

# HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

## FALL 2023 Session Notes

HSS HOT TOPICS		Joint Note
1	Accomplishments – HSS	
2	405 Alexander <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Mobile Downtown Outreach Service</li> <li>• Available Supports</li> <li>• Low Barrier Approach</li> <li>• Coroner Inquiry into 405 Alexander Deaths</li> <li>• Food Services</li> </ul>	
3	Budget – HSS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insured Health</li> <li>• SUHE</li> <li>• Yukon Hospital Corporation</li> <li>• Hospital Financial Statements</li> <li>• Ernst and Young Report</li> </ul>	
4	Clinics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilingual Health Centre (Constellation Health Centre)</li> <li>• Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic (CASA)</li> <li>• Mental Health Walk-in (CMHA-Y)</li> <li>• Vaccine Clinic Contract</li> </ul>	
5	Cultural Safety and Humility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to Date</li> </ul>	
6	Emergency Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayo/ Old Crow Evacuation</li> <li>• Community Billeting</li> <li>• Red Cross</li> </ul>	
7	Health Human Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Federal Funding</li> <li>• HHR Steering Committee</li> <li>• Retention Bonuses</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Bursaries</li> <li>• India Trip</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internationally Educated Health Professionals</li> <li>• Licensing</li> <li>• Nova Scotia – Letter of Intent</li> </ul>	
8	<b>Health and Wellness Yukon (PPF)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Health Transformation Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul>	
9	<b>Joint Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan</li> <li>• MMIWG - Yukon Strategy</li> <li>• SART</li> </ul>	
10	<b>MAID</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	
11	<b>NGO Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Agreement Management</li> <li>• All Genders Yukon</li> <li>• RCMP Investigation</li> <li>• We See You Society (Second Opinion Society)</li> <li>• 211</li> <li>• 988 Service</li> </ul>	
12	<b>Nursing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost for Nurses</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Inter Professional Practices and Chief Nursing Officer</li> <li>• Nurse Practitioners</li> <li>• Old Crow Health Centre Lockdown</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Shortages</li> <li>• Ross River Health Centre</li> </ul>	
13	<b>Physicians</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims &amp; Billing</li> <li>• Collaborative Care</li> <li>• Fee-for-Service</li> <li>• Contracts</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find a Primary Care Provider Program</li> <li>Locums</li> <li>Medical Director</li> <li>Memorandum of Understanding</li> <li>Physician Assistants</li> </ul>	
14	<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>	
15	<b>Substance Use Health Emergency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy</li> <li>Actions to Date</li> <li>Alcohol Use and Strategy</li> <li>Awareness Campaign</li> <li>Community Outreach</li> <li>Coroner's Report</li> <li>Decriminalization of Substances</li> <li>EMS</li> <li>Managed Alcohol Program</li> <li>Mental Wellness Summit</li> <li>Mobile Crisis Unit (Car 867)</li> <li>Naloxone</li> <li>Out-of-Territory Treatment</li> <li>Overdose Outreach Team</li> <li>Supervised Consumption Site</li> </ul>	
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65	<b>Income Supports (Social Assistance)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guaranteed Annual Income</li> <li>• Inflation</li> <li>• Pioneer Utility Grant (PUG)</li> <li>• Seniors' Income Supplement</li> <li>• Rising Rental Costs</li> <li>• Social Assistance and Rate Review</li> </ul>	
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## Session Briefing Note

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### Accomplishments

Health and Social  
Services

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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).
- 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** was 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).
- 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).
  - 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.

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## Accomplishments

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- 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).
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services assumed operations of the **Referred Care Clinic** (2018), as well as added all Opioid Treatment Services to the clinic.
- 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).
- Provided funding to the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to increase mental health supports by offering extended hours of operation for the seven-days per week **walk-in mental health clinic**.
- Hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses to increase bed availability through **Withdrawal Management**.
- Increased funding for primary health care services in communities to introduce **Nurse Practitioners** and dedicated public health nurses in several communities.
- **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).

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Services

### 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 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.
  - establishing an Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee;
  - maintaining high-quality infection control practices in long-term care homes;
  - opening Wind River Hospice at Whistle Bend Place;
  - implementing the Shine a Light on Dementia program to provide education and training to support caregivers (available in both French and English);
  - developing 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;
  - engaging Yukoners in a review of the Travel for Medical Treatment Program;

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- completing a service evaluation to ensure that Senior Services and Adult Protection Services are effective and accessible;
  - expanding 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 anticipated to be operational in July of 2023;
  - implementing 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 the Canada, the Yukon ranked second, meeting 100 of 117 standards (July 2023).
- Entered an agreement with **Alzheimer Society of BC** to collaborate on expanding dementia services (April 2023).
- Working with 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.
- 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.

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- Renovated Thomson Centre to add ten additional long-term care beds (March 2018).
  - Introduced the **respite and reablement** unit at Thomson Centre (October 2018).
  - Opened and staffed **Whistle Bend Place** (September 2018).
  - Provided funding to the Yukon Council on Aging for the **Seniors Information Centre** to provide up-to-date information to Yukon Seniors 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 one 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).

### 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).

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- 
- In partnership with the Yukon T1D Support Network 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, started the **Find a Primary Care Provider** program (November 2019).
    - 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.
  - Reduced barriers for accessing **Mifegymiso** by publicly funding this medication used for medical abortion (October 2018).
  - Negotiated a new pharmaceutical markup and cap with Yukon **pharmacists** (November 2020), and continue to work to further integrate pharmacists into our health care system. Supported expansion of pharmacist's scope to allow pharmacists to deliver some vaccines, prescribe for minor ailments, extend prescriptions, and deliver controlled substances, amongst others (June 2022).
  - Increased resident **psychiatric specialist services** and introduced a new model of care (January 2020).
  - **Trikafta**, a drug for cystic fibrosis, added to the Yukon's Drug Formulary for coverage (October 2021).

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- Worked with the **World Professional Association for Transgender Health** to provide education and training to Yukon health professionals (June 2019).
- 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.

### Social Services / 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.
- Income Support Services transitioned to person-centered service delivery staffed primarily by social workers and implemented a new case management system in 2018.



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- In 2018, the Developmental Diagnostic and Support Clinic expanded its mandate to include **autism spectrum disorder** assessments and diagnosis for school aged children.
  - 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 Child Care Centres** (February 2018) for the first time since 2008.
  - Increased financial assistance provided through **Extended Family Care Agreements** to match funding levels received by foster parents (November 2017).
  - **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 social assistance and Seniors Income Supplement clients with a one-time \$150 top-up **payment to address inflation** and the rising cost of living (November 2022).
    - 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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- 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.
  - Increased access to supportive housing including opening units at **Housing First Residence** on Wood St. in 2019 and at the Shelter in 2020, added new residential supports in territory for adults with disabilities, and opened Cornerstone housing with supported independent living services in June 2022.

#### Yukon Hospital Corporation:

- Supported the opening of the **new Emergency Department** at Whitehorse General Hospital (January 2018).
- Developed an **Ophthalmology** wait time strategy with the Yukon Hospital Corporation (January 2019).
  - Cataract assessment wait times reduced to four months.
  - 870 cataract surgeries completed between 2019 and 2020.
  - 450 cataract surgeries completed in 2021.
- Increased Ophthalmology funding to support 600 cataract surgeries per year moving forward (March 2020).

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## Accomplishments

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- 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.
  - To date, 14 actions are operational and 39 actions are in progress.
  - We have commenced work on developing Health and Wellness Yukon.

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- Transferred **Early Learning and Child Care** to the Department of Education as part of our implementation of universal childcare for Yukon families (April 2021).
- 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).
- Established a **Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Health** to guide the implementation of *Putting People First* and the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon (July 2023).
- Guided the Yukon through the **COVID-19 response**, quickly introducing:
  - The largest vaccine rollout in the Yukon's history. Developed the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy for the Yukon (December 2020) and became the first Canadian capital city to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to the general public (March 2021). Continue to deliver COVID-19 vaccines throughout the Yukon and in a central dedicated vaccine clinic in Whitehorse.
  - Delivering COVID-19 testing resources, including by opening a Respiratory Assessment Centre (March 2020), which became the COVID Testing and Assessment Centre; operating a drive-thru testing service; offering COVID testing in communities; and, by making at-home tests widely available to Yukoners.
  - Worked with the Yukon Medical Association to establish new virtual care options for Yukoners in response to COVID-19.
  - Supports for vulnerable populations.
  - Working with health and social care system partners to provide access to care, develop surge plans, and ensure the health and safety of Yukoners.

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- Released the *Charting the Course: Living with and managing COVID-19* to outline a sustainable approach to managing COVID-19 moving forward (November 2022).
  - Supported the Post COVID-19 Working Group to release an online resource for Yukoners living with **post COVID-19 condition** (November 2022).
- 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).
- 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.
  - Expanding **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.

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- 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.
- 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** and the **Support is Here for You campaign** to increase awareness of substance use supports (November 2022).
- Hosted the **Youth Roots: A Substance Use Prevention Gathering** to discuss and promote approaches to prevent youth substance use (November 2022).
- 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 Hwéché'in to provide a land-based camp for youth.

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- 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.
- Working in partnership with United Way Yukon to provide the free and confidential **211** helpline service to help connect Yukoners with available services and supports.

### 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.
- Our government is acting with partners to address immediate concerns such as the environment outside of the shelter and supporting the Council of Yukon First Nations with the new Mobile Downtown Outreach Program.
- While our current actions address immediate safety concerns, we are also developing long-term plans that target poverty, homelessness and addictions.
- We are actively addressing public safety concerns and supporting downtown business operations, such as discouraging large congregations by creating alternative locations for services.
  - We have removed benches that blocked the line of sight along Alexander Street.
  - We are working with partners to decentralize some food services.
  - We are expanding locations where community outreach workers are available to include the Whitehorse Public Library.



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- We are increasing oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure residents and businesses feel safe and supported.
  - This includes hiring private security services for businesses in proximity to Alexander Street, regular RCMP foot patrols and working with the Council of Yukon First Nations to fund and launch a downtown community safety outreach initiative, staffed by outreach workers.
  - Security services started on November 1, 2023, and will run until the end of December as a pilot project.
- 405 Alexander Street, formerly known as the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, offers a low-barrier, 24/7 shelter and supportive living program, 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.
- From April to June of 2023, there was an average of 44 guests per night.
- From April 2022 to March 2023, there was an average of 19.42 people per month living in Housing First units at 405 Alexander.

**Reports:**

- In May 2023, two independent reports were released evaluating the shelter's effectiveness, its impact on the community and the clients it serves.
  - *Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Evaluation*, prepared by Vink Consulting; and
  - *A Path Forward*, prepared by House of Wolf & Associates.
- We commissioned Vink Consulting for their report while the House of Wolf & Associates, Inc. report was requested by the Council of Yukon First Nations. Both were completed with our involvement and support.
- Findings within the two reports were informed by discussions with clients, shelter staff and community partners.
- Responding to these findings as well as the recommendations from the 2020 Community Safety Plan requires the involvement of all our partners, as well as multiple departments and levels of government.

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- 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.
- The *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, Housing First 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% 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:

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- The purpose of 405 Alexander Street should be determined and communicated.
- Decentralizing some aspects of service delivery may be appropriate.
- Safe gathering spaces inclusive of women, LGBTQS+, and sober clients should be considered in addition to low-barrier spaces.
- Education and engagement events such as town-halls, community walkthroughs, social media campaigns should 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.

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- 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.

### Next Steps:

- We are 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.
- While change takes time, we are taking meaningful steps to ensure shelter users are supported while also addressing community concerns.
- 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 Crime Prevention Through 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.
  - Work is also underway to respond to concerns about garbage and area cleanliness and we are in discussion with Connective on considering the use of “sharps containers” for the safe dispensing of objects such as needles. Further assessment of this work is underway.

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- We are currently reviewing a proposal from House of Wolf & Associates, Inc. regarding a five-year strategic plan to support our work to address social issues around 405 Alexander Street.
  - The proposed strategy's intent is to transform 405 Alexander into a community-driven, culturally sensitive, supported community for positive change.
- 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 the community.
  - 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.

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- Employing people with lived experience and with compassion to work with shelter clients.

**Timeline:**

Short Term (1-3 months):

- We will be hosting a community Restorative Justice Circle to support cross-learning and healing.
- We will be piloting a Library Outreach Worker position.
- We are finding new locations to decentralize food and warming services.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations is leading a Mobile Downtown Outreach Initiative to provide after-hours and weekend support and referrals. The Government of Yukon is funding this as a pilot program with approximately \$300,000 until March 31, 2024.
- We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend hours at the Supervised Consumption Site.
- We have hired IRP (Inspire Reconciliation Potential) Consulting to develop a strategy for community engagement, communication and education.
- We are developing a campaign that will focus on community wellbeing to highlight social accountability that will reduce stigmas and encourage social change.
- The Government of Yukon has contracted Sirius Security to provide regular patrols of the neighbourhood around the Shelter.

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- This two-month pilot project will run between November 1 and December 31, 2023 and provides a visible deterrent to behaviors and incidents that have created insecurity and safety issues in the neighbourhood. It will also gather information on public safety incidents that will help government agencies and community partners continue to develop longer-term solutions.

**Medium Term (3-12 months):**

- We will continue to work with partners to explore alternate locations for programming:
- We will consider options for completing a community safety and wellbeing plan for the city and downtown core.
- We will finalize a program model, budget and location for the new Managed Alcohol Program.
- We continue to consider additions and improvements to the supportive housing continuum in Yukon.
  - The Council of Yukon First Nations is currently building a new family preservation and housing project in Whistle Bend.
  - We are helping Safe at Home with their winter housing project as they continue to explore the feasibility of transforming the Coast hotel into permanent housing.
- We will explore new solutions for management of supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.

**Long Term (1 year+):**



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- We will review the barrier access at 405 Alexander Street and implement alternatives for those with service restrictions.
- We will determine an approach for Alexander Street beautification in partnership with City of Whitehorse, including improving garbage collection.
- We will continue to ask the city to construct alternate community washroom facilities.

**Mobile Downtown Outreach Service:**

- 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 outreach service will be operated by the Council of Yukon First Nations and staffed by 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 after-hours and on weekends to address a gap in service availability and will be accessible by a mobile outreach vehicle 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 organizations that provide these services to explore ways to support and strengthen their efforts.
- The Government of Yukon has committed to provide approximately \$300,000 to fund this pilot project until March 31, 2024.

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- This service is part of the multifaceted approach to address community safety concerns in downtown Whitehorse.
- The outreach service will be available in the coming weeks with 4-5 outreach workers staffed by the Council of Yukon First Nations.

**Available Supports:**

- We provide a range of on-site support 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 of the outreach van.
- Guests have access to harm reduction education and supplies, including Naloxone kits, and connection to appropriate support and services.
- Guests also have access to social workers and nursing support.
- Indigenous services users have access to cultural support and programming, through the Council of Yukon First Nations support of a full-time Cultural Support Worker.

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- Mobile Crisis Response 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.

**Coroner Inquiry into 405 Alexander Deaths:**

- We are aware that the Coroner's Office intends to conduct an inquiry into the deaths of four individuals at 405 Alexander.
- Our government is committed to supporting the Coroner's Office as they conduct this work and to reviewing the Coroner's findings once they are available.
- The Department of Health and Social Services provides a range of on-site supports at 405 Alexander, including EMS, Home Care, Social Supports, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach services.
- EMS has expanded their Paramedic Specialist Clinic hours at 405 Alexander to at least 20 hours a day, and EMS also 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.
- BRAVE Sensors were installed in bathrooms to alert staff if someone ceases to move for reasons such as an overdose or other health emergency.
- We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to increase awareness of the Supervised Consumption Site among guests of 405 Alexander and are working to expand the hours of operation at the Site once

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additional staff have been hired. We have also expanded the services and hours of operation of the outreach van.

- Guests have access to harm reduction education and supplies, including Naloxone kits, and connection to appropriate support and services.
- Staff at 405 Alexander receive training in recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of overdose.
- Mobile Crisis Response 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.
- We are committed to working with other levels of government and local organizations to implement the recommendations in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

**Food Services:**

- We are exploring ideas with several non-government organizations who have come forward to offer locations for meal services.
- We are also considering using the Jim Smith building's cafeteria, which will require further assessment.
- Moving forward, we will ensure that all locations offering these services will be culturally safe and accessible.
- 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.

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**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.

**Downtown Community Conversation:**

- A Downtown Community Conversation moderated by Inspire Reconciliation Potential Consulting will occur on November 21, 2023, at 6 pm at MacBride Museum.
- This is an opportunity for those living and working downtown to voice their concerns through a moderated conversation with community

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partners and discuss viable solutions to support a safe and vibrant downtown.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

# INFORMATION NOTE

## Health and Social Services

### ISSUE: Downtown Action Items

**TABLE 1**

	<b>Action Items Completed</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1.	In partnership with Connective, we removed the benches in front of 405 Alexander as part of an environmental redesign.	September 28, 2023
2.	We have recently finalized an agreement with IRP Consulting to conduct community engagement around community safety, outreach support and planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>On November 6, 2023, IRP facilitated a session with several organizations around action planning for downtown community safety. Further community engagement is being planned.</li></ul>	In progress.
3.	Improved the provision of women-only services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the government of Yukon and Connective opened the Supervised Housing and Reintegration Support Program (SHARP) on June 1, 2023. This program is operated by Connective and provides safe, secure housing and wraparound supports for women involved with the justice system.</li><li>In August of 2022, the Government of Yukon completed a transfer of land where an Indigenous women and children's shelter is being developed by the Council of Yukon First Nations.</li></ul>	June 1, 2023
4.	Along with Connective, we have ensured that 405 Alexander has sufficient and appropriate guidelines and processes in place related to occupational health and safety.	October 2022 and Ongoing
5.	Connective partnered with the Council of Yukon First Nations to increase access to culturally-based programs and services and	Ongoing

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	adequately trained staff to address diverse and culturally sensitive needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>405 Alexander has an Elder-in-residence.</li> </ul>	
7.	Maintain ongoing engagements and relationships with clients with lived experience to ensure they have a role in matters affecting programming and operations.	Ongoing
10.	Connective is employing people with lived experience and with compassion to work with shelter clients. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connective created Facing Forward: Portraits of Resilience in Whitehorse, a storytelling project that highlights guests and staff of 405 Alexander.</li> </ul>	January 2023 and ongoing
11.	We hired Sirius Security to patrol the area from Black Street to Strickland Street between 3rd Ave and 5th Ave. Patrols will operate Sunday to Thursday from 6 pm to 2 am and Friday and Saturday from 7 pm to 3 am. Staff will observe, report on incidents and act as a visible deterrent against loitering, vandalism and drug use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is funded as a pilot project for November and December of 2023.</li> </ul>	November 1, 2023

**TABLE 2**

	<b>Action Items In Progress</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1.	We are partnering with the Council of Yukon First Nations, who are leading the development of a Downtown Safety Outreach Program. This program will support street-involved individuals and is similar to the Bear Clan model in Manitoba. Staff and volunteers will be in the community during peak activity hours to offer safe support while helping people navigate high-conflict situations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program is funded through to March 31, 2024.</li> </ul>	In progress, expected to be in place in Fall 2023.
2.	In partnership with Connective, we are exploring the installation of “sharps containers” for the safe dispensing of needles.	In progress.
3.	We are considering the House of Wolf & Associates Inc’s proposal of a five-year strategic plan that will focus on addressing social issues around 405 Alexander.	In progress.



