek, the Town of Faro and the Kluane Lake Region.
- We have begun work to develop flood hazard maps for all flood-prone Yukon communities. We expect to release flood maps for the Southern Lakes, Carmacks, and Teslin in 2024. Flood hazard mapping

## Session Briefing Note

### Our Clean Future Implementation

**Spring 2024**Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

for Old Crow and Dawson and the Klondike Valley will begin in 2024 and 2025.

- In May 2023, we completed the installation of a biomass heating system at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse.
- In January 2024, we passed an electric vehicle charging station regulation under the *Public Utilities Act* to allow First Nation governments, private businesses and municipalities to sell electricity through electric vehicle charging stations.

#### Third response:

- Of the original 136 actions released in Our Clean Future in 2020, we have completed 45 actions. Eighty-seven actions are in progress and four are yet to begin.
- The ambitious addition of 42 new actions in 2023 puts us on track to reduce the Yukon's emissions by 30 per cent by 2030; however, there is still significant work required to meet our target reduction of 45 per cent by 2030.
- We are working with industry to establish a path to implement the mining intensity target of a 45 per cent reduction in emissions per unit of production by 2035.
- We will continue to build on Our Clean Future as we learn more and implement new actions. This will be reflected in future annual reports.
- We will continue to find opportunities to reach our targets as we work with experts, stakeholders and partner governments across the territory and beyond.

#### Context — this may be an issue because:



Session Briefing Note

Our Clean Future

Implementation

Spring 2024

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

- Climate change is of high interest to Yukoners and the government’s progress in delivering on Our Clean Future commitments will be of interest.

Background:

- Our Clean Future was released on September 14, 2020 and now has 178 actions, of which 136 are original actions and 42 are new actions. These actions seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the Yukon to be highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030 (see Appendix A).
- The Government of Yukon reports annually on progress for the implementation of Our Clean Future. Three Annual Reports have been published to date, with the latest report released on December 20, 2023.
- The Our Clean Future website was launched in December 2023, which shows our commitments and successes towards fighting climate change.
- On February 16, 2024, the Government of Canada released an update on design options being considered for the upcoming Clean Electricity Regulations. This regulation is one of the Government of Canada’s central commitments towards transitioning Canada towards a net-zero electricity grid by 2035.
- Yukon will be exempted from the Clean Electricity Regulations as the territory’s electricity grid is currently not interconnected with any other region and is therefore not regulated by North American Electric Reliability Corporation.

Approved by:

Deputy Minister

Department of Environment

March 19, 2024

Date approved

Deputy Minister

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

March 19, 2024

Date approved

## Housing Issues

## Yukon Housing Corporation

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### Recommended response:

- Many Yukoners continue to face challenges across the housing continuum, including:
  - homelessness and a lack of access to housing with services;
  - a lack of affordable rental supply; and
  - high house prices and mortgage rates.
- Exceptionally high building costs and rising interest rates are creating significant challenges for both Yukon Housing Corporation and its partners.
- The corporation's new strategic plan, Creating Home, will help transform affordable housing service delivery through the adoption of a more client-centred and collaborative approach that integrates supports and leads to better outcomes for Yukoners.

### Additional response:

- Across government, we are working with stakeholders to develop new land parcels, increase housing stock while also responding to the findings of the 2022 Office of the Auditor General Report on Housing.
- We continue to advance projects that provide new housing to meet Yukoners' needs.

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### Context:

- The combination of high rental costs, limited affordable housing options, and difficulties in securing mortgages, continue to be a challenge for many Yukoners.
- 

### Background:

#### General housing information in the Yukon

#### Homelessness

- At least 197 people were experiencing homelessness in the 2023 Whitehorse Point-in-Time Count. This included: 58% men; 38 % female; 4% other.



## Housing Issues

Yukon Housing Corporation

### Rental pricing

- As of October 2023, the median rent for units in Whitehorse in all types of buildings \$1,368. This is 5.1% higher than it was in October 2022. For rental units in buildings with three or more units, the median rent was \$1,250, and the vacancy rate was 1.2%. Within the renter population in Whitehorse:
  - 22.7% live in unaffordable housing;
  - 17.9% live in unsuitable housing; and
  - 10.5% live in inadequate housing.