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### Health and Social Services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations from this proposal are below.</li> </ul>	
4.	<p>We are decentralizing some services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several NGO's have come forward to offer locations for meal services. The Jim Smith Building is also being considered, and we will consult with building tenants and opposition parties.</li> <li>We are working to secure a warming centre within the city of Whitehorse.</li> <li>We are working with partners to explore alternative locations for programming. This may include a strategic property purchase in downtown Whitehorse.</li> </ul>	In progress.
5.	We are working on a public awareness and education campaigns to share stories and perspectives of the guests at 405 Alexander.	In progress.
6.	We have offered a community Restorative Justice Circle to support cross-learning and healing.	In progress.
7.	We have funded a Library Outreach Worker position.	In progress.
8.	We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend hours at the Supervised Consumption Site.	In progress.
9.	We are developing a Managed Alcohol Program.	In progress.
10.	We will purchase or reallocate Yukon Housing Corporation housing stock to secure and start-up more transitional housing.	In progress.
11.	We will designate funding for the Council of Yukon First Nations' Family Preservation and Wellness Housing program (the women and children's shelter).	In progress.
12.	We will work with Yukon Housing to explore more permanent solutions for capital and operational support for Safe At Home.	In progress.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current funding for Safe At Home is through the winter housing strategy and continues until March 31, 2024.</li> </ul>	
13.	Working to introduce a land-based healing funding initiative.	In progress.
14.	We will find new solutions for management of supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.	In progress.
15.	We will review the barrier access at 405 Alexander Street and implement alternatives for those with service restrictions.	In progress.
16.	We will explore additional smaller-scale emergency shelter spaces, including low and medium barrier options and a sober option for those leaving treatment.	In progress.
17.	We will determine an approach for Alexander Street beautification in partnership with City of Whitehorse, including improving garbage collection.	In progress.
18.	Along with the City of Whitehorse, we are looking into creating new community washroom facilities.	In progress.

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## Budget

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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 have worked 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.

### Key facts:

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$512.3M** (\$512,302,000) in the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M.
  - This is an increase of **\$6.9M** (\$6,899,000) over the 2022-23 Main Estimates re-stated to include EMS that fiscal year for an increase of 1.37%
- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$15.9M** (\$15,933,000) for Capital expenditures.
  - This is a decrease of **\$959K** (\$959,000) over the 2022-23 Main Estimates and represents a decrease of 5.68%.

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- Since 2017-18, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased from **\$363.57M** (\$363,570,000) to **\$512.3M** (\$512,302,000).
- In 2023-24, a total of **\$55.6M** (\$55,569,000) in funding is available through the Canada Health Transfer.
- We anticipate receiving an additional **\$20.8M** this fiscal year through federal transfers, including \$10M through the Territorial Health Investment Fund, \$7.3M through bilateral agreements, and \$3.2M in funding for Proof of Vaccination.

### FTE Summary:

	Health and Social Services FTEs – Mains Budgets					
Fiscal Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2023-24 Supp. 1
Total FTE Count	1,413.90	1,419.13	1,526.53	1,677.3	1,573.4	1,584.2
Change from Prior Fiscal Year	61.45	5.23	107.40	63.50	(103.90)	10.8

\*(FTE counts between 2017-18 and 2021-22 do not include re-stated positions from EMS)

- In 2021-22 and 2022-23, FTE changes were required to ensure the department could quickly and effectively respond to the challenges of COVID-19.
- In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, there were **1,573.4 FTEs** compared to **1,677.3 FTEs** in the 2022-23 Main Estimates, inclusive of EMS. There was a decrease of **103.9 FTEs**.
  - 85.3 FTEs were transferred from Community Services to Health and Social Services in 2023-24 during the transfer of Emergency Medical Services.

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- This included a decrease of **144.9 FTEs**. This reduction is primarily driven by the transfer of 405 Alexander to Connective and the removal of the 103.4 temporary FTEs introduced in 2022-23 to reflect the shift away from the acute stage of the pandemic response.
- This also included an increase of 41.0 FTEs. This increase is driven by permanently integrating 31.0 front-line, service delivery-oriented FTEs across the department to respond to ongoing and future public health challenges and maintain best practices learned during the COVID-19 response.
- In the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, there is an increase of **10.8 FTEs** to support the implementation of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and expansion of hours at the Supervised Consumption Site.
- Since 2017-18, FTE changes have been driven by major initiatives such as:
  - In 2017-18, staffing Sarah Steele and expanding MacDonald Lodge, as well as the Thomson Centre Respite and Reablement Unit.
  - In 2018-19, staffing the first phase of Whistle Bend Place and increasing access Home Care.
  - In 2019-20, staffing 405 Alexander and the second phase of Whistle Bend Place.
  - In 2021-22, FTE increases were related to the COVID-19 response and vaccination rollout.
  - In 2022-23, there were 103.4 temporary FTEs, including 82.8 for the COVID-19 response.

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### Insured Health Funding:

- In the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we are providing an increase of **\$9.85M** (\$9,849,000) to Insured Health Services.
- This increase is to respond to growth within Insured Health Services as a result of our growing and aging population, as well as the rising costs of health care.
- This funding is associated with legislated programming, which the Government of Yukon is required to pay.
- There is an increase of \$1.85M (\$1,849,000) for physician claims.
  - In 2017-18, there were 380,000 physician claims. In 2022-23, there were 458,000 physician claims. So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, there have been 215,000 physician claims.
  - The Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association included negotiated fee code increases, which has contributed to increased costs for physician services.
  - This increase also includes those physician services that are paid through a contract model. This includes many of the Yukon's resident specialists and community-based physician services. There are currently 116 contracts with physicians through Insured Health Services.
- There is an increase of \$2M (\$2,000,000) for Pharmacare.
  - The costs of medications have increased across Canada by approximately 4.2% as a result of factors such as supply chain challenges and an increased use of high-cost products. Additionally, the Yukon's population is growing and aging, which has increased the number of Yukoners eligible for the Pharmacare program.

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- Our government has introduced a biosimilar policy to encourage the use of lower cost biosimilar alternatives that is expected to reduce spending on high-cost products.
- There is an increase of \$6M (\$6,000,000) for hospital claims.
  - The costs of hospital claims are not reflected in funding provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation through the Yukon Hospital Services O&M budget.
  - Across the country, hospital claims have risen as a result of inflation with the costs of hospital claims in British Columbia rising by 3.7% in 2022-23 and 2.33% in 2021-22 while hospital claims in the Yukon have increased by 2.81% in 2022-23 and 1.53% in 2021-22.
  - There were \$3,527,998 in hospital claims paid through Insured Health Services in 2017-18 and a total of \$3,816,693 claims in 2022-23. So far this fiscal year, there have been \$1,864,522 in hospital claims.

**Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:**

- In the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we are providing an increase of \$1.26M to begin implementing the initial actions outlined in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. This is expected to include:
  - \$72K for the initial implementation of the Strategy;
  - \$72K for the implementation of Planet Youth;
  - \$447K to commence planning for Community Wellness Plans;
  - \$400K to support communications and public awareness campaigns;
  - \$269K to support an expansion of Opioid Treatment Services programming.

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- Additionally, we are providing \$645K to expand the hours of operation at the Supervised Consumption Site to seven days per week.
  - The first supplementary budget for 2023-24 includes 3.5 FTEs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to support the expansion of hours at the Supervised Consumption Site; as well as 4.0 FTEs to support the development of Community Wellness Plans, 1.0 FTE to commence work on Planet Youth, and 1.0 FTE to support with overall implementation of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
  - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, we provided a temporary increase of \$3.4M to assist with our response to the Substance Use Health Emergency.
    - \$1.798M for Mental Wellness and Social Supports;
    - \$122K in Mental Wellness bilateral funding;
    - \$397K for new nursing positions within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Community Nursing;
    - \$193K in additional funding for the Supervised Consumption Site;
    - \$856K for Safer Supply; and,
    - \$55K for new Substance Use and Addictions Programs.
  - This additional funding complemented our established and ongoing funding for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, which was budgeted as **\$25.238M** in 2022-23.
  - In 2022-23, we also provided \$590K for initiatives including:
    - The Mental Wellness Summit Phase Two;
    - A three-day on-the-land gathering with the Nelson Project;
    - Hives for Watson Lake Project;
    - To support Roots of Hope to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness Department on suicide prevention training; and,
    - The Support is Here for You Campaign.



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- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$25.7M** for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and worked to permanently integrate some of the temporary supports introduced in 2022-23 through existing programming.
- We also provide funding to psychiatrists and local physicians who service the Referred Care Clinic, as well as provide medical travel coverage to access some pre-approved out-of-territory residential treatment programs at approved facilities.

## Yukon Hospital Corporation Funding:

- The Government of Yukon continues to fully meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and year over year we have provided funding through core and additional Transfer Payment Agreements commiserate with the total identified needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- Throughout the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the Main and Supplementary budgetary exercises.
- We recognize we are in unprecedented times as we emerge from the acute stage of the COVID-19 response, face inflationary pressures, and address a worldwide health human resource crisis.
- 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.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$93.64M** (\$93,637,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M, as well as **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) in Capital expenditures for a combined total of **\$105.84M** (\$105,837,000).

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- As part of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify additional funding needs.
  - The first supplementary estimates for 2023-24 includes an increase of **\$17.11M** (\$17,112,000).
  - This increase responds to growth in hospital and surgical services costs, higher costs associated with responding to the health human resource crisis and increased use of agency nurses, as well as for maintenance capital, which is intended to maintain facilities and replace equipment.
  - This increase also includes funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation Employee Pension Program to address payments required based on the 2022 actuarial report.
  - This represents an increase of 18.3% over the 2023-24 Main O&M Estimates.
- Between the 2017-18 and 2023-24 Main Estimates, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding from **\$70.6M** (\$70,592,000) to **\$93.64M** (\$93,637,000), which is an increase of **32.64%**.
- Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, we provided a total of **\$16.4M** (\$16,369,868) in additional funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation in direct response to COVID-19 related pressures.
- While the majority of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon Hospital Services O&M and Capital budget, additional funding is also provided through other channels.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, we provided a total of **\$97M** (\$96,558,370) 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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- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we anticipate providing approximately **\$115.2M** (\$115,190,126) to the Yukon Hospital Corporation based on current forecasts.

O&M Funding	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Core Agreement Funding	85,555,000	\$88,295,000	\$100,958,000
TPA and other revenue outside core	4,091,762	\$5,409,584	\$2,647,195
COVID	7,663,000		N/A
Patient Revenue that flows through HSS	3,477,223	\$2,853,786	\$4,004,931
Funding for 22-23 deficit	N/A	N/A	\$7,580,000
<b>Total Funding and Revenue via HSS</b>	<b>100,786,985</b>	<b>96,558,370</b>	<b>115,190,126</b>
YHC Revenue	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Revenue Outside of HSS	9,011,015	\$9,229,630	\$8,569,062
<b>Total YHC Revenue</b>	<b>109,798,000</b>	<b>105,788,000</b>	<b>123,759,188</b>

\*2023-24 data does not reflect the full fiscal year with revenue and TPA funding based on estimates.

## Hospital Financial Statements:

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has released their Annual Report and Audited Fiscal Statements for the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- As a result of unanticipated higher costs in areas such as use of agency nurses and staff overtime, the Yukon Hospital Corporation experienced additional financial pressures that our government is supporting the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address through the increases in the 2023-24 first supplementary estimates.
  - The first supplementary estimates for 2023-24 includes an increase of **\$17.11M** (\$17,112,000).

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- In the short-term, the Yukon Hospital Corporation managed those financial pressures by cash flowing some funding provided for the Mental Wellness Unit capital project.
  - Funding for the Mental Wellness Unit has not been affected by this short-term approach and the project remains on track and is fully funded.
- Moving forward, we continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify their ongoing core and additional funding needs in accordance with the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- Each year during the development of the Main Estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation provides the Department of Health and Social Services with a forecast of the coming year's financial needs.
  - Similar to Insured Health Services or Social Supports, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's actual funding requirements are variable and will be adjusted higher or lower as the fiscal year progresses.
  - Each fiscal year when presented with these forecasts, the department will work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address core and additional funding needs with the recognition that adjustments will be made through the supplementary budget exercises each fiscal year with some funding needs often identified after the end of the prior fiscal year to be addressed in the future budget exercises.
- During the development of the 2022-23 Main Estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted \$89M (\$89,040,000) in funding needs, not including capital expenditures. In the 2022-23 Main Estimates the department budgeted \$88M (\$88,295,000) to respond to these forecasts.

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- During the development of the second supplementary estimates for 2022-23, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted an additional funding need of \$671K. The second supplementary estimates for 2022-23 budgeted \$671K to address this request.
  - In 2022-23, there is a \$745K variance between the Yukon Hospital Corporation's forecasted funding needs and the funding budgeted through the Main and second supplementary estimates. This variance is connected to the Yukon Hospital Corporation entering into a Line of Credit to ensure pension solvency requirements were met.
- During the development of the 2023-24 Main Estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted \$93M (\$93,026,000) in funding needs, not including capital expenditures. In the 2023-24 Main Estimates the department budgeted \$93.6M (\$93,637,000) to respond to this forecast.
  - During the development of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted an additional funding need of \$19.3M (\$19,344,000). The first supplementary estimates for 2023-24 includes an increase of \$17M (\$17,220,000).
  - As the current fiscal year continues, further funding needs and pressures will be assessed with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to align forecasted costs against actual costs.

**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.

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- 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.
- The Government of Yukon entered a contract valued at **\$300K** with the vendor on May 23, 2023, and received the final report during the week of October 30, 2023.
- We appreciate the work of Ernst and Young and the important recommendations they have provided to enhance processes and ensure funding needs are best understood moving forward.
- In response to the review, we are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to implement some of the recommendations through the Transfer Payment Agreement.
- 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.

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Approved by:

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

Fall 2023

## 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 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 are working to create a new medical walk-in clinic to provide Yukoners with more access to primary care providers and same-day services.
- We continue to work to connect every Yukoner to a primary care provider as per recommendation 2.2 of the *Putting People First* report.

### Key facts:

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$2.34M** (\$2,341,913) for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
- Since October 2022, there have been 1,978 eligible applications for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
  - 875 clients received their first appointment and have been connected with a primary care provider.
  - 53 others have been offered access to the clinic but have not yet completed their intake form and/or signed their service agreement.
  - 73 individuals were offered a position and later declined.



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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.
  - Clients 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 clinic's staff complement will include 1 Clinic Manager, 5 Nurse Practitioners, 1 Registered Nurse, 1 Licensed Practical Nurse, 2 Medical Office Assistants, 1 Social Worker, 1 Mental Wellness Counselor, and 1 full-time contract physician.
- The clinic is currently 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.
  - Recruitment for 2 additional Nurse Practitioners and the equivalent of 1 FTE Medical Doctor (expected to be split between multiple physicians) is underway.
  - The clinic is also supported by 1 consultant physician.
  - There are currently 5 full-time bilingual staff and 1 bilingual AOC at Constellation Health Centre with recruitment underway for additional bilingual full-time and AOC staff.

**Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre:**

- The bilingual health center opened its doors to its interim location on November 7, 2022, at 102 – 4149 4th Avenue in Whitehorse (Nuvo Building).
- As of September 13, 2023, the health centre is now operating in its permanent location within 9010 Quartz Road.

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- 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 clients 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.
- There continues to be a triaged and gradual intake of individuals from the waitlist as we work to recruit additional primary care providers.
- Applications continue to be 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.
  - 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 amongst others.
  - If someone is not initially accepted, they will be added to the waitlist and notified when the opportunity for an intake is available.
- The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre is supported by a physician who provides consultation services.
- Work continues with physician partners to identify primary care providers to deliver contracted services at the Clinic.
- We are currently in discussions with an additional physician who has expressed interest in providing primary care at the Constellation clinic.

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**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.
- Work is underway through the Department of Health and Social Services and with our physician community to have walk-in clinic services available to Yukoners in Whitehorse by 2024.
- Opening a new walk-in clinic in Whitehorse will help provide Yukoners with a new access point for primary care and decrease pressures on the hospital emergency department for non-urgent medical needs.
- While renovations are completed at the Clinic's permanent location at Mah's Point we will open the walk-in clinic at a temporary location at 9010 Quartz Road.
  - This temporary location will be located in the same building as the Whitehorse Health Centre, the Yukon's Midwifery Program, and the Centre de Sante Constellation Health Centre, but will operate as an independent clinic.
- At full capacity we anticipate the clinic could be staffed by providers such as Nurse Practitioners, Licensed Practical Nurses, Medical Office Assistants, and Social Workers, as well as serviced by Physicians on contract hours.
  - We are working with three consultant physicians from the medical community to identify physicians to provide primary care at the walk-in clinic.
- The Expression of Interest for the clinic has been drafted and sent to the Yukon Medical Association to provide to their membership on November 9, 2023.

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**Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon (CMHA-Y):**

- We have provided funding to the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to increase access to mental health services as part of our commitment to introducing a seven day per week walk-in/call-in mental health clinic in Whitehorse as outlined in the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$1.62M** (\$1,615,000) for the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon.
- The Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon offers a variety of programs, services, counselling supports and resources, including free programs like the Bounceback program.
- Yukoners can contact the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to book an appointment to access free counselling services.
- Our government has supported the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to offer seven day per week counselling services. Based on current staffing levels and uptake, services are currently operating six days per week Monday through Saturday.
- Yukoners can contact the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to access free drop-in counselling services by calling (867) 668-6429.

**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 at the NVD Place Mall.
- This move will support our ongoing efforts to integrate COVID-19 vaccinations into our ongoing health service operations while supporting

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our immunization team to offer vaccines through a location that best 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 continues to be offered at the Whitehorse Health Centre – 9010 Quartz Road location with a focus on clients 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 Yukon Convention Centre was tendered through a sole source contract as allowed under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and began on March 19, 2020 with a number of successive leases. The most recent ran from April 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023 and had a total value of \$30,000 per month.
- 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.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Cultural Safety and Humility**Health and Social  
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**Government Priority:**

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

**Recommended response:**

- Our government has committed to moving forward with the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report. Integrating cultural safety and humility into the health and social services system is an important element in the report.
- The Department of Health and Social Services established a cultural safety team to advance a coordinated approach on embedding cultural safety and humility into the health and social service system, consistent with the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report.
- The cultural safety team currently consists of two Indigenous employees.
- The cultural safety team is engaging with Yukon First Nations governments to prioritize actions and initiatives outlined in *Putting People First* 4.1 for implementation.

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**Key Facts:**

- The cultural safety team is 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, acknowledges the need for cultural safety and commits to collaborate with Yukon First Nations and,
  - A culturally safe complaints process.
- The cultural safety team is also 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 FN 101 as prerequisite to working in the Yukon.

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- 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 toward an Indigenous Relations recruitment competency.
- Continuing Care holds Monthly Sharing Circles.
- CORE training for Family and Children's Services Child Protection Social Workers, created and co-facilitated with the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- Custom training on Cultural Safety, Unconscious Bias, 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 YFN101 (not customized to YG) through the Public Service Commission.

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



**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Emergency Support Services**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

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

**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.

**Key facts:**

- In August 2023, Emergency Support Services assisted 456 evacuees from Old Crow and Mayo, as well as 32 evacuees from Yellowknife.
- So far in 2023-24, the Department of Health and Social Services contracted **\$420K** (\$420,000) for accommodations to support evacuees in response to emergencies.
- The Transfer Payment Agreement with the Red Cross is valued at **\$1.35M** (\$1,345,920) between 2023-24 and 2025-26.

**Mayo / Old Crow Evacuation:**

- Emergency Support Services secured contracts with several hotels and motels in Whitehorse, as well as stood up additional group lodging at the Canada Games Centre.
- No evacuees required the use of the Canada Games Centre for emergency accommodations.

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- Evacuees who registered with Emergency Support Services were provided with food vouchers to assist with the costs of groceries and dining.
- We appreciate the support of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Whitehorse Food Bank, who also provided food to evacuees.
- A Home Care Occupational Therapist and the Mayo-based Home Support Worker provided support to evacuees from Mayo, as needed.
  - Evacuees also had access to an on-call physiotherapist.
- Yukoners who required mental wellness support due to smoke, wildfire or evacuation were also able to seek counselling services through the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

**Community Billeting:**

- We recognize the interest of community members who reached out to offer billeting and other assistance to evacuees during these difficult events.
- There are many ways Yukoners can support evacuees such as by donating to the Canadian Red Cross or by helping to share information on social media 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.
- This summer, no evacuees required use of the Canda Game Centre, and we were pleased to connect evacuees who registered with Emergency Support Services with accommodation through a hotel or motel.

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## Emergency Support Services

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- In order to ensure the safety of evacuees and ensure appropriate emergency supports are provided, Emergency Support Services has not integrated billeting into our response.
  - 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 some 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.
- Should the need arise, the Canadian Red Cross will provide emergency 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 identifying lodging, and access to food and clothing.

**Approved by:**

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

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

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Health Human Resources**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon remains 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 Canada and the Yukon's healthcare systems today.
- Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges including an insufficient supply of healthcare workers.
- These challenges have been further exacerbated by COVID-19, and both a growing and aging population.
- The Government of Yukon recognizes the seriousness of these shortages. In response, we have established a Health Human Resources Steering Committee jointly led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- This Committee is using an intersectoral approach to create a Yukon Health Human Resource strategy to address all aspects of health human resources. Our Health Human Resource strategy will be released this fall.
- We are also working closely with federal, provincial, and territorial government partners to respond to this situation.

**Key facts:**

- We have committed to allocating **\$2M** during the 2023-24 fiscal year to enhance recruitment and retention of new healthcare professionals across the Yukon. This includes funding to support the following initiatives:

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- **\$649K** (\$649,000) for Nurse Retention and Recruitment Incentives;
- **500K** (\$500,000) to develop a cross-sectoral Yukon Health Human Resources Strategy;
- **\$464K** (\$464,000) for Community Nursing and Nurse Practitioner funding for additional nursing FTEs; and,
- **\$387K** (\$387,000) for 3.8 FTEs for Human Resources. The new positions will help support the Health Human Resource Strategy and Internationally Educated Health Professionals, they will also work on recruitment initiatives for health professionals.
- Community Nursing is currently experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 19% for Primary Health Care Nurses, which is an improvement of approximately 29% since fall 2022.
  - Prior to COVID-19, the vacancy rate amongst Primary Health Care Nurses was approximately 5%.
- On December 1, 2022, we announced a **\$6M** package of retention and signing bonuses for nurses employed by the Government of Yukon.
- Since December 1, 2022, the Department of Health and Social Services has recruited 60 nurses, including (44 Registered Nurses and 16 Licensed Practical Nurses.
- We have provided \$50,000 to the Yukon Medical Association to financially support a physician locum recruiter.

**Health Human Resource Steering Committee:**

- The Health Human Resources Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from across numerous Government of Yukon departments, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as the Yukon University, Yukon Medical Council, Yukon Registered Nurses Association,

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the Yukon Employees Union, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada and First Nations representatives.

- 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 Human Resource work underway in their respective organizations so that it aligns with the Committee's recommendations and priorities.
- The work of this committee aligns with the ongoing collaborative efforts of Federal, Provincial, and Territorial governments, which are supported by the recent federal investments which identify health human resources as a shared priority.

**Retention Bonuses:**

- The retention and recruitment bonuses implemented December 1, 2022 are being provided to Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical Nurses, until March 31, 2024, who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and performing nursing duties for the Government of Yukon.
- This bonus package serves to address the wage gap we face with other Canadian jurisdictions and helps us with the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges we are facing by creating tools to effectively attract and retain staff to serve our communities.
- This is not a reflection of the appreciation for the hundreds of other frontline care workers who work tirelessly to contribute to the health, safety, wellbeing, and care of Yukoners.
  - These staff can never be replaced, and we thank each and every one of them.

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- We understand that some of our nursing staff have raised questions about the administration of these allowances. This has been brought to the attention of the Department of Health and Social Services, who is working closely with the Public Service Commission to respond to these concerns as quickly as possible.
- The Public Service Commission has received four grievances associated with these bonuses and they will be managed through normal grievance processes.
- The administration of these allowances is consistent with our delivery of other allowances and in accordance with other nursing retention letters of understanding within the Yukon Employees Union Collective Agreement.
- Like the other compensable allowances for nurses, the recruitment and retention bonuses are based on work performed. Employees who are on leave without pay but return during the specified period of time to qualify for any bonuses will receive a prorated amount for the time they are actively performing a position that requires a nursing designation.
- 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.

**Education:**

- In partnership with the Departments of Education and Economic Development, we also continue to work with Yukon University to expand programming to support Yukoners to pursue health-related careers.

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- The Government of Yukon funds Yukon University to offer a Practical Nurse Diploma whose graduates are a valuable addition to the health care work force in the Yukon.
- Yukon University also offers a Health Care Assistant program which provides Yukoners with the skills needed to be front-line caregivers.

**Bursaries:**

- As part of the 2023 Confidence Supply and Agreement, we will work to enhance recruitment and retention initiatives for health care professionals, including 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.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services has budgeted **\$89K** (\$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.
  - During the 2014-15 fiscal year, a total of **\$49K** (49,000) was budgeted for these bursaries to support up to 12 new recipients per year.
- In 2023-24, a total of 16 Yukoners received a bursary for studies in the healthcare field. These total **\$65K** (\$65,000) in bursaries being administered.
  - **\$30,000** went to 6 students pursuing nursing education;



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- **\$7,500** went to 1 medical student pursuing a family medicine residency; and,
  - **\$27,500** went to 9 students in other health care professions including 3 students pursuing licensed practical nursing and 2 in nurse practitioner programs.
- 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 committed and working to expand our programs to create greater incentives for students to return to work in the Yukon, and to fulfilling our commitments as part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services provided **\$150K** (\$150,000) to the Yukon Registered Nurses Association who administers the Continuing Nurse Education Fund.
- 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 also 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.

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**India Trip:**

- The trip to India was worth the time and effort and represents our first step in exploring possible partnerships within India, which will hopefully lead to an ongoing supply of qualified health care workers.
- There are significant costs and pressures on the Yukon's health care system today.
  - So far in 2023-24, the Health and Social Services has spent \$640,353 on agency nursing groups and the Yukon Hospital Corporation has spent \$6.1M on agency nursing groups.
  - Despite significant retention and recruitment efforts, there continues to be nursing shortages.
- Over the long term as we work to respond to health human resource challenges, India represents a significant opportunity to recruit health care providers.
  - According to Statistics Canada, approximately 1 in 5 recent immigrants to Canada listed India as their country of birth.
  - India has emerged as the second-largest source country for the Yukon Nominee Program since its inception. From 2007 to August 31, 2023, the Yukon has nominated a total of 772 principal applicants from India, along with over 200 dependents.
  - India's nursing programs accept approximately 23,000 new Registered Nursing students every year with a reported 750,000 prospective students taking a required entrance exam.
  - India has recently announced plans for over 150 new nursing programs, which could more than double the number of new Registered Nursing graduates.
- Many countries already have established partnerships in India and are seeing a return on investment for their efforts.

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- For the Yukon, this was a necessary first step. We are committed to continuing to explore this initiative and are confident that in the future, we will see a return on investment too.
- During the trip, representatives met with officials from the government of Kerala, with NORKA, which is a government emigration agency, and with nursing regulators, hospitals, and nursing schools.
- More work will need to be done with prospective partners in India, and here in the Yukon, before we see any nurses recruited directly from India.
- We want to ensure that internationally educated health professionals are well supported and integrated into our communities and our healthcare system and facilities to ensure their personal success and to ensure that Yukoners receive the high-quality care they deserve and respect.
- Our efforts within India are part of our medium- and longer-term approaches to respond to health human resource challenges. This is not an immediate fix and was never intended to be.
- In the coming weeks we will be releasing the Yukon's Health Human Resource Strategy, which will outline an intersectoral approach to addressing these challenges. The India trip is just one element of what will be a multi-faceted response.

**Internationally Educated Health Professionals:**

- Internationally educated health professionals have historically played an important role in the delivery of health care in Canada, and we recognize that best leveraging their expertise is a challenge being addressed by all governments across Canada.
- As part of our response to health human resource challenges, we are exploring ways to best support internationally educated health professionals to enter health professions in the Yukon.

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- 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 to determine how best to support underemployed internationally educated individuals living in the Yukon..
- We are working with Yukon University to explore opportunities to expand bridging and new education programs to support health care professionals including internationally educated individuals.

**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 and improving processes for all applicants.
- We also 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 draw 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.

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Services**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.
- As part of this collaboration, we will work together to share best practices related to recruitment, retention, training, models of care, and licensing and credentialing.
- Nova Scotia has adopted innovative strategies to create new opportunities to address recruitment and retention.

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

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to creating a person-centered health care system and to creating a health authority to deliver coordinated and integrated health services.

**Key messages:**

- One of the key recommendations in the *Putting People First* report is to create an arm's length government agency to deliver many aspects of health and social services – Health and Wellness Yukon.
- Health and Wellness Yukon is a foundational element of health system transformation. Over time, we anticipate:
  - jointly improving the health care system with Yukon First Nations with the goal to eliminate the systemic racism that exists today;
  - every Yukoner will have access to a regular care team and can receive quality services when needed;
  - services are connected to each other 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
  - there is a focus on prevention, including investing in the upstream determinants of health.
- Our first priority is to complete the legislation necessary to establish Health and Wellness Yukon.
- Setting up Health and Wellness Yukon is a complex initiative, and we are going to take the time to do it right.

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**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 November 24, 2022, the first *Putting People First Annual Report* was released, reporting that 70% of the 76 recommendations were operational or in progress:
  - 14 actions are operational;
  - 39 actions are in progress;
  - 23 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.
- The second annual report is to be released fall 2023

**Partnerships:**

- We are committed to partnering with Yukon First Nations on key aspects of health system transformation, including the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon.
- The new health authority will respect and recognize Yukon First Nations' history, governance and cultural traditions.

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- The Health System Transformation Team met with interested Yukon First Nations governments and the Council of Yukon First Nations in summer 2022 and proposed the creation of a Health Transformation Advisory Committee as an important step to solidifying our partnership with Yukon First Nations.
- 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 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 Councillor Tanya Silverfox
- In June 2023, the Health Transformation Advisory Committee was formed through recommendations from the Minister and Chiefs Committee on Health.
  - This committee will lay the foundation for health system transformation by providing recommendations related to the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon.



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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is participating on the Health Transformation Advisory Committee in the development of Health and Wellness Yukon and we will be working with other health system partners, such as the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, allied professionals and others.

**Health Transformation Advisory Committee:**

- The *Putting People First* Report recommendation 1.2 raises the establishment of an arm's length health authority to deliver health and social services to Yukoners, this is referred to as Health and Wellness Yukon/Shäw Kwä'a (show kwa en a).
- 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 3 Yukon First Nation Members appointed by the Chiefs Committee on Health and selected as a result of 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 Health and Wellness Yukon 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, a live work plan and work is underway to establish the mechanisms necessary to stand up the authority.

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**Staff:**

- We are focused on achieving a health and social system that is integrated, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist, and puts Yukoners at the center.
- A key step to achieving this is building Health and Wellness Yukon in a way that supports providers and Yukoners alike by breaking down barriers and silos across the system.
- Establishing Health and Wellness Yukon is a foundational step towards addressing the changes that Yukoners have asked for.
- This work is in its early stages, and we are committed to working with staff, the health and social services workforce, our health system partners, Yukon First Nations, and others as this work progresses. This engagement will occur directly with staff and through union engagement.
- We are aware that there is an ongoing health human resource crisis, and we are committed to supporting the workforce throughout this work – we value all the exceptional health and social service providers in the Yukon.
- To date, work has focused on gathering information, best practices and forming partnerships.
- Since commencing this work, we have approached Health and Wellness Yukon with a change management lens that recognizes the importance of building awareness amongst the workforce and supporting employees through the current planning and eventual transition.

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- Short- and long-term communications approaches are being developed to support this work, and we continue to hold internal meetings and provide updates to the workforce as they are available.

**Approved by:**

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

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

## Session Briefing Note

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### Joint Priorities

Health and Social  
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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 to implementing the *LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan* and the *Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*.

#### Key messages:

- We have taken a number of steps to honour and implement the action items from the *LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan* and the *MMIWG2S+ Strategy*.
- While we have made important changes and introduced new programming, we recognize there is more work to be done.
- We are working with communities, local organizations, and Yukon First Nations to address the unique needs of communities.

#### Key facts:

- The Sexualized Assault Response Team (SART) has planning underway for cross agency training in fall and winter 2023.
  - Cultural safety and awareness training for SART agencies and partners.
  - Documentation for counsellors working with victims of sexualized violence training.
  - Responding to online sexualized violence training.
  - Responding to 2SLGBTQIA+ victims training.
  - A victim's path through the criminal justice system training.
- The Yukon-wide confidential sexualized assault support line is available 24/7 at 1-844-967-7275.
- Rapid Access Counselling is available to all Yukoners – call 867-456-3838 to make a counselling appointment within 72 hours.

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### Joint Priorities

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#### LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan:

- The Yukon continues to demonstrate leadership in advancing access to gender-affirming surgical and non-surgical procedures and services, and to support 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.
- Our government recognizes the importance of these services for the transgender and gender diverse community, and we are pleased the recent regulatory amendments enable Yukoners to now access this care.
- We are improving access to supportive mental health and wellness services for 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provided World Professional Association for Transgender Health mental health training for all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon counsellors, including counsellors providing services in Yukon high schools.
- We increased safety for 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners by passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act* and amended the *Family Property and Support Act*.
- We are covering preventative medications such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and expanded coverage for the HPV vaccine.
- We also 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.

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### Joint Priorities

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- We remain committed to working with our partners, including community organizations, to advance gender-inclusive health and social care.

#### MMIWG2S+ – Yukon Strategy:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to taking action to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people.
- We strive to do this work in a decolonized way, in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous women's organizations.
- The Yukon Advisory Committee on MMIWG2S+ has created a technical working group to write the Implementation Framework for Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy, which will provide details regarding the 32 action items.
- On June 6, 2023, the Yukon Advisory Committee on MMIWG2S+ released the implementation plan for Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy.
- Though more work is required, initiatives are underway as we work with communities and Yukon First Nations to expand community supports, respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency, and implement the *LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan* and amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*.

#### SART:

- The Sexualized Assault Response Team (SART) provides coordinated services and supports to victims of sexualized assault.
- Currently the key components of SART include:
  - The 24-hour, confidential, toll-free support line for all victims of sexualized assault.

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- 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.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services offers rapid access counselling 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 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 also has staff across various programs who provide a range of 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.
- Available services also include 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.
- Victims of sexualized assault living in communities can access the 24/7 toll-free support line and rapid access counselling.
- In Summer 2023 we began an engagement with the communities as we work to expand SART services to communities.

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- Meetings are taking place with Yukon First Nations, community services providers and victims of sexualized assault to help identify the needs of all the communities.
  - A what we heard report will be completed fall 2023 and we will be returning to the communities to share results and information of the expansion of SART services to communities.
  - 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.

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



**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****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:**

- After the federal government's announcement of a one-year delay, people experiencing mental illness as their only underlying medical condition will become eligible for medical assistance in dying on March 17, 2024.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to work regularly with providers, regulatory bodies, and people with lived experience to ensure we can continue to provide access to these services.
- As MAID continues to evolve, we remain committed to working with Health Canada and keeping all Yukoners, including Yukon First Nations governments, informed and up to date.

**Key facts:**

- MAID first became legal 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.

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Services**Advisory Committee:**

- The Yukon MAID Advisory Committee serves to provide input on policies, practices, safeguards and any other system procedures or changes required in response to any federal changes for effective implementation and access within the Yukon.
- The MAID Advisory Committee includes 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****Fall 2023****NGO Funding**Health and Social  
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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.
- I would like to thank all of the service providers and non-government organization partners in the Yukon for their daily work to support Yukoners.