### Rental and vacancy rate, Yukon (YBS)

	<a href="#">April 2022</a>	<a href="#">October 2022</a>	<a href="#">April 2023</a>	<a href="#">October 2023</a>
Median rent (all types)	\$1,300	\$1,301	\$1,325	\$1,368
Vacancy rate (all types)	1.6%	1.7%	2.2%	1.9%

### Housing Construction

- Residential building construction declined by 19.3% over the same period. There was \$81.9 million in residential building construction in Yukon in 2023. This figure represents a 7.5% decline from 2022.
- Labour shortages contribute to higher construction costs and are leading to lower residential construction output.<sup>1</sup>

### House prices

- Yukon Bureau of Statistics real estate reports show that average prices for single detached and condos have fallen for three consecutive quarters; however, house prices remain high and many Yukoners face affordability challenges due to rising mortgage rates.
- Average House Prices (YBS)

Type	Whitehorse Average House Prices		
	<a href="#">2022 Q3</a>	<a href="#">2023 Q3</a>	Change
Single-detached house	\$701,200	\$664,600	(-5.2%)
Condominium	\$459,400	\$426,600	(-7.1%)

<sup>1</sup> Northern Housing Report, 2023

### Yukon Housing Corporation Accomplishments

#### Creating Home – YHC new strategic plan

- Creating Home is the corporation's new 5-year strategic plan that will transform affordable housing service delivery through the adoption of a more client-centred and collaborative approach that integrates supports and leads to better outcomes for Yukoners and communities.
- The plan draws on a recognized framework intended to re-design and transform health care delivery, called the Quadruple Aim, and adapts it to housing.
  - This innovative approach to housing delivery will lead to better outcomes by:
    - improving the client and provider experience
    - strengthening community wellbeing; and
    - contributing to a sustainable future
- Creating Home represents a significant shift in how Yukon Housing Corporation operates and delivers housing services.

#### Capital builds recently completed by YHC or partners:

- 60 units completed between 21/22 and 22/23 by YHC
- **February 2024** 10 units in Old Crow (with HPW)
- **March 2024** accessible duplex in Faro
- **January 2024** – 3-unit mobile home delivered and prepared for occupancy for RRDC staff to help improve social conditions in the community.
- **August 2023** – two accessible, affordable duplexes in Mayo and Carmacks, YHC
- **July 2023** – a 12-bed men's shelter, Jëje Zho, in Dawson City, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- **May 2023** – 9-unit Elders' complex, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- **January 2023** – 87-unit rental development in Whitehorse by Boreal Commons
- **January 2023** – 47-unit build for in Whitehorse YHC
- **December 2022** – 84-unit Seniors' Supportive Housing Facility, Normandy Living.
- **July 2022** – 45-unit multi-use building, Cornerstone: Opportunities Yukon
- **June 2022** – triplex in Whitehorse, YHC
- **Summer 2022** – 20-unit, Whistle Bend: Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- **March 2022** – triplexes in Mayo and Watson Lake, YHC

## Housing Issues

## Yukon Housing Corporation

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### Underway or Upcoming housing capital projects for YHC and partners

#### YHC- Underway (12 units)

- 10-unit Watson Lake Housing First building
- 2-unit affordable duplex in Dawson

#### YHC – Upcoming (112+ units) Community housing:

- 34-unit building with 8 accessible units in Dawson
- 45+ unit building with 9 accessible units on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Whitehorse (formerly Ryder Apartments)
- 10 units in Mayo
- 6-plex in Teslin
- 6-plex in Carcross
- 6-plex Haines Junction
- Accessible triplex in Whitehorse
- Accessible duplex in Ross River

#### Staff housing:

- Accessible duplex in Destruction Bay
- Accessible duplex in Pelly Crossing
- Duplex in Burwash Landing

### Rent subsidy programs to make life more affordable for renters and seniors:

- July 2023, the corporation acquired an additional 16 units for lease from Normandy, for a total of 26 units to lease to YHC clients through its rent supplement program.
- Since 2020, the corporation has supported over 300 households pay rent through the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit. As of April 2024, 177 clients are receiving monthly support.