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**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 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 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;

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### **NGO Funding**

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- 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 tracking and managing agreements.
- We continue to explore additional opportunities to improve reporting requirements for agreements to understand outcomes, including the requirement for logic models and performance measurement frameworks.

#### **All Genders Yukon:**

- In fall 2022, All Genders Yukon announced that the organization had folded and funding is not being provided during the 2023-24 fiscal year through the Department of Health and Social Services.
- Prior to the 2022-23 fiscal year, the department provided All Genders Yukon with funding through a Transfer Payment Agreement with Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, including:
  - **\$161K** (\$161,000) during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
  - **\$272K** (\$272,150) during the 2021-22 fiscal year, including a one-time COVID-19 increase of \$111K (\$111,150).
  - Prior to the 2022-23 fiscal year, baseline funding for All Genders Yukon was **\$108K** (\$108,000).
- Our government remains committed to ensuring Yukoners have timely access to counselling services from World Professional Association for Transgender Health trained professionals.

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- We have supported over 90 mental health providers from government and non-government organizations to attend training from the world Professional Association for Transgender Health.
  - Having counsellors from many organizations trained by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health ensures clients have a choice in care provider.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services community hubs have staff trained by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.
- The Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon also has staff trained by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

**RCMP Investigation:**

- On September 14, 2023, the Department of Health and Social Services was notified by a non-government organization partner of an allegation of sexual assault at a government-funded facility by a casual employee employed by the non-government organization.
- We took immediate steps to engage our non-government organization, ensure appropriate supports were provided, and to communicate with clients and staff who may have interacted with the individual under investigation.
- This incident is under investigation by the RCMP.
- The Sexual Assault Response Team can be contacted at 1-844-967-7275.
- Our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch provides counselling services and can be contacted at 867-456-3838.

**We See You Society (Second Opinion Society):**

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****NGO Funding**Health and Social  
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- Our government provides funding through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to several non-government organizations who provide a variety of mental health services to Yukoners.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has met with the We See You Society (formerly the Second Opinion Society) to extend their funding for the 2023-24 fiscal year while working with the organization to plan for the future.
- We remain committed to supporting the We See You Society to develop an updated program model, so to ensure appropriate services and programming are made available to residents of the Yukon.

**211 Helpline:**

- Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2024, the department has an agreement valued at \$135K (\$135,000) with the United Way Yukon for the 211 helpline.
- Yukon 211 was launched on October 15, 2020, with temporary support from the Government of Canada, to enable enhanced services during COVID-19.
- In partnership with the United Way Yukon, the 211 helpline connects Yukoners to government and community-based, non-emergency health and social services.
- 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);

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## NGO Funding

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- 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.

### 988 Service:

- In 2020, the Government of Canada announced the creation of a new suicide prevention and emotional distress crisis hotline called 988, which is expected to provide in-the-moment crisis support.
- This service is expected to launch in the coming months through a collaborative effort between the Government of Canada and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health with the support of provinces and territories, as well as local non-government organizations.
- We have worked with the Government of Canada to identify a local service provider through an Expression of Interest process to support the delivery of this service.
- The Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon has been identified to provide this service.
- Additional details about this new service will be shared once they become available.

**Approved by:**

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

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



**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****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 continue to work tirelessly to provide Yukoners with health care services and play an integral role in our ongoing response to the public health needs of Yukoners and the Substance Use Health Emergency.
- We recognize that health care provider burnout is a real and pressing issue in Yukon communities, and 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, in particular, play a critical role in the delivery of health care services in the Yukon. The Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken several actions to attract and retain Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, and Health Care Aids across Yukon communities.

**Key facts:**

- Community Nursing is currently experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 19% for Primary Health Care Nurses, which is an improvement of approximately 29% since fall 2022.

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## Nursing

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- Within Long-Term Care homes, we are experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 21% for nursing staff including Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, and Nurse Practitioners.
- Home Care is experiencing a 5% vacancy rate for Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 33.8% for nursing staff, including Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, and Nurse Practitioners.
- As of March 31, 2023, there are a total of 348 active Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse positions within the Department of Health and Social Services.

Year	March 31, 2020	March 31, 2021	March 31, 2022	March 31, 2023
Total active LPNs and RNs at HSS	335	352	356	348

## Costs for Nurses:

- The department has agreements with five agency nursing organizations.
  - These organizations have had limited ability to meet staffing needs due to the high demand for nursing staff across Canada.
- In 2022-23 and 2023-24, three agency nursing groups supported the Department of Health and Social Services to deliver nursing services.
  - In 2022-23, the department paid a total of **\$1.42M** (\$1,419,608) to three agency nursing groups.

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## Nursing

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- So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the department has paid a total of **\$640,353** to three agency nursing groups. Based on projections, the department anticipates these costs may be approximately **\$1.4M** this fiscal year.
- 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 **\$6.1M** across 10 agency nursing groups. Based on projections, the Yukon Hospital Corporation anticipates that agency nursing costs could be between **\$8M and \$12M** this fiscal year.
- As agency nurses are paid by contract, it is not possible to precisely calculate the average annual pay per agency nurse. The average cost of accessing one agency nurse per day 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 costs for housing per agency nurse are 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.

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- Alternatively, the Yukon Hospital Corporation estimates that an agency nurse could cost \$318,375 per year based on how shifts are calculated at Yukon hospitals.
- Within the Department of Health and Social Services, agency nurses have only been required within the Community Nursing branch.
  - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, agency nurses supported 1,224 nurse days through Community Nursing.
  - Between April and September 2023, agency nurses have supported 660 nurse days so far during the 2023-24 fiscal year through Community Nursing.
- Agency nurses have been used to provide support in eleven Community Health Centres this year.
- The average compensation for Registered Nurses employed by the Government of Yukon, including benefits is approximately \$127,109 per year.
- The average compensation for Licensed Practical Nurses employed by the Government of Yukon, including benefits is approximately \$103,446 per year.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, a total of 40 Health and Social Services new hires had relocation included in their offer letters for a total cost to the department of \$161,252, which included relocation support for 8 nurses employed by the department.
- So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, there has been a total of 14 Health and Social Services new hires who have been offered relocation for a total cost to-date for the department of \$116,761, which includes relocation support for 6 nurses employed by the department.

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**Education:**

- In partnership with the departments of Education and Economic Development, we continue to work with Yukon University to expand programming to support Yukoners in communities in pursuing health-related careers.
- The Government of Yukon funds Yukon University to offer a Practical Nurse Diploma and health care attendant program whose graduates are a valuable addition to the health care work force in the Yukon.

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

- We have recently created and hired an Inter-Professional Practices and Chief Nursing Officer. This position will contribute to and oversee quality assurance and clinical safety activities, standardize professional standards, work with partners on the Health Human Resources Strategy, and evaluate models of care to meet client needs.
- Engagement with Yukon First Nations and health system partners including nurses, midwives, allied health professionals, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Community Services Regulatory Affairs and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association will occur as part of our ongoing Health Human Resource planning and as we transition to the Health Authority.

**Nurse Practitioners:**

- Currently, there are Nurse Practitioners working in the following settings:
  - 3 Nurse Practitioners at the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre with 2 vacant Nurse Practitioner positions.

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- 1 AOC Nurse Practitioner providing clinics in Old Crow and Pelly Crossing.
- 1 Nurse Practitioner FTE supporting Continuing Care.
- 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.
- We are exploring work to introduce changes to license classes and membership classes for Nurses and Nurse Practitioners and allow Nurse Practitioners to practice to full scope.

**Old Crow Health Centre Lockdown:**

- The Old Crow Health Centre was temporarily in a state of lock down between 9:30 am to 10:20 am on October 10, 2023, due to reports of an active shooter in Old Crow.
- The Centre shut down upon receiving a call from the RCMP advising lockdown. RCMP also provided the call giving the all clear to reopen once it was determined there was no threat to public safety.
- All lockdown procedures were followed.
- No injuries were reported.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use continues to be in contact to provide support to the community as needed.

**Recruitment:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken several actions to recruit nurses to the Community Nursing Branch, including:

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- 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.
  - This event hosted over 6,000 nurses from across the globe. Yukon nurses not only attended education events but also worked shifts at the nursing recruitment booth to share their knowledge and passion for the Yukon and make connections with nurses across the country and the world.

**Shortages:**

- As a result of the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers, some Community Health Centres temporarily reduced services.
  - In August 2023, the Beaver Creek, Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Teslin, and Watson Lake Health Centres were required to reduce their services.
  - In July 2023, the Carmacks, Dawson City, Destruction Bay, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Teslin, and Old Crow Community Health Centres were required to reduce their services.
  - In June 2023, the Carcross, Dawson City and Pelly Crossing Community Health Centres were required to reduce their services.

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- In May 2023, the Beaver Creek, Carcross, Dawson City, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Teslin, and Watson Lake Community Health Centres were required to reduce their services.
- During these service disruptions, the department worked 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 2023.

**Ross River Health Centre:**

- Community Nursing is experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 19% for Primary Health Care Nurses, which is an improvement of approximately 29% since fall 2022.
- While the vacancy rate has improved, we recognize there is more work to be done to recruit new nurses and support existing staff to take needed time off for their health and wellbeing.
- We are actively recruiting nurses and offering signing bonuses, retention allowances, community allowances and furnished housing.
- The Ross River Health Centre has resumed services with a nurse available for urgent care needs. The Chief and community have been notified of this update.
  - EMS will be supporting emergency responses and after-hour responses.
- In some cases, nursing levels may require some service disruptions at Community Health Centres.



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- The department is engaging agency nurses and working to identify other opportunities to enhance nursing coverage to fill gaps, when possible.
  - Emergency Medical Services expands coverage to help to mitigate the impacts of nursing staff shortages at Community Health Centres.
  - Yukoners who require emergency assistance should continue to call 911.
  - The 811 helpline is also available to provide confidential health advice, when needed.
  - We are committed to hearing the feedback and concerns of local representatives as part of our response to the Health Human Resource Crisis, as well as to working with communities to address their unique needs.
  - We are continuously exploring new opportunities to keep First Nations governments and municipalities informed of Community Health Centre service disruptions.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[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 with the Yukon Medical Association to help increase Yukoners' access to primary health care services and foster a strong physician community through a series of innovative initiatives.
- The agreement's new Attachment and Attraction program reflects a shift to a model that supports physicians and will make the Yukon one of the most desirable places to practice medicine in Canada.
- We know that the ways in which family physicians in the Yukon practice is different than other jurisdictions.
  - Many family physicians here also provide specialized care such as GP Oncology, GP Anesthesia and GP Obstetrical services. These are services that are critical to supporting Yukoners to access primary, acute and palliate 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.

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- I assure you though that 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 2023-24, we budgeted **\$6.5M** (\$6,488,000) to support physician benefit programs, the majority of which are administered by the Yukon Medical Association.
- In 2022, the Yukon was supported by 72 resident family medicine physicians, 15 specialists, 69 visiting family medicine physicians, and 77 visiting specialists.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, there were approximately 245,734 unique patient-physician encounters at care settings in the Yukon.
  - So far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, there have been approximately 103,422 unique patient-physician encounters at care settings in the Yukon.
- Based on 2019 to 2020 data, the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that approximately 17% of Yukoners did not have access to a primary care provider. This compares to a national average of 14.4%.
  - 2017 to 2018 data showed that approximately 21% of Yukoners did not have access to a family physician during this period.

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- 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% and the supply of resident specialists increased by 81.8%.

## Claims and Billing:

- Ensuring that physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and physician community.
- We acknowledge that there are changes needed within our physician payment system to address concerns related to claim backlogs and overall system improvements.
- Many of the backlogged claims within the system are the result of claims requiring a manual assessment prior to being processed.
  - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, we paid a total of **\$29.96M** (\$29,960,293) in fee-for-service physician claims.
- We have formed a joint Physician Payment Advisory Committee with the Yukon Medical Association to work together to improve the claims and payment system, as well as respond to concerns with administrative burdens.
- To date, we have shifted 20 fee codes from manual assessment to automatic pay to help facilitate the quick payment of the most frequently used fee codes. This includes the fee code used for the Doctor of the Day at Whitehorse General Hospital.

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- We are working with the vendor to transfer claims that are over 60 days to automatic payments. While these changes are being developed, the physician claims team is focusing on manually processing claims over 60 days.
  - Through the Committee, we continue to identify new fee codes that can be moved to autopay.
- 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 continue to prioritize work to clear backlogged claims and have hired additional staff to support processing claims.
- We have engaged Meyers Norris Penny (MNP) to assist with system improvements, including developing an audit and recovery process. Physicians will have an opportunity to share their input during this work.
- Our physician community has also identified concerns with current administrative burdens including but not limited to, billing and payment process, as well as with the electronic medical records.
- We are currently working on a multi-year Digital Health Strategy, which involves physician input.

**Collaborative Care:**

- Based on feedback provided by the Yukon Medical Association and their membership, we are currently working with two private primary

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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.
- As part of this pilot approach, we expect to lease 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.
- 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.

**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.

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- The department uses alternative payment models with many physicians and specialists who are contracted to deliver services such as at specialist clinics or community health and wellness centres.

**Contracts:**

- Our government is committed to working with physicians and the Yukon Medical Association to establish a Walk-in Clinic that will provide high quality collaborative care for Yukoners.
- We are working with physician consultants to identify payment models that best meet the needs of patients and support providers, ensuring Yukoners have access to important services and care both at the Walk-in Clinic and in their own family physician clinics.
- While physicians are compensated using the 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 contracted in settings such as specialist clinics, community health and wellness centres, the Centre de Sante Constellation Health Centre, and will be used at the forthcoming Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
- 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.
- Additionally, our government and the Yukon Medical Association have introduced the Attachment and Attraction Program to encourage patient attachment to family physicians while supporting physicians with overhead costs.

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- We are also exploring opportunities to support two private practices to introduce allied health professionals and increase access to collaborative care.

**Find a Primary Care Provider Program:**

- In spring 2023, we expanded the Find a Primary Care Provider Program to include Nurse Practitioners.
- As of November 6, 2023, a total of 1,808 individuals have received a match through the program. There are 3,434 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 9.6% of the Whitehorse area population.
  - Since expanding the program to include matches with Nurse Practitioners, 132 individuals have been matched with a Nurse Practitioner.
  - There are currently 5 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.
  - While the program is intended for Yukoners without a primary care provider, individuals who are already connected to a physician are able to apply for a match.
- The program does not allow for duplicate applications under the program and processes are in place to ensure the waitlist is up to date.



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- 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 and communication with applicants.
- We are also working with the Yukon Medical Association to explore system modifications to best meet the needs of physicians.

**Locums:**

- Our government is providing funding to the Yukon Medical Association for a Physician Recruiter position to support work to recruit 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, hospital privileging and licensing are sources of concern.
- We recognize challenges associated with the physician billing and claims process have impacted some locum physicians.
  - We have introduced automatic payments on 20 frequently used fee codes and are focused on manually processing payments over 60 days.
  - Work is also underway to enhance our systems. This includes working to introduce automatic payments for claims over 60 days, as well as to address challenges that result from patient names not aligning across the system.
- As part of our work through the Health Human Resource Steering Committee, which includes physician, hospital and the Yukon Medical

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

**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.
- The department and the Yukon Medical Association are finalizing an Expression of Interest for this important role.

**Memorandum of Understanding:**

- The current three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association covers the period of April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025.
- The Memorandum of Understanding includes:
  - An Attachment and Attraction program that is intended to assist with increasing access to primary and specialty care while supporting physicians' operating costs;
  - 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 provides incentives for Yukon physicians to expand their patient rosters, which we anticipate will

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help reduce the number of Yukoners without access to a primary care provider.

- The program offers funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard of 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.
- For patients of participating family doctors, this means increased access to care and the availability of same-day, unscheduled appointments.
- We also anticipate this program will help to attract new physicians to the Yukon.
- The Attachment and Attraction program is fully up and running with participating physicians.
  - We are closely monitoring this new initiative and working with the Yukon Medical Association to address feedback and to evaluate the program moving forward.

**Physician Assistants:**

- A Physician Assistant is a healthcare professional who works in collaboration with physicians and other healthcare providers to deliver patient care. Physician Assistants work under the supervision of licensed physicians but possess the autonomy to perform a wide range of clinical tasks and procedures.
- Physician Assistant's scope of practice varies across Canada but typically they conduct patient assessments, order and interpret investigations, formulate treatments plans, prescribe medications, assist in surgical procedures and order and perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

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- There are no Physician Assistants practicing in the Yukon and at present are not regulated to do so.
- It is the Department of Health and Social Service's understanding that the topic of introducing Physician Assistants into the healthcare system has been met with a variety of opinions from the Yukon physician community.
- As part of our work in developing a Health Human Resource Strategy, we are looking at a number of options to ensure our health care work force is properly resourced and able to provide high-quality care for all Yukoners.
- We will continue to work with our health system partners such as the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to determine how best to do this.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Safer Supply and Prescribing  
(Opioids)**Health and Social  
Services

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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 committed to 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 Administrative 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 August 31, 2023, there were 214 clients registered with Opioid Treatment Services and an average of 413 appointments per month.
- So far in 2023, there have been 524 clients supported through the Referred Care Clinic and an average of 802 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 to minimize harm reduction.
- 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.
- 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.

**Prescribing Authorities:**

- In Canada, possession of controlled substances is prohibited under federal law.

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- 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 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.
  - 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.

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## Safer Supply and Prescribing (Opioids)

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- 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 may prescribe evidence-based opioid agonist therapies such as methadone, suboxone, sublocade, and kadian to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings for opioid drugs.
- An Overdose Outreach Team, through Opioid Treatment Services, launched on July 25, 2022.
  - This team provides outreach to individuals at high-risk of opioid overdose or those who have recently overdosed.
  - The team also provides harm reduction education, system navigation and connection to services related to substance use.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_

[Date approved]



**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****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 implement 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.
- This is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone, which is why we continue to work with partners to coordinate our response.
- In response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, we have developed Car 867, an Overdose Outreach Team, increased Opioid Treatment Services and access to safer supply, expanded the methods of consumption available 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 such as naloxone kits.
- We understand that there is still work to be done to address the Substance Use Health Emergency in the territory.
- We appreciate the work of our partners: Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the RCMP, Yukon First Nations, and

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## **Substance Use Health Emergency**

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all levels of government towards addressing this public health emergency.

### **Key facts:**

- A Substance Use Health Emergency was declared January 20, 2022.
- As of August 31, 2023, there have been 4,238 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site since January 1, 2023.
  - In 2022, there were 1,997 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site.
- As of September 19, 2023, a total of 7,251 take home naloxone kits have been distributed in 2023.
  - In 2022, we distributed 7,264 kits.
  - In 2021, we distributed 3,571 kits.
- A Substance Use Health Emergency Project Executive Committee has also been formed. This committee met twice per month between March 2022 and August 2022. As of September 2022, the committee continues to meet as needed.
  - This committee is made up of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services including EMS, the Department of Justice, the Department of Community Services, the Executive Council Office, Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Carcross Tagish First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Whitehorse General Hospital, Blood Ties Four Directions and the RCMP. As well as, Referred Care Clinic physicians, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the Chief Coroner.

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- As of November 8, 2023, there have been 18 confirmed substance-use related deaths in the Yukon in 2023.
  - 16 of these involved opioids.
  - Since April 2016, there have been 93 Yukoners who have died due to opioids.
  - In 2022, there were 25 confirmed substance-related deaths in the Yukon.
- As of September 13, 2023, there were 130 visits to Whitehorse General Hospital for drug poisoning and 461 for alcohol-related visits since January 1, 2023.
  - 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.
- As of September 24, 2023, Emergency Medical Services has responded to 258 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 627 calls related to alcohol-related calls since the beginning of this year.
  - 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.
- Never use alone - call the National Opioid Response Service at 1-888-688-6677. This anonymous service will have someone stay on the

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phone with you so individuals can be linked to virtual overdose prevention support.

- Rapid Access Counselling is available to all Yukoners – call 867-456-3838 to make a counselling appointment within 72 hours.

**Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy:**

- Our government has actively engaged in collaborative work with health system and community partners on the development of the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- Along with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon released the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy August 23, 2023.
- 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.
- The Strategy highlights four areas of growth that focus on prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support, and community safety and wellbeing.
- 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 valuable 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 lifespan 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

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substance use related harms are reduced and the health and wellbeing of Yukoners flourishes.

- The Government of Yukon is immediately providing funding to support collaborative efforts aimed at implementing an initial 14 actions outlined in the strategy. These 14 include actions cover all four areas of growth:
  - **Prevention**
    - Implement Planet Youth in Yukon communities.
    - Continue to support Yukon communities in creating and implementing community wellness plans.
    - Continue to launch communication and educational campaigns addressing substance use and mental wellness issues.
  - **Harm reduction**
    - Implement a Managed Alcohol Program.
    - Further expand the operating hours of Whitehorse's Supervised Consumption Site.
    - Further expand access to Opioid Treatment Services, including safer supply and Opioid Agonist Therapy.
  - **Treatment and recovery support**
    - Ensure the availability of Opioid Agonist Therapy wherever Yukoners seek assistance (partially addressed through the deployment of the Mobile Opioid Treatment Services clinic).

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- Continue to increase support for Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment options.
- **Community safety and wellbeing**
  - Continue to invest in preventing gender-based violence and improving services for victims of crime.
  - Increase frontline support staffing and create more safe and sober housing options for individuals grappling with substance use issues when transitioning from the criminal justice system back into communities.
  - 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.
  - Continue to support effective and accountable policing and enforcement responsive to community needs and taking into account the Yukon's modern treaty environment.
  - Expand the capacity of the Mobile Crisis Response Team (Car 867).
  - 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.

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**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.
- 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 two 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 continue to gather information from the ongoing Ministerial Advisory Committee, Communications Working Group, and Project Executive Committee.

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- 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 continue to increase on-the-land healing and treatment options in the territory which includes:
  - working with the Teslin Tlingit Council to develop a co-facilitated, land-based healing option in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services programming;
  - supported a week-long family camp from July 24 to July 30, 2022 at Jackson Lake in partnership with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon;
  - working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to support 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;
  - partnering 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; and
  - supporting the Hives for Watson Lake partnership with Liard First Nation.
- The Rapid Access Bike paramedic team launched in summer 2022 to improve EMS service and provide faster response in downtown Whitehorse during the summer months. This Yukon EMS program is a partnership with the RCMP and City of Whitehorse.
- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy was released August 23, 2023.



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- On August 28, 2023, the Government of Yukon highlighted the 14 initial actions from the Strategy.
  - Emergency Medical Services has expanded their Paramedic Specialist Clinic hours at 405 Alexander to at least 20 hours a day.
  - Emergency Medical Services has implemented a Paramedic Response Unit in downtown Whitehorse which provides harm reduction supplies and drug checking kits.

**Alcohol Use and Strategy:**

- On March 29, 2023, the Northwest Territories released an alcohol strategy aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm in their territory.
- We recognize the health risks associated with alcohol-use and continue to deploy a variety of public awareness strategies to promote responsible alcohol use to keep Yukoners safe and healthy.
- 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.
- The Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy includes recommendations to address alcohol-use in the territory, including implementing a Managed Alcohol Program as one of the 14 initial actions.

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**Awareness Campaign:**

- In August of 2023, all community and First Nations government health centres, Blood Ties Four Directions and other partners received printed material and resources regarding the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and Mental Wellness Substance Use Services.
- The Departments of Health and Social Services and Justice are currently working to develop a communications approach for the next six months.
- Over the next six months, the department anticipates promoting awareness and education campaigns targeted to youth, individuals directly impacted by substance use, as well as campaigns related to areas such as community safety and anti-stigma, amongst others.

**Community Outreach:**

- We appreciate the work of Yukon First Nations governments to address the unique needs of their communities in response to this health emergency.
- 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 continues to provide harm reduction services in Whitehorse through the Outreach Van, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff working in

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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 upcoming Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

**Decriminalization of Substances:**

- The Government of Canada is responsible for the *Criminal Code* and the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* which determine criminality regarding drug use, possession, and trafficking.
- Our government has been working with partners to address the Substance Use Health Emergency, including support for a range of harm reduction initiatives aimed at reducing overdose deaths and curbing stigma around drug use.
- The Department of Justice is responsible for the Community Safety and Wellbeing pillar of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. Action item 9 instructs the department to explore and consider options on how best to allocate limited territorial policing resources to most effectively address violence in communities, the misuse of illicit drugs and organized crime.
- The Department of Justice is monitoring decriminalization efforts in British Columbia, Toronto and other jurisdictions to ensure any policy changes will be driven by high-quality evidence.

**Emergency Medical Services:**

- Emergency Medical Services has a Paramedic Specialist Clinic located at 405 Alexander. The clinic ensures a paramedic is on site at least 20 hours a day.

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- Emergency Medical Services has expanded hours at 405 Alexander clinic hours to 20hr/day. We are continuing to work towards having a paramedic on site 24/7.
  - The clinic has a spectrometer to test samples of drug supply on site. The spectrometer provides a more accurate detection of benzos, fentanyl and other contaminants in the drug supply.
- Emergency Medical Services has expanded the Paramedic Specialist Clinic to include a Paramedic Response Unit in the downtown core of Whitehorse.
  - The Paramedic Response Unit operates 10.7 hours a day, seven 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.

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- Emergency Medical Services has distributed over 1,500 drug checking kits across the territory.

**Managed Alcohol Program:**

- As part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement, our government has committed to establishing a Managed Alcohol Program within the next year.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working to establish a Managed Alcohol Program in Whitehorse by early 2024.
- Currently, the Yukon Liquor Corporation, the Department of Health and Services' Social Supports branch and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services are working to establish policies and procedure manuals for the Managed Alcohol Program.
- The Managed Alcohol Program will attempt to reduce harms related to alcohol use amongst alcohol-dependent individuals and reduce the use of non-beverage alcohol.
- This initiative will help protect one of the Yukon's most vulnerable populations and will support public health and resource allocation.

**Mental Wellness Summit:**

- On February 14 and 15, 2022, our government hosted a Mental Wellness Summit that brought together leaders, partners and those with lived experience from across the territory to identify collaborative solutions to support communities. Over 550 people took part in the summit.

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- The second phase of the Mental Wellness Summit was held between September 21 and 23, 2022. There were 320 people who attended the second phase of the Summit either in-person or virtually.
- Presentations from both parts of the Mental Wellness Summit are available for streaming on Yukon.ca.
- Information and feedback from the Mental Wellness Summit was used to inform the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

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

- On November 1, 2022, our government and the RCMP announced the launch of Car 867, the new Mobile Crisis Unit.
- 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 (such as Rapid Access Counselling, the Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team, the Psychiatric Outreach Program and Adult Protection Services), as well as safety planning and working with the client on issues in real-time.
- Currently, this program is being implemented in Whitehorse and assists communities on an ad-hoc basis.
  - Between October 31, 2022 and October 31, 2023, the unit responded to 273 calls.

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- 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.
- Work is underway to recruit a second position to run the unit 7 days a week.

**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, 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.
- If you want to get a Naloxone kit or learn ways to reduce harm when you or your loved one uses substances, you can contact the opioid overdose prevention coordinator.

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**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.
- 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.
- Treatment is being supported in BC and Alberta through Homewood Ravensview, Edgewood Treatment Centre, Last Door Recovery Centre, and Last Door Addiction Recovery Services.
- In order to ensure the privacy of individuals who need to travel out-of-territory for medical treatment, we are unable to provide the specific number of clients who have travelled through the Medical Travel Program for residential treatment.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations with temporary funding from the federal government provides support to send individuals out-of-territory to access residential treatment.
- Detox and sobering services are not Insured Health Services and are not covered through Insured Health Services for out-of-territory medical travel.



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- The Yukon offers a live-in Withdrawal Management Service in Whitehorse and a concurrent disorder treatment program for people living with substance use issues.

**Overdose Outreach Team:**

- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has established an Overdose Outreach Team through Opioid Treatment Services.
- The Overdose Outreach Team provides harm reduction education, supports clients with system navigation and provides connections to other services related to substance use.
  - The Team also provides support to individuals who have recently experienced drug overdose.
- The Overdose Outreach Team includes support workers, social workers and community engagement workers.
- The Team currently operates Monday to Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm.
- Yukoners can call (867) 333-9717 to be referred to the Overdose Outreach Team.

**Supervised Consumption Site:**

- The Supervised Consumption Site was opened in Whitehorse on September 30, 2021, in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions.
  - At launch, the Site was open Monday to Friday from 10:30 am to 7 pm and closed on statutory holidays.
- Our government worked with Blood Ties Four Directions to adjust the hours of operation at the Supervised Consumption Site to run Monday to Friday from 12:00 pm to 9 pm.
- As part of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we have increased funding to support work to expand the operating hours,

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which are anticipated to be between 10:30 am and 9:30 pm, seven days per week, including holidays.

- We look forward to expanding these services in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions once the agreement is finalized and additional staff are hired.
  - Recruitment for the additional 3.5 FTEs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is expected to commence in the near future.
- As of August 31, 2023, there have been 6,312 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site since it opened in 2021.
- 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.

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Approved by:

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

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

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- The Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre will support the recommendations of the *Putting People First* report by providing a setting for residents to access holistic, person-centered care with an integrated, interdisciplinary team.

**Key messages:**

- Our government is working to connect Yukoners to integrated and coordinated health and wellness services in their home communities.
- To support this work, we are building a new Health and Wellness Centre in Old Crow.
- Once completed, the new Health and Wellness Centre will allow us to better support the community's health and wellness needs in a collaborative care environment.
- We are working closely with Vuntut Gwitchin Government to meet community health and wellness needs.

**Key facts:**

- The existing Old Crow Health Centre was built in the 1970s.
- Ketza TSL Construction was awarded the contract for the Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre.
- Building construction on the new Centre began in early 2022 and is expected to be completed this winter.
- Work will continue once construction is complete to outfit and prepare the facility for service delivery.

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Centre**Health and Social  
Services**Health and Wellness Centre:**

- The Health and Wellness Centre will include Health Services programs, allied Health and Social Services programs, administration and support spaces, and a Wellness Room.
- We are working with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the design of a healing room in the health and wellness centre, as well as gathering other cultural and First Nations input into the overall design.

**10-Plex housing unit:**

- Along with the Health and Wellness Centre, a 10-plex housing unit is being built in Old Crow.
- The 10-plex will include four one-bedroom units, one of which will be a barrier-free suite; and six two-bedroom units, two of which will be barrier-free suites.
- One of the barrier-free suites is designated for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation use only.
- This project will replace Health and Social Services staff housing, increase the number of affordable housing units, and create jobs in the community.
- The project is expected to be completed in October 2023.

**Approved by:**

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring seniors and Elders in the Yukon receive the support they need.

#### Key messages:

- The Yukon's 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 ensure seniors and Elders receive the support they need.
- Our government is committed to culturally safe and responsive programming that recognizes culture 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.
- For regional communities, the Regional Home Care team provides Home Care Nurses/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, and are assigned to work in communities not supported by a Home Care Nurse. They travel regularly

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to make assessments and hire and supervise Home Support Workers based on client needs in each community.

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

**Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$70.3M** (\$70,274,232) 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.
- Continuing Care and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are collaborating to review and assess community needs for long-term care in Watson Lake
- There are 509.05 FTEs working within the Yukon's four long-term care homes.
- There are 260 permanent long-term care rooms and 28 respite rooms.
- On average, there are a total of 5.5 admissions to long-term care each month.
  - There has been a wait list since June 2023.
  - As of October 11, 2023, there are a total of 14 people waiting for a permanent bed, 5 have deferred admission offers but remain on the waitlist.
- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$14.1M** (14,077,441) 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 supported an average of 717 active clients per month across the territory during the 2022-23 fiscal year.

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- After an intake assessment the Yukon Home Care Program team aims to provide access to services within:
  - One to two days for high-risk clients;
  - One week for medium-risk clients; and,
  - Two weeks for low-risk clients.
- We provided **\$76,000** during the 2023-24 fiscal year 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.

### Bridge to Home:

- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation continue project work on a quality improvement initiative with Health Quality BC (formally known as BC Patient Safety and Quality Council) focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home and community.
  - Engagement with people with lived experience has started as the collaborative works towards creating a person-centered, Patient Oriented Discharge Summary (PODS) that can be used by the Yukon Hospital Corporation with patients at time of discharge to support discharges from hospital to home and community.
- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$40K** (\$40,000) to support this Bridge to Home initiative.
  - We have since received an amendment that approves up to **\$60K** (\$60,000) in funding for this initiative.
- Community based government programs, such as the Yukon Home Care Program, support the discharge process from the hospital, working with patients and their families to ensure the necessary resources and support are provided so their health can be managed at home.



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- This may involve coordinating with primary care physicians, arranging for home care services, or connecting patients with community resources such as transportation or meal delivery services.
- Bridge to Home is a recommendation in *Putting People First*, is promoted by Healthcare Excellence Canada, and builds upon similar successful initiatives in other jurisdictions.
- The Bridge to Home initiative helps patients transition from the hospital to their homes, while also improving outcomes and reducing the risk of readmission.
  - Support looks different for every person and ensuring a smooth discharge process requires a holistic approach.

**COVID-19:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services (Continuing Care and Yukon Communicable Disease Control) works 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.
  - Continuing Care reintroduces continuous masking as source control during an outbreak for all staff, visitors, volunteers and contractors.

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- Residents are monitored daily for symptoms of respiratory illness and tested, as necessary.
- Long-term care reduces the movement of residents, staff and visitors until an outbreak is declared over by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- 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.
- 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 home COVID-19 Test kits in long-term care homes for staff as an additional resource.

**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, which was released in spring 2019.
- 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.
- On April 17, 2023, we finalized an agreement with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. for the expansion of dementia supports in the territory.
  - This includes the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline to support people and their caregivers on their journey with dementia.

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- 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.
- Our work to support Yukoners living with dementia, caregivers, and service providers also includes:
  - forming the Behavioural Care Resource Team in 2021 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 have dementia and require a therapeutic and secure environment as well as 24-hour 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.

### **Demographic Projections:**

- Over the next 20 years, the Yukon's seniors 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.
- 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 Community Hospital;
  - the Home Care satellite office located in Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson;
  - the Home Care satellite office located in a Health and Social Services building in Haines Junction.
- Total staffing vacancies across the Home Care program amount to 13.2% or 13.9 FTEs.
  - 12.5 FTE vacancies are located in Whitehorse.
  - The remaining 1.4 FTEs are Regional vacancies. The perm vacancies in the Regional communities are currently backfilled by AOC support.
- Home Care takes efforts to hire home support workers from inside their own communities. There is no known instance wherein an individual requesting to work in a community has only been offered a position in Whitehorse unless the applicant applied for a position specified as being in Whitehorse and subsequently asked to be placed in community.

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- The number of home care clients by communities as of October 31, 2023, is as follows:
  - Atlin: fewer than 5 clients
  - Beaver Creek: 13 clients
  - Burwash Landing: 9 clients
  - Carcross: 16 clients
  - Carmacks: 23 clients
  - Dawson City: 32 clients
  - Destruction Bay: fewer than 5 clients
  - Faro: 11 clients
  - Haines Junction: 27 clients
  - Keno: fewer than 5 clients
  - Mayo: 41 clients
  - Old Crow: 24 clients
  - Pelly Crossing: 28 clients
  - Ross River: 11 clients
  - Teslin: 26 clients
  - Watson Lake: 21 clients
  - Whitehorse (and surrounding area): 384 clients

**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.

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- Thanks to the dedication of staff, 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 by Accreditation Canada.
- Normandy Living has successfully received accreditation with the non-profit Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities Canada for a period of three years.
- The Yukon met 85.5% 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 that was 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 amongst the highest hours of direct nursing care/resident/day in the country, with on average 4.38 hours of care provided a 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

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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 what we consider 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 four days from January to March 21, 2023
  - For a portion of 11 days from March 22 to July 25, 2023.
  - This shows an improving trend, even over the winter and summer holiday seasons.
- Recruitment and retention efforts remain 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:**

- We have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to integrate two long-term care rooms into the Watson Lake Community Hospital to increase supports in the community, though this work has been impacted by the global nursing shortage.
- We appreciate residents of Watson Lake bringing forward feedback and concerns about the availability of Continuing Care supports and services in the community.

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- The opening of two long-term care rooms is on hold as we seek to best understand local needs and values that will inform planning delivery of future programming, a commitment our government is making for all communities across the Yukon.
  - 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.
  - Watson Lake is supported by 1 permanent Registered Nurse providing Home Care, 1 AOC Registered Nurse, 2 AOC Home Support Workers, and 1 Whitehorse-based Home Care Occupational and Physical Therapist who visits the community twice per year.
    - Recruitment is underway for 1 permanent part-time Home Support Worker.
  - As of September 30, 2022, there were 517 Yukoners age 55+ living in Watson Lake, representing 35% of the community's population.