### Support for homeowners:

- March 2024 – CYHB Homeowners stream
- June 2023 the Yukon government launched an \$8.25 million flood recovery program for residents and businesses affected by flooding in the Klondike Valley. (Tab #19)

## Housing Issues

## Yukon Housing Corporation

- April 2023, YHC launched the expanded Yukon Home Ownership Program which provides mortgages for qualified households to build and buy their homes across the territory, including Whitehorse.
  - The program is currently under review and scheduled for revision in the coming year.
- In 2020, YHC launched the revised Home Repair Program to support low to moderate-income Yukon homeowners to remain in their homes and age in place by providing funding to address mobility requirements, repairs, or core housing needs.

### Support for new residential land development 2023:

- June 2023, the Government of Yukon partnering with the Government of Canada and the City of Dawson to develop [four new residential lots in Dawson City](#).
- February 2023 – 120 lots, including single family, multi-family and townhouse lots in Whistle Bend made available through public lottery.
- March 2023 Government of Yukon partnered with Liard First Nation on developing 43 new residential lots on Frances Avenue in Watson Lake.
- March 2023 – 74 residential lots in Mayo and the Logan and Whistlebend subdivisions of Whitehorse made available through public lottery.
- November 2022, signed a loan agreement with Kwanlin Dün First Nation's (KDFN) arm's-length development corporation Chu Níkwān Limited Partnership (CNLP) for a new residential land development project at [Copper Ridge West in Whitehorse](#), the first large-scale residential land development on settlement land in the Yukon. An amended loan agreement was signed August 2023 with Chu Níkwān for the same development.

Approved by:

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President, Yukon Housing Corporation

April 30, 2024

Date approved

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
– Update on Calls to Action**

Executive Council  
Office

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**Recommended response:**

- Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility of all governments and individuals in our society.
- Our government is deeply committed to advancing reconciliation through collaboration and partnership with Indigenous governments.
- While there is still work to do, our efforts are resulting in meaningful change and creating better programs and services for all Yukoners.
- In 2023, on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we shared our progress toward addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action through the release of the Pathways magazine and an accompanying report.
- The magazine and report provide an update on the actions being taken across the Yukon government and in close collaboration with First Nation governments and organizations in areas including child welfare, health, education and justice.

**Additional response:**

- The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments are leaders in demonstrating a collaborative approach to reconciliation.
- We will continue our collaborative work to implement and report on the Calls to Action, including through work on the Yukon Forum joint priorities and by implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

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**Context—this may be an issue because:**

- The 2023 mandate letters include a commitment to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action.



## Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Update on Calls to Action

Executive Council  
Office

### Background:

- The TRC report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, was released in June 2015. It contains 94 Calls to Action focused on redressing the harms resulting from Residential Schools and creating better relations between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous Peoples. Thirty-two of the Calls to Action relate directly to YG.
- YG and Yukon First Nations (YFNs) collaborated on addressing the Calls to Action under the 2017 Yukon Forum Joint Priority Action Plan and through other reconciliation initiatives, such as supporting the important work of the YFN-led Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project.
- YG has taken additional steps to address the Calls to Action, including:
  - establishing the position of Assistant Deputy Minister of First Nations Initiatives at the Department of Education, signing an agreement to establish a YFN School Board and entering into education agreements with all YFNs (speaks to Calls 7 and 10 directed to the federal government);
  - supporting Indigenous athletes and the North American Indigenous Games (Call 88);
  - implementing the YFN Procurement Policy (relates to Call 92) and the Representative Public Service Plan: *Breaking Trail Together* (relates to Call 7);
  - working with YFNs and Yukon Indigenous women's groups to implement the Yukon's *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit+ People Strategy* (MMIWG2S+ Strategy) (relates to Call 41);
  - participating at the Trilateral Table on the Wellbeing of YFN Children and Families to address gaps for culturally appropriate parenting programs (Call 5); and
  - receiving input from YFNs on Health and Social Services programming through the Mental Health Advisory Committee (relates to Call 19).

### Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office

2024 02 02

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date