### Wait Times for Long-Term Care:

- Currently, residents from several communities are on the wait list for long-term care. The number of individuals from each community is less than five. In addition to Whitehorse, communities with residents on the wait list include:
  - Burwash Landing
  - Faro
  - Dawson City
  - Haines Junction
  - Mayo
  - Tagish/Carcross
  - Teslin



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- Watson Lake; and,
- Pelly Crossing

**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 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 is experiencing the impacts of the local and global shortage of healthcare workers and is experiencing significant staffing challenges.
- As a result of staffing shortages, the Yukon Midwifery Program had to temporarily shut down services and transfer clients to Solstice Maternity while recruitment for additional midwives and other mitigation strategies are underway.
- The new Collective Agreement between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Employees Union has established a new classification for midwives, which is expected to assist in better attracting midwives to work within the existing model of service delivery.
  - An ongoing competition for midwives is currently running on Yukon.ca, where we have aligned our wages with the Collective Agreement.
- 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 patient safety.

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- We continue to work with local and national partners to address the local, global, and national 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 and safe care for all Yukoners.

**Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$1.35M** (\$1,354,723) for the Yukon Midwifery Program.
- The Yukon Midwifery clinic in Whitehorse officially opened its doors on July 7, 2022.
- The first midwifery-led birth occurred on November 6, 2022.
- Between November 6, 2022, and January 20, 2023, a total of 12 clients were supported with midwifery-led births, including one home birth.
- On January 26, 2023, the Yukon Midwifery Program temporarily shut down and transferred clients to Solstice Maternity.
- As of July 2023, two of the Registered Midwife positions are filled with a third Midwife expected to resume services in March 2024.
  - 4 AOC Second Birth Attendants have been hired with the intention to fill 10 to 12 AOC Second birth Attendant positions to meet the equivalent of 1 FTE to support the call schedule.
  - Ongoing recruitment and hiring processes are underway.
- While the Yukon Midwifery Program is temporarily shut down and unable to provide clinical care and services, Registered Midwives are offering supportive prenatal care visits and full spectrum postnatal care.

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- Insured Health Services continues to provide the option for those seeking midwifery services to do so out-of-territory. Uptake of this support has been low.
- Support continues to be provided through Solstice Maternity.

**Implementation Plan and Model of Care:**

- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a robust quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- We are committed to ensuring that the Yukon Midwifery Program reflects the best standards of care and reflects the unique realities of the Yukon context.
- 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, Yukon First Nations. This is accomplished through the following work:
  - Expert midwifery consultants who provide advice and feedback on system improvements to the program as needed.

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- The Whitehorse General Hospital Midwifery Working Group - supported the systems and operational integration of Registered Midwives into Whitehorse General Hospital
    - Since the Yukon Midwifery Program launched, this group completed two separate full quality assurance case reviews of all midwifery-led births.
  - MOREOB – patient safety and performance improvement program for interprofessional obstetrical teams funded by the Government of Yukon for Whitehorse General Hospital.
    - Official sign-off is in place for the development of the Nursing-Midwifery guidelines for Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - We also continue to participate on committees, teams, and 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, to ensure patient safety.
- The *Midwives Regulation* requires that Registered Midwives in the Yukon have insurance of \$10M (\$10,000,00) per incident and \$20M (\$20,000,000) per year.

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- 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.
- Under the previous system, there were gaps in care.
- Individuals wanting to practice midwifery in the territory are 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.
- The requirement for Yukon midwives to obtain one year of experience outside the territory was put in place 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.

**Staffing:**

- Ensuring the health and safety of our clients relies on a team of Registered Midwives that are able to provide the full scope of midwifery care.
- To provide the 24/7 coverage the Yukon Midwifery Program offers while complying with the Yukon Standards of Practice for Registered

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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.
- We do not currently have the full staffing resources available to achieve this level of coverage, which contributed to the decision to temporarily pause midwifery-led births.
- This is a challenge faced by many midwifery programs across this country regardless of the model of service delivery.
- At the center of this decision is the health, safety, and wellness of Yukoners.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program is currently recruiting for two midwives and a Second Birth Attendant position to support the relaunch of the program.
- We are working to develop a plan to enable the re-launch of Midwifery services, subject to the success of the hiring process.

**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 our health system partners, including Yukon 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:**

- Since 2016, our government has worked 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:**

- There are 55 licensed pharmacists in the Yukon.
- So far in 2023, Yukon pharmacists have administered 531 vaccines.
- In 2022, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,265 vaccines.
- In 2021, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,112 vaccines.
- A total of 36 pharmacists have an injection endorsement; 5 pharmacists have a travel vaccine endorsement; and 34 pharmacists have the minor prescribing endorsement.
- Free Naloxone kits are available through participating pharmacies.



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#### 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.
- On June 30, 2022, the scope of practice for pharmacists was expanded further to support pharmacists 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 the *Putting People First* report.
- 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 prescribers 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, which allows for pharmacists to assess and prescribe medications for some minor ailments, smoking-cessation, and some vaccinations.

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- 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 COVID-19 vaccinations, publicly funded non-COVID vaccines, and some travel vaccines.
  - Pharmacists were already supporting Yukoners over the age of five to access publicly funded vaccines, including Shingrix, the HPV vaccine, and the seasonal influenza vaccine.
  - 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 either their primary care provider, the Whitehorse Health Centre, or their nearest Community Health Centre.
- Yukoners of any age can receive travel vaccines through a private clinic in Whitehorse.

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### 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.
  - While this work is completed, we are also working to evaluate our reimbursement framework and supplement it with strong documentation to prevent this issue from occurring in the future.
- 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:

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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 psychiatrists to increase access to psychiatry services and wraparound supports for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We are working with key stakeholders to expand 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 the Yukon Hospital Corporation to help clients get the most appropriate and timely care.

**Key facts:**

- The Yukon is currently supported by six resident psychiatrists, including one resident child and youth psychiatrist.
  - The Yukon is also supported by a locum child and youth psychiatrist who provides regular services.
  - At the Referred Care Clinic, one psychiatrist provides specialized addictions medicine psychiatry on a contract basis one day per week.
  - Four of the resident psychiatrists are connected to Summit Health Associates, which the Government of Yukon has contracted with to provide both outpatient and inpatient psychiatric services.

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- The fourth psychiatrist at Summit is a new addition this fall that was supported by the Government of Yukon to expand access to services for Yukoners.
  - There is also a resident psychiatrist who provides services through their private practice.
- There is approximately a two week wait time for a client to see a psychiatrist through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services psychiatry.
- As of June 22, 2023, the average wait time at Summit Health is 24 weeks for non-urgent consults. More urgent consults are triaged to be seen earlier.
- As of June 22, 2023, there are approximately 700 active patients at Summit Health with 115 patients on the waitlist to see a psychiatrist.
- Full-time and on-call services psychiatric services are provided at Whitehorse General Hospital 365 days per year, 24 hours a day.

**Accessing Psychiatry:**

- Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or Nurse Practitioner, 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 that are referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services who require wraparound supports are

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prioritized and every effort will be 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.
- Construction has begun at Whitehorse General Hospital on the new Mental Wellness Unit that is in partnership with the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and community partners.

**Contracts:**

- We recognize that physicians may have questions about entering into a contract with the Government of Yukon.
- Contracts with physicians adhere to Government of Yukon award processes using either an Expression of Interest or direct award.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to working with physicians interested in a contract to support service delivery. This work involves assessing current service delivery models, understanding where there are gaps in coverage, and how we can best work with providers to meet the care needs of Yukoners.
- We take seriously our commitment to transparency and equity while balancing fiscal responsibility.
- Yukon has a blended model of fee for service and contract physicians and both models play an important role in delivery of primary and specialist care.
- The department meets regularly with physicians and works collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon

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Hospital Corporation to evolve compensation and program development.

**ECT 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, utilizing various formulations, including compounded products. The risks and benefits of ketamine used 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.
- 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 (ECT) is a treatment for severe mental illness which involves brief electrical stimulation of the brain.
- Our government will continue to work closely with our partners, including psychiatrists, to continue to offer Yukoners with psychiatric treatment options and wraparound supports.

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**Psychiatry**

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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 enhancing supports for Yukoners living with chronic 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 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$903K** (\$903,457) for the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
- As of August 2023, there are 735 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 82 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 the clients' needs.
- The services provided by the Chronic Conditions Support Program supports all people with or at risk of a chronic condition with condition-specific programming available for respiratory conditions, diabetes, heart failure, and cardiovascular disease.

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- 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 58 people with the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and 8 people with the Pharmacare Program enrolled for a glucose monitoring device.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$1,210K** (\$1,209,557) for Hearing Services.
- Hearing Services' wait times are currently at 2 weeks for urgent care needs and between 15 and 19 months for those with less urgent needs.
  - In February 2020, wait times were under two months.
- Hearing Services waitlists have recently accumulated for the top-priority and pediatric clients. As of July 2023, there were 22 top-priority clients, 30 pediatric clients, 277 medium-priority clients, and 279 lower-priority clients awaiting appointments.

**Chronic Conditions Support Program:**

- The Chronic Conditions Support Program (CCSP) is a patient-centered, collaborative care team that offers individual and group support with nurse educators, exercise specialists, certified respiratory educators, dietitians, and pharmacists.
- There are 5 permanent FTEs that support the Chronic Conditions Support Program including 2.0 FTE Chronic Conditions Nurse Educators, 1 FTE clinical exercise specialist, 1 FTE clinical supervisor and 1 FTE program administrator. They are supported 1 term exercise

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specialist, 1 term clinical exercise assistant and by contract dieticians and pharmacists.

- Yukoners are able to access the Chronic Conditions Support Program by self-referral or through their primary care provider.
- Anyone who has or is at-risk for a chronic health condition can access services.
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program continues to offer individual, and group supports to Yukoners managing chronic conditions.
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers a variety of supervised exercise programs that are in high demand.
- 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.

**Diabetes:**

- On May 19, 2021, the Yukon Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Motion No. 30 committing to develop a Type 1 Diabetes Strategy by September 2022.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to work with the T1D Support Network toward implementing a territory-wide Type 1 Diabetes Strategy.
- The Type 1 Diabetes Strategy is currently being drafted.
- Interviews and focus groups were completed by the T1D Support Network in late Fall 2022 and formed the basis of the Needs Assessment for the Strategy.

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- The Strategy is expected to address areas such as management, treatment and care, data collection, learning and knowledge sharing, access to devices, medicines and other supports.
- The T1D Support Network held a funding agreement with our government for a pilot project to provide Continuous Glucose Monitors for Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes.
- Building on the success of the pilot project, 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.

**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.
  - We offer the Diabetes Wellness Series and various other diabetes group education sessions in collaboration with the Diabetes Education Centre.
  - Chronic Disease Nurse Educator Supports are also available through this program to offer one-on-one education, case management, system navigation and annual foot checks.
  - Exercise Specialist led exercise programming is also available to clients to build healthy habits and better manage blood sugars.

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- The Chronic Conditions Support Program also offers a Chronic Disease Management Toolkit to care providers to assist them with monitoring patients and provide chronic care according to clinical guidelines.
- Additionally, all supplies required to manage diabetes such as insulin, insulin syringes, insulin pumps, lancets, test strips and glucometers are covered through Insured Health Services.

**Hearing Services:**

- Hearing Services conducts hearing tests, helps clients purchase hearing-aids through bulk discount agreements with major manufacturers and provides technical support for hearing aids.
- Wait times for hearing tests have grown in recent years as a result of factors such as COVID-19, an increase in referrals, and staffing challenges.
- We are working to recruit audiologists to manage the backlog. In the meantime, we are prioritizing clients in need of urgent and immediate assistance as well as children.
- We are working with a casual and an out-of-territory contract audiologist.
- In addition to utilizing contractors and casual staff, the program has been able to secure a clinical technician who will support the Audiologist by maintaining equipment and performing some hearing test procedures.
- Once the clinical technician is fully trained, the Audiologist will then have more time to conduct hearing assessments.

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Approved by:

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Dental**Health and Social  
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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 fill gaps in our current programs and provide more Yukoners with access to essential dental care.
- Eligible Yukon seniors registered in the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program and Non-Insured Health Benefit clients currently have access to dental care.
  - 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 up to Grade 7 at elementary schools in Whitehorse and rural communities with a resident dentist;
  - students from kindergarten up 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:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$5.43M** (\$5,425,852) for the Yukon Dental Program.
- Between January 1 and June 30, 2023, a total of 1,255 individuals enrolled in the Yukon Dental Program.
  - During this period, 614 of those individuals accessed dental care.
- As of September 8, 2023, a total of 1,164 individuals have been approved for the Yukon Dental Program for the 2023-24 coverage year which began on July 1, 2023.
- 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 is providing **\$527K** (\$526,680) over 3 years to Pacific Blue Cross to administer the Yukon Dental Program.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the itinerant dentist made 2 visits to Dawson City, Watson Lake, Carmacks, Old Crow and Mayo, and 1 visit to Faro.
- 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 services approximately 300 to 500 children per year.

**Itinerant Dentist:**

- There has not been an itinerant dentist since March 31, 2023, when the contract to service Yukon communities ended.



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- 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, including the Canadian Dental Association Journal, the Dental Connection Website, and the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Dental Directors Working Group, amongst others.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working with the Department of Highways and Public Works to explore developing a tender that could garner interest in the itinerant dentist contract.
- Yukoners can still access dental services in Whitehorse until a new itinerant dentist is recruited.
- 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.
- This previous itinerant dentist provided service to Dawson City, Old Crow, Mayo, Carmacks, Watson Lake, and Faro.
  - Residents of Ross River have 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 to identify a new itinerant dentist, we will assess whether additional community visits and clinic locations are required.

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**Yukon Children's Dental Program:**

- The Yukon Children's Dental Program is one of the most generous pediatric dental programs in the country.
- Children and students 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 two days a week and will be operating four days a week as of October 16, 2023.

**Yukon Dental Program (CASA):**

- The Yukon Dental Program officially launched on January 4, 2023, providing \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to Yukoners without dental coverage, and \$600 annually to Pharmacare and Extended Benefit recipients.
- On July 1, 2023, a new coverage period began, which will provide coverage to individuals until June 30, 2024.
- The program covers dental treatments necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease and restore chewing and social function, and 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).

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- 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.
  - In December 2022, the Canada Dental Benefit was launched for children 12 and under and does not impact eligibility for the Yukon Dental Program.
- Yukoners eligible for the Pharmacare and Extended Health Care Benefits programs, and who apply and meet the income threshold, could receive an annual \$600 through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.
- Children are also eligible for the program if their caregivers meet the income threshold, and they are not eligible for the Yukon Children's Dental Program.
  - Starting in the 2023-24 school year, the Yukon Dental Program will provide coverage to eligible youth who previously received care through the Yukon Children's Dental Program's Grade 8 program.
- The department is unable to reimburse the costs of dental work received before an individual has been approved for enrollment in the program.
- The Yukon Dental Program does not provide medical travel coverage.
  - Medical travel is defined in regulation and supports access to insured health services when services are unavailable locally in territory.

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- Dental programming is provided as a benefit to eligible Yukoners and not as an insured service.
  - Emergent 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 administration 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 monitoring and evaluating how the current and future federal programs impact the Yukon Dental Program.
- As part of our evaluation plan, we will be reaching out to Yukoners to receive their feedback on what is working and what could be improved with the program.

**Federal program:**

- In March 2022, the Liberal Party of Canada and Canada's New Democratic Party reached an agreement, which includes the promise to launch a new dental care program for low-income Canadians.
- The federal plan launched for children under 12 years of age in 2022; it is set to launch for children under 18, seniors, and people with disabilities in 2023; and for all eligible Canadians in 2025.
- In September 2022, the federal government announced they will provide payments up to \$650 per year for each child under 12 years in families without private or employer supported insurance and an adjusted net annual income under \$90,000.

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- This coverage was available as of December 1, 2022, and will cover expenses retroactive to October 1, 2022, until June 30, 2023.
- These payments serve as a stop-gap measure meant to cover low-income families while the government works out a permanent plan. This current model is not expected to impact eligibility to Government of Yukon programs.
- In April 2023, the federal government outlined plans to develop and administer a national dental program in place of the current funding model.
- In May 2023, the federal government asked provinces and territories if they would like to opt out of the program. Yukon chose not to opt out as there was insufficient information at the time.
- While the Government of Yukon has implemented our territory-wide dental program, the department is keen to understand in greater detail the federal plans and how they might impact public dental programs in the Yukon. Work is ongoing on this front.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

Fall 2023

### Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Health and Social  
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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.
- Increased pressures resulting from the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers continue to be mitigated through a variety of approaches to reduce patient and staff impacts and to prioritize critical care.
- As part of our work to implement the *Putting People First* report, we are taking steps to align health services across the territory, like transitioning Yukon EMS from Community Services to Health and Social Services.
- This transfer is an organizational change intended to align the health services across the territory in a way that enables care to be more person-centered and more effectively integrated to promote seamless care transitions.

#### Key facts:

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$12.3M** (\$12,301,000) for EMS. This is a net zero transfer between the department of Community Services and the Department of Health and Social Services
- There are 87.3 FTEs and 98 Community Responders providing EMS across the territory.

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- Currently, operations including Air Ambulance Services, ground operations, the Paramedic Specialist Clinic at 405 Alexander and the Paramedics Response Unit are fully staffed in Whitehorse.
- EMS experiences shortages of Community Responders in all Yukon communities from time to time.
- EMS continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all Communities.
- In 2022, EMS in Yukon communities had full coverage 68% of the time, while EMS in Dawson City had full coverage 86% and Watson Lake had full coverage approximately 95% of the time or higher.
  - EMS had full coverage in Dawson City 74% of the time in July and August 2023
- As of July 2023, EMS coverage is supported by the following number of responders in each community:
  - Beaver Creek – 7 community responders
  - Carcross – 7 community responders, 2 recruits
  - Carmacks – 8 community responders
  - Dawson City – 6 community responders, 1 recruit, 2.0 full-time and 4 AOC employees
  - Destruction Bay – 11 community responders
  - Eagle Plains – 1 community responder
  - Faro – 6 community responders, 1 recruit
  - Haines Junction – 12 community responders, 1 recruit
  - Marsh Lake – 5 community responders
  - Mayo – 7 community responders
  - Pelly Crossing – 3 community responder
  - Ross River – 5 community responders

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- Tagish – 2 community responders
- Teslin – 8 community responders
- Watson Lake – 9 community responders, 4.0 full-time, and 4.0 AOC employees
- Whitehorse – 22.0 full-time, 3.0 part-time, 14.0 AOC, and 6 casual employees.
- There are 3.0 FTEs supporting the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter at 405 Alexander and 2.0 FTEs are part of the paramedic response unit.
- There are 14.0 full time, 2.0 part time, 3.0 AOC, and 1.0 casual employee also supporting our air ambulance services.

**Ambulances:**

- In the 2023-24 budget, we provided **\$628K** (\$628,000) to support ambulance replacements for Emergency Medical Services.
- These new ambulances will be introduced into the EMS fleet and deployed to communities based on an assessment of clinical and operational requirements.
- The EMS fleet (Ambulances) are deployed throughout Emergency Medical Services and moved routinely throughout the territory, based on capacity and need.
- During the 2022 calendar year, there was one occurrence of an air ambulance response due to no local coverage.
- As of March 31, 2023, there have been zero occurrences of an air ambulance response due to no local coverage.



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**Billing:**

- Emergency Medical Services is aware of some instances of concerns with billing from communities when local emergency services attended calls with EMS.
- EMS values these important partnerships across the Yukon and is working with communities to resolve these concerns.
- Moving forward, EMS is collaborating with local fire departments to ensure clarity amongst providers, and to enter into Memorandum's of Understanding.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is also aware that some Yukon communities are considering introducing a "call out fee" to bill the Government of Yukon for EMS calls that are responded to outside of the municipality.
- At this time, no "call out fees" have been formally introduced by Yukon communities.

**Communities:**

- EMS provides both ground and air transports for patients in communities requiring care at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- In Dawson City and Watson Lake, EMS uses a combination of Government of Yukon Paramedics and local Community Emergency Medical Responders.

**Watson Lake:**

- In Watson Lake, there are 4 full-time Primary Care Paramedics working seven days a week (day time), as well as 4 AOC positions and 7 active Community Responders in Watson Lake.

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- Due to increased call volumes in Watson Lake, Yukon Emergency Medical Services shifted to a new staffing model at the Watson Lake ambulance station, through a hybrid of both 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, which can be broken out into full-time, part-time, or auxiliary-on-call positions, provide coverage in Watson Lake for more than 10 hours per day, seven days per week.
- Watson Lake had 98% coverage in 2021 and 97% coverage in 2022. In the month of January 2023, we had 100% coverage. Coverage means a local ambulance is staffed at that time.
- Watson Lake EMS call volume has stayed relatively stable over the past 3 years with an average of approximately 420 calls per year.

**Dawson City:**

- As of September 2023, Dawson City is supported by 6 community responders, 1 recruit, 2 Primary Care Paramedics and 4 AOC employees.
- Dawson City had 98% coverage in 2021 and 86% coverage in 2022.
- Between January and June 2023, EMS coverage in Dawson City was 72%, in July 2023 it was at 76% and in August 2023 coverage was at 75%.
- In 2022, Yukon EMS in Dawson City responded to 295 calls.
- Our government is aware of a proposal from community members in Dawson City to establish a Dawson Ambulance Association.

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- We understand this group's intent is to provide non-government EMS services when the government funded service is unable to provide a ground service – or a “back-up service.”
- I encourage community members who are interested in delivering emergency medical services to work with EMS as volunteers to deliver greater coverage for the area.
- A representative from EMS has agreed to meet with the group.
- Further review is required to understand this proposal, its feasibility, legislative requirements, and the legal, ethical and humanitarian risk to responders and patients.

**Delayed Medevacs due to Redeployments:**

- EMS provides both ground and air transports for patients in communities requiring care at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- There have been no instances where a medevac was delayed due to medevac staff being redeployed to cover an EMS gap in a community.
- Yukon EMS staff and Community Responders are dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the territory.

**Documentary Series:**

- Big Time Decent Productions is currently filming the TV series Yukon Rescue with the Dawson City Fire Department and Yukon First Nations Wildfire.
- The production company is working with Economic Development's Media Development unit for permission to film with other emergency service providers.

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- On October 29, 2023, crewmembers from the TV series were following the fire department and attended the scene of a motor vehicle accident in Dawson City.
- The TV crew began filming the general surroundings and the Dawson City Fire Department from a distance.
- Yukon EMS attended the scene and asked the film crew to stop filming, which they did.
- Once notified that there was a fatality related to the accident the film crew left the scene. It is estimated the crew was on the scene for a period of 10 to 15 minutes.
- The production company notified the Department of Economic Development's Media Development unit of the incident on the same day.

**Drug Testing:**

- Yukon EMS is working to advance a range of harm reduction initiatives in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency.
- 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 1,500 home drug checking kits throughout the Yukon. Kits are available at 405 Alexander, through the Paramedic Response Unit in Whitehorse, and in several communities.

**Shortages:**

- At times, incident volume exceeds available resources. This is not unique to the Yukon and can happen with all Emergency Services locally, nationally and internationally.
- We have a variety of ways to manage these situations and reduce the impact to patients and prioritize critical care. To ensure coverage, EMS

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may reposition people and ambulances, call on the nearest units, use medevac, 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.
- EMS maintains recruitment and new staff orientation programs and is always looking for community responders and professionals. EMS recruitment strategies have allowed the services to bolster capacity.

**Code Red/Yellow:**

- Code Reds occur when EMS services have been requested and there are no ambulances immediately available to respond.
- Code Yellows occur when EMS transport resources are not available for call assignment and no patient transport requests are pending. Although Code Yellows may occur in the Yukon, there is no formal data on their occurrence.
- Code Reds are tracked in Whitehorse, but not in other communities where ambulance dispatch is done through Community Nursing.
- Between January 2022 and October 2023, there were approximately 235 Code Reds. The impacts of these instances vary, and EMS continually monitors code reds to ensure mitigation strategies are in place.
- A Code Red is more likely to occur in Whitehorse due to higher call volume and inter-facility transfers.

**MOUs:**

- EMS is currently developing a Memorandum of Understandings with Dawson City that will set expectations and clarify roles for emergency

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services within communities. 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.

**Training:**

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services offers a variety of training methods and programs aimed to increase recruitment and retention of community responders, and to ensure support for community responders throughout the territory.
  - This includes a training centre, mobile training unit, high fidelity training mannequins, on-line learning platform, local training nights, certificate courses, and two dedicated clinical educators; in addition to peer support groups and mental wellness and supports with a focus on psychological health and safety of our first responders.
- Yukon EMS also provides accredited core training and certification for Emergency Medical Services Community Responders through the Emergency Care and Safety Institute Emergency Medical Responder Program.
- Yukon Emergency Medical Services has 2 clinical educator positions dedicated to education and training. These positions provide in person and virtual training in Whitehorse and communities.
- EMS hosts bi-weekly training nights for Community Responders.
- EMS recently increased monetary compensation to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage Community Responder attendance and support biweekly training nights.

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- Community Responders are reimbursed \$19.08/hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area. This includes an additional offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books and accommodations.
- Community Responders receive an Honoraria (pay) for the commitment to EMS provided for on-call services, training and all operational deployment. We are currently exploring opportunities to expand the Honoraria for Community Responders
- 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 and recognition and community engagement.

**Community Nursing Support:**

- As a result of local, national, and global shortage of health care providers, EMS works to reduce gaps in coverage including providing support in instances of Community Nursing service reduction.
- During service reductions or health centre closures, emergency services are available to residents and Yukoners are encouraged to contact 911.
- During service reductions, EMS will work with local Community Responders to enhance coverage and can expand services by positioning paramedics directly in a community.

**Transfer to HSS:**

- On April 1, 2023, EMS was officially integrated into the Department of Health and Social Services' Community and Primary Care.

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- Community and Primary Care and EMS both play a vital role in caring for Yukoners and this integration will improve service delivery to Yukoners.
  - The integration of EMS into Community and Primary Care will leverage the exceptional performance and care provided by EMS staff while fostering closer collaboration amongst staff, community responders and health care providers at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Community Nursing, as well as other units.
  - Emergency Medical Services paramedics are helping mitigate the impacts of nursing staff shortages at Community Health Centres, by expanding coverage in affected areas when required.

**Approved by:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services\_\_\_\_\_  
[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* as well as recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.
- As part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement, our government has committed to providing support for fertility treatments and surrogacy.
- 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 3 years to Queer Yukon to hire a health care navigator position to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners by removing barriers and helping to identify pathways to safe, inclusive, and supportive gender-affirming care.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the Yukon Women's Midlife Clinic are supported by 3 Nurse Practitioners who receive funding from the department.

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**Abortion:**

- Therapeutic (surgical) and medical (medication) pregnancy termination options are available to Yukoners at no cost.
  - Mifepristone is available in Dawson City, Watson Lake and in Whitehorse via the Opal Clinic.
  - Surgical abortions are performed at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Pregnancy termination options are available up to 15 weeks plus 3 days of pregnancy. For pregnancies over this threshold and up to 24 weeks, services are available through the British Columbia Women's Hospital, which are covered through the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan or by Non-Insured Health Benefits.
- In 2018, our government publicly funded Mifegymiso for medication abortions.
  - Mifegymiso is a Health Canada approved combination product containing mifepristone and misoprostol that are taken in sequence.

**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 also provides a variety of conception control products to clients of the clinic.

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- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners in accessing sexual and reproductive health care and will continue to assess access to birth control.
- The development of a new program will require careful planning, research, and engagement with Yukoners and our health system partners.

**Fertility Treatments:**

- Fertility treatments and procedures such as in vitro fertilization are not insured health services and are not eligible for coverage.
- Work is currently underway to include Yukoners who travel to access fertility treatments under the Medical Travel Program.
- The Department of Finance is exploring opportunities that would support Yukoners with the cost of fertility treatments.
- We are working to make these supports available as quickly as possible, while recognizing initiatives of this size will take some time.
- We look forward to providing an update to Yukoners once further information is available.

**Gender-Affirming Care:**

- The Yukon continues to demonstrate leadership 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 services that are not insured health services under the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan.
- Yukoners can access services including tracheal shave, facial feminization, body contouring, vocal surgery and hair removal without having to pay out-of-pocket or in advance.
- For Yukoners seeking testosterone therapy, the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program provides coverage for injectable testosterone.
  - If a patient is interested in a topical testosterone gel, their primary health care provider may submit an appeal to the Director of Insured Health Services with a rationale demonstrating this as a preferred treatment method.
- We remain committed to working with our partners, including community organizations, to advance gender-inclusive health and social care.
- 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.

**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 most Government of Yukon public washrooms in Whitehorse and we are in the process of making

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products available in all buildings in Whitehorse and across all Yukon communities.

- The Council of Yukon First Nations has provided a supply of period products to several non-government organizations and is ensuring these products remain available for distribution.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations is providing cabinets and period products to Yukon First Nations offices.
- Yukon University's campus housing is working to make period products available in communal bathrooms.
- The federal government has also announced that as of December 15, 2023, federally regulated employers will be required to make period products available in the workplace at no cost.

**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.
- Worldwide there is also an increase in congenital syphilis, which has been identified in the Yukon this year.
- 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:

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- 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 highly effective, often with just one dose of an 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]

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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* recommendations highlighted opportunities for improvement in insured health coverage and adjacent services and we are making progress.
- We continuously explore 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.

**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.
  - So far, 32 people are enrolled in 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.
  - So far, 1,043 people are receiving benefits in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

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- 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.
  - So far, 6,663 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, dental care, medical supplies and medical travel.

**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.
- 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 to work with a health care provider to switch to a biosimilar included in the initiative to maintain coverage.



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- 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.
- Insured health coverage also includes travel for medical treatment, air or ground ambulance services, and the costs of related services such as hospital transfer, escorts and return transportation charges.
- 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.

**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*.

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**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.
- 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, including certain conditions in the following categories:
  - Congenital Metabolic Diseases
  - Congenital Chromosomal Diseases
  - Congenital Development Defect Sequellae
  - Chronic Collagen and Vascular Diseases
  - Neurological Disease
  - Cardiac Diseases
  - Respiratory Diseases
  - Gastrointestinal Diseases
  - Renal Diseases
  - Dermatological Diseases
  - Chronic Infective Diseases
  - Endocrine Diseases
  - Cancer
  - Psychosis
  - Diseases of the Blood

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- Osteoporosis
- 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.
  - 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.

**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*.

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**Allergies, EpiPens and Baby Formula:**

- 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.

**New Health Care Cards:**

- The first Supplementary estimates for 2023-24 includes an increase of **\$775K** (\$775,000) for the issuance of new health care cards.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working towards signing a contract with a provider and we look forward to sharing specific details about the rollout of these cards with Yukoners once this work is complete.
- The initial issuance of new cards will be completed with staggered expiration dates. Post the initial issuance, cards will be reissued every five years.

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- 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.
- Security features will include anti-scan patterns, multiple laser receptive layers, unique Document Control Numbers matched to the associated individual's records paired with highly secure inventory management provided by the card producer.
- 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.
- 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.

**PrEP:**

- PrEP is a pre-exposure prophylaxis medication provided as a preventative treatment for those at risk of contracting HIV.
- In recognizing the importance of funding preventative treatment, our government introduced coverage for Yukoners to access PrEP medication free of charge.
- Yukoners can receive a prescription for PrEP from their health care provider and receive the medication from a pharmacy.
- For those living in remote communities, prescription can be filled at a pharmacy and mailed out, prescription renewals can then occur through health care providers at the clinics in the communities.

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- The medications for PrEP are listed on the Yukon Drug Formulary.

**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 to access the services they need, including medical travel and care transition.

**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 these Yukoners to do so.
- Our program provides support for insured health services that are not available in someone'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 fiscal 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 September 15, 2023, during the 2023-24 fiscal year Insured Health Medical Travel has supported:
  - 1,887 in-territory medical travel cases

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- 1,796 out-of-territory medical travel cases
  - 197 in-territory medevacs
  - 231 out-of-territory medevacs
  - Booked 4,984 scheduled air flights
  - Processed 4,149 subsidy forms.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Insured Health Medical Travel supported:
  - 4,278 in-territory medical travel cases
  - 3,179 out-of-territory medical travel cases
  - 436 in-territory medevacs
  - 418 out-of-territory medevacs
  - Booked 8,952 scheduled air flights
  - Processed 9,136 subsidy forms.
- During the 2021-22 fiscal year, Insured Health Medical Travel supported:
  - 4,081 in-territory medical travel cases
  - 2,671 out-of-territory medical travel cases
  - 373 in-territory medevacs
  - 451 out-of-territory medevacs
  - Booked 7,523 scheduled air flights
  - Processed 8,163 subsidy forms.

**Care Transition:**

- The department and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have recently started a quality improvement initiative called Bridges to Home with the British Columbia Patient Safety and Quality Council focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home, and community.



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**Intercommunity Travel:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has been identified as the department responsible for leading work on intercommunity transportation.
- Work on this has been an interdepartmental initiative involving Health and Social Services, Justice, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and Community Services. Collaboration and coordination of work is important to reduce redundancy and ensure current gaps are addressed.
- Identification of existing programs and services operated by various governments and agencies is underway. This work, along with exploring additional options and solutions, will assist in forming the recommendations put forward by Health and Social Services.

**Residences:**

- Recommendation 2.6 of the Putting People First report is to create residences 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 considering short-term solutions such as reserving a block of hotel rooms in these cities.
- In August of 2023 we surveyed Yukoners who had traveled in the previous 18 months for medical services to ask about their accommodations.

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- We received more than 1,800 responses to the survey. Results indicated that 27% of those who traveled to Whitehorse stayed with friends or family. In Vancouver, 12% stayed with friends or family.
- We have issued a Request for Information in Whitehorse and Vancouver to explore opportunities with hotels that would meet the needs of Yukoners travelling for medical services.
- The survey results and Request of Information will inform how to better support Yukoners in their accommodations who travel for medical services.

### Medical Travel to Washington state:

- Yukoners who travel out-of-territory to access specialized diagnostics or treatment not available in the Yukon may have to travel to British Columbia and other provinces in Canada for these services.
- We understand that some BC Cancer patients are being sent to Washington state for treatment.
- The Medical Travel Program has not received any requests or been advised of any potential impacts to Yukoners.

**Approved by:**

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

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Specialized Medical Treatments**Health and Social  
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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.

**Canada Blood Services Outage:**

- On October 22, 2023, Canada Blood Services experienced technical difficulties during a planned IT network upgrade.
- Unanticipated issues occurred that resulted in technical and connectivity disruptions impacting the collection and manufacturing of blood, platelets, and plasma, and resulted in the activation of an Amber Phase for platelets on October 23, 2023.
- More than 1,000 people who had been willing to donate blood or plasma nationally were unable. Stem cell registry recruitment and programs supporting interprovincial organ sharing were also disrupted.
- Most applications, equipment and sites that were previously experiencing inaccessibility have returned to normal. Canadian Blood Services is continuing to work diligently to repair the outstanding issues.
- The National Emergency Blood Management Committee declared the return to Green Phase for platelets on October 26, 2023.

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- Whitehorse General Hospital was made aware of the issue and there were no impacts to patients in the territory.
- Blood donor clinics in Canada, with the exception of Québec, are run by Canadian Blood Services, a not-for-profit organization that operates at arm's length from government.

**High-Cost Drugs:**

- 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.
- 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.
- Federal funding is not guaranteed beyond 3 years.

**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.
  - Staff are developing a workplan to address the needs of the Renal Care Working Group.

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- 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 September 12, 2023, True North Respiratory is completing an average of 57 spirometry tests per month.
  - True North Respiratory receives an average of 66 referrals a month.
- Wait times for spirometry appointments have improved.
- As of August 31, 2023, of the 150 active referrals, 31% have appointments scheduled.
  - All patients on the active waitlist have been contacted at least once in an attempt to schedule an appointment.
- An oversight committee meets quarterly and has implemented improvements for triaging referrals based on priority.
- Turnaround times for interpreting the tests by a respirologist are between one and three weeks.
- Patients requiring full pulmonary function tests for diagnosis and assessment of respiratory disease will be referred out-of-territory.

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- True North Respiratory strives to coordinate appointments with other trips into Whitehorse for clients from communities as testing in the community is no longer being conducted due to safety requirements.

**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 program clients.
- Immediate access to oxygen is provided through Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits 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.
- 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.
- 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

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- 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 F508del mutation.

### 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.
- **Children's Cold Medication Shortages:**
  - Early this year and last, 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.
  - In the past, Yukon hospitals and pharmacists have mitigated some of these issues by using and supporting the use of alternative products where possible.
- **Antibiotic shortages:**
  - Canada is expecting a shortage of Amoxicillin, Azithromycin, Cefprozil, Cefuroxime, Cephalexin and Clarithromycin during the 2023-24 respiratory illness season.

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- 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.
- There is a stable supply and inventory of antibiotics, however an increase in demand for antibiotics is predicted going into the respiratory illness season which may lead to antibiotic shortages across Canada.
- **Ozempic Shortages:**
  - We recognize the importance of Ozempic for patients living with diabetes and we are addressing the shortage with our federal, provincial and territorial partners.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - Health Canada is working with the manufacturer and other stakeholders to help ensure patients get the medicine they need.
  - The manufacturer is experiencing delays in shipments due to global supply constraints and increased demand for the product.
  - The manufacturer has recently advised Health Canada that the shortages and intermittent delays will last longer than initially



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expected. Shortages of the 1mg pen, 0.25 mg and 0.5mg will continue until March 31, 2024.

- Pharmacists are being encouraged to limit refill prescriptions to a 30-day supply and for patients to contact them in advance of their supply running out.
- 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:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Land-Based Healing**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 explore opportunities to address areas such as aftercare and the role of a land-based healing treatment centre.
- As part of our initial work to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, 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.
- 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*.
- 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

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components into its youth programming and Intensive Treatment programs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

- Much of this work aligns with the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report and our commitments in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.

#### Key facts:

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$400K (\$400,000)** for the Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation.
- We have supported five existing land-based healing initiatives in the territory and will continue to work with First Nations governments and partners to support any new land-based healing initiatives.

#### Initiatives:

- Our government is committed to supporting funding requests related to land-based healing in which Yukon First Nations governments and First Nations-led organizations design, lead and implement their own unique programming that is appropriate to community.
- 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 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.

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- 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 engage in the Roots of Hope initiative.
- We have 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.
  - 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.
  - The camp was hosted on the traditional territory of Champagne and Aishihik First Nation.

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**Land-Based Healing**

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- The camp included a variety of experiential activities, land-based activities, cultural knowledge from a Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Elder, and cultural programming from traditional knowledge contractors.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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### 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.
- The staffing of each hub is continuously reassessed based on several factors.
- 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.
- As of September 11, 2023, there were 1,210 active clients accessing services through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs.

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**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 through Whitehorse.
- 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.
  - 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

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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.
- A counsellor from the Carmacks hub visits Pelly Crossing weekly, and a counsellor visits Faro and Ross River on a biweekly basis.

#### 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.
  - 1 community counsellor is currently on leave. We are actively recruiting this replacement.
  - All other positions in the Dawson City hub are currently filled.
- 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 mental health support worker and a clinical counsellor travel to Old Crow on a monthly basis to connect with children and youth as well as adult clients.



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- 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.
- The department is working directly with Vuntut Gwitchin Government to coordinate trauma training for Vuntut Gwitchin staff as well as coordinate mental wellness services from various agencies that provide support to the community.

**Haines Junction/Carcross hub:**

- The Haines Junction hub provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, and Carcross.
- 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.
- Recruitment has started for an additional counsellor that will be connected to Carcross clients as well as the Referred Care Clinic in

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Whitehorse. This position will support clients in Carcross who need access to medical care and Opioid Treatment Services through the Referred Care Clinic.

- 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. These positions are currently filled.
  - The mental health nurse position for the Watson Lake 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 Watson Lake and Teslin to provide services in-person.
  - Recruitment is underway for an additional mental health support worker, 1 youth-focused support worker and 1 community counsellor.
- An additional community counsellor is dedicated to Teslin. This counsellor lives and works in the community of Teslin.

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- 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.
- 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.

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- 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 works 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 (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 has previously worked with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness department and a number of youth from Dawson

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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:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Services (Whitehorse)**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:**

- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$25.7M** (\$25,719,233) in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- Between January 1 and August 31, 2023, there have been:
  - 214 registered clients enrolled in Opioid Treatment Services.
  - 724 registered clients in Opioid Treatment Services and/or the Referred Care Clinic.
  - 119 people admitted into Intensive Treatment Services.
  - 734 people admitted into Withdrawal Management.

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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 Junctions/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. We are also piloting the hire of a youth mental health nurse.
- Counsellors are regularly scheduled in high schools and other agencies throughout Whitehorse.
- In addition, other group programs are offered to support children, youth, and families.
- Group programming covers topics such as: understanding ADHD, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for adolescents, parenting support, emotional and behavioural regulation, and anxiety and depression groups.

**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 as well, including;

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- 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.
- The clinicians at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services also provide many groups on an outreach basis, including 2 perinatal mental health groups for new mothers. These groups ran in fall 2022 and spring 2023 and 2 additional groups have been funded for 2023-24.
- Yukoners can book a Rapid Access Counselling appointment to learn more or register.

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



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**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 3 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 want to continue in a longer-term intensive program. Is a continuous intake five week program.
  - 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.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services piloted two intensive treatment programs at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in fall 2022 and spring 2023. Both these programs were highly successful, and another program is running in fall 2023. Weekly programs are also offered every morning at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

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**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; psychoeducation groups; social and wellness groups; medication support, medication reviews and monitoring; 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.
- Early Psychosis Intervention Program is for people under the age of 30 who have received a new diagnosis of bipolar, schizophrenia or psychosis, which is a part of the Psychiatric Outreach Program.
- Both programs accept self-referrals or referrals from professional supports, friends, and family.
- Mobile Crisis Response Unit – Car867 is a program in partnership with the RCMP to provide RCMP and mental health nursing responses for mental health and wellness related 911 calls.
  - Between October 2022 and September 20, 2023, the unit has responded to 281 calls.
- 1 position is hired, and work is underway to recruit a second position to run seven-days a week. Currently, the program runs five days per week.

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**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. Physicians may prescribe evidence-based Opioid Agonist Therapies such as methadone, Suboxone, Sublocade and Kadian to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings for opioid drugs.
  - Safer supply may also be prescribed through Opioid Treatment Services.
  - Referral Care Clinic with Opioid Treatment Services is staffed by 3 general practitioner physicians per day.
  - There are also 15 funded positions, including 1 Registered Nurse Team Lead (vacant), 4 Outreach Licensed Practical Nurses (1 vacant), 3 Nurse Practitioners (1 vacant), 3 Community Mental Health Registered Nurses (0.5 vacant and 1.0 on leave), 2 outreach support workers, and 2 Medical Office Assistants (1 vacant).

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**Overdose Outreach Team:**

- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has established an Overdose Outreach Team through Opioid Treatment Services.
- The Overdose Outreach Team provides harm reduction education, supports clients with system navigation and provides connections to other services related to substance use.
  - The team also provides supports to individuals who have recently experienced drug overdose.
- The Overdose Outreach Team includes support workers, social workers, and community engagement workers.
- The Team currently operates Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm.
- Yukoners can call (867) 333-9717 to be referred to the Overdose Outreach Team.

**Supervised Consumption Site:**

- The Supervised Consumption Site was opened in Whitehorse on September 30, 2021, in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions.
  - At launch, the Site was open Monday to Friday from 10:30 am to 7 pm and closed on statutory holidays.
- Our government worked with Blood Ties Four Directions to adjust the hours of operation at the Supervised Consumption Site to run Monday to Friday from 12:00 pm to 9 pm.
- As part of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we have increased funding to support work to expand the operating hours, which are anticipated to be between 10:30 am and 9:30 pm, seven days per week, including holidays.

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- We look forward to expanding these services in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions once the agreement is finalized and additional staff are hired.
  - Recruitment for the additional 3.5 FTEs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is expected to commence in the near future.
- As of August 31, 2023, there have been 6,312 visits to the Supervised Consumption Site since it opened in 2021.
- 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.

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- Services include medical assistance with withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming and referral to ongoing treatment, counselling and social work supports, therapeutic groups, and other support services.
- There are 14 beds available for adults and 4 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 Licensed Practical Nurse position is filled and recruitment is underway for 3 additional positions.
- Bed availability is variable as they are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.
- During the 2022 calendar year, Withdrawal Management supported 953-bed requests.
  - There was a total of 947 bed requests for adults and 6 bed requests for youth.
- In 2022, a total of 1,650 bed requests were delayed admissions.
  - 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.
- As of November 2023, there have been 864 bed request admissions at Withdrawal Management.
  - In 2022, we averaged 76 admissions per month.
  - In 2023, we are averaging 91 admissions per month.

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- 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.

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

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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 Pandemic Response Plan.
- The Office of the Auditor General has acknowledged our government's efforts in managing an effective COVID-19 vaccine rollout, identified opportunities for improvement and provided us with recommendations to assist in the future. We have accepted these findings and are committed to acting upon these recommendations.
- We are committed to working with Yukon First Nations to ensure we are prepared to work together when the need arises.

**Key facts:**

- In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we budgeted **\$3.545M** (\$3,545,000) for Health Systems Rationalization to support the department to build long-term resiliency to remain responsive to COVID-19 and other public health needs.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Government of Canada provided **\$1.9M** (\$1,900,000) through the COVID-19 Safe Restart Agreement for Wastewater Surveillance initiatives. We have carried forward **\$952K** (\$951,881.88) to 2023-24 to support continued monitoring efforts.



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- The Council of Yukon First Nations was previously responsible for this initiative, which has shifted to the One Yukon Coalition following discussion with the Council of Yukon First Nations.
  - Wastewater surveillance for respiratory diseases is ongoing in Haines Junction and Whitehorse.
- As of September 22, 2023, a total of 112,814 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered throughout Yukon service delivery locations since January 1, 2021.
- Paxlovid was approved in the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in January 2022. Since then, 565 doses have been dispensed to our partners in care across the Yukon as of September 2023.

**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*.

**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

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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 to finalize data-sharing agreements.

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

- We have 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.
- 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.

**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 government with important recommendations to support future vaccination 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.

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- 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 early 2024 and is expected to be released in early 2025.
  - We are also 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 working with interested First Nations to establish and finalize data-sharing protocols and agreements. This will allow us to better co-ordinate our efforts in an emergency.
  - We are considering a new electronic Inventory Management System that will add real-time inventory counts across all facilities that store publicly funded vaccine products.

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**Masking Requirements and Vaccination:**

- The Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health has not recommended a masking requirement in the Yukon or in any health care facilities.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health continues to closely review evidence related to respiratory illness and measures to protect against the spread of illness.
- Masks are not currently required in Yukon hospitals or Community Health Centres, and patients, staff and visitors can voluntarily wear a mask, if desired.
  - Patients are requested to wear a mask if they have respiratory symptoms when seeking healthcare. Staff and visitors are requested to stay home when sick.
- As part of enhanced infection prevention and control measures to protect residents and staff, continuous wearing of a medical mask is now required for visitors, volunteers, contractors, and staff in areas affected by declared or suspected outbreaks.
  - For areas not affected by an outbreak, wearing a medical mask is a personal choice.
  - The mask and hand hygiene stations remain in place at the entrances to long-term care homes. Additional personal protective equipment is available to areas affected by outbreaks. We ask that everyone continue to perform hand hygiene upon entering a long-term care home and stay home when feeling sick, even if symptoms are mild.
- Yukoners are encouraged to stay up to date with their seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. The 2023-24 vaccine rollout

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successfully launched on October 16, 2023, for high-risk individuals and will be open to all Yukoners six months and older on October 23, 2023.

- Seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccine are available through participating local pharmacies, and we encourage Yukoners to schedule an appointment with a pharmacist.
- Yukoners can also access the seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccine through their Community Health Centre or the Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD location by appointment or with some limited walk-in capacity.
- Long-term care residents will have vaccines provided in-home by continuing care peer immunizers.
  - Whistle Bend Place will provide vaccinations on October 16 and 17, 2023.
  - Copper Ridge Place will provide vaccinations on October 18 and 19, 2023.
  - Thomson Centre will provide vaccinations on October 20, 2023.
  - Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson will provide vaccinations during the week of October 16, 2023, by public health nurses.

**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

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Whitehorse and Haines Junction and discussion are underway with other communities.

- This program is dedicated to the collection and sharing of data with Yukon communities.
- 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:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

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### Vaccinations

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#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to access services and to expanding preventative treatments through the implementation of *Putting People First* and *Aging in Place*.

#### Key messages:

- Immunizers continue to deliver an unprecedented number of vaccines across the Yukon to meet the public health needs of Yukoners.
- 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:

- So far in 2023, Yukon health care providers have administered an estimated 15,863 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 2021 and September 22, 2023, a total of 112,814 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the Yukon.
- So far in 2023, a total of 1,115 Shingrix vaccines have been administered this year.

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## Vaccinations

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### Access to vaccines:

- As of September 27, 2023, the vaccine clinic has relocated from the Yukon Convention Centre to the NVD Place Mall at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Ogilvie.
  - 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 will offer mass vaccination programming for flu and COVID-19 and will also offer 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.
- Vaccine prioritization is informed by the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, staffing capacity, and the evolving demand for COVID-19 vaccines.
- 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.
- 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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**Flu vaccines:**

- Between October 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, a total of 12,937 flu vaccines were administered.
- During the 2023-24 vaccination campaign, we will be 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.
- COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines will be available to Yukoners in a phased approach.
  - On October 16, 2023, high risk Yukoners, including those who are 65 and older and those who are immunocompromised will be eligible for the flu vaccine.
  - On October 23, 2023, all Yukoners six months and older will be eligible to receive flu vaccine.
  - Yukoners can update their COVID-19 immunization if they are eligible. On October 16, 2023, high-risk Yukoners can receive the vaccine followed by all Yukoners on October 23, 2023.
- The new COVID-19 XBB vaccine will be used during the fall vaccine rollout starting October 16, 2023.
- Yukoners who are due for both vaccines are strongly encouraged to receive both during the same appointment, which is both safe and convenient.
- Booking appointments,
  - Yukoners can book appointments in Whitehorse at [Yukon.ca/en/appointments](https://yukon.ca/en/appointments), this includes a link to participating pharmacies.
  - Residents in rural communities can make an appointment by calling their local health centre.

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- Yukoners can also walk into the nearest health centre. Walk-ins are available but may result in higher wait times.
- Long-term care residents will have vaccines provided in-home by continuing care peer immunizers.
  - Whistle Bend Place will provide vaccinations on October 16 and 17, 2023.
  - Copper Ridge Place will provide vaccinations on October 18 and 19, 2023.
  - Thomson Centre will provide vaccinations on October 20, 2023.
  - Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson will provide vaccinations during the week of October 16, 2023 by public health nurses.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is formulated to combat the Omicron XBB variant and is approved for individuals as young as six months.

**HPV vaccine:**

- In April 2017, our government expanded eligibility for the HPV vaccine.
- 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.

**RSV vaccine:**

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- As of September 12, 2023, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has not provided guidance on the delivery of RSV vaccines.
- Our CMOH and the Yukon Immunization Program are closely monitoring next steps with our national partners and other jurisdictions.
- We do not anticipate a vaccine for RSV will be available this fall.

**MPOX (Imvamune):**

- Between July 23, 2022 and June 30, 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.

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- Publicly funded Shingrix vaccines are available for eligible Yukoners through local pharmacies and Community Health Centres.
  - 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.
- Travel vaccines can be administered by participating pharmacists and through a private vaccine clinic in Whitehorse for a fee.
  - Pharmacists cannot administer vaccines to children under the age of five.
  - Children under the age of five can visit the private vaccine clinic.

#### Youth and childhood vaccines:

- Community Nursing continues to deliver 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.
- 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,

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rotavirus, Tdap, varicella, pneumococcal conjugate,  
meningococcal c conjugate, and measles, mumps and rubella.

- School-based clinics will be offered once again during the 2023-24 school year.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Environmental Health Services**Health and Social  
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**Government priority:**

- Environmental Health Services is committed to responding to the public health and safety needs of Yukoners by ensuring that consistent standards are applied to all areas where the health of Yukoners may be affected.

**Key messages:**

- Environmental Health Services follows Regulations under the *Public Health and Safety Act*.
- Environmental Health Officers review applications, provide education and conduct inspections to ensure food safety, drinking water quality, and appropriate methods of sewage disposal.
- Permits and applications are issued and approved based on evidence-based review and investigations.

**Key facts:**

- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Environmental Health Services completed approximately 750 Environmental Health Inspections.
- Environmental Health Services can be contacted at 867-667-8391 or toll-free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8391.

**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*.
- 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.

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**Lodgepole Lane property:**

- The Department is aware that the building located at Lot 194 in Porter Creek, also referred to as #2 Lodgepole Lane, has been associated with several complaints to Environmental Health Services, the City of Whitehorse Bylaw Services, RCMP, and the Whitehorse Fire Department for at least ten years.
  - In August 2020, following a joint inspection, the building was declared unfit for human habitation.
- We understand that, despite the various orders from different levels of government to close and/or remediate issues, the building continues to present a health and safety risk.
- Environmental Health Services is not actively working on this file but will continue to work with the City of Whitehorse and the RCMP to address the environmental health concerns regarding the building to eliminate health and safety concerns as the need arises.

**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 current and future water 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 some time to complete and additional information will be known once the design phase begins.

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- 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 advisories and next steps.

**Approved by:**

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

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



**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****Aging in Place Action Plan**Health and Social  
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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 to remain in their own homes and communities.
- As we 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 aligning with other recommendations such as those in the *Putting People First* report.
- We continue to work collaboratively with partners, including First Nations 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.

# Session Briefing Note

**Fall 2023**

## Aging in Place Action Plan

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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.
- A total of 22 actions are operational (39%) and 34 actions are in progress (61%).

### Progress:

- Our government recognizes that while some initiatives could be considered complete, we are committed to continuously improving services and supports for seniors and Elders.
- There are 22 recommendations operational, we have:
  - Established an Aging in Place Seniors' Advisory Committee in February 2021.
  - The Department of Community Services has worked with Elder Active and the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon on various programs to support community-led seniors' organizations in rural communities.
  - 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-

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Yukonnaise to provide seniors' specific information and programming to French speaking Yukoners.

- Integrated intergenerational programming with pre-school aged children and long-term care homes to bring children and seniors together.
- Initiated intergenerational programming with school-aged children with educational materials being developed regarding residential schools.
- Through the Home Repair Program, the Yukon Housing Corporation provides funding to homeowners to repair or upgrade their residence, which includes a non-repayable grant of up to \$30,000 to retrofit homes to address mobility concerns.
- The Home Repair Program also provides up to \$10,000 for approved homeowners to fix serious, unexpected and dangerous situations requiring immediate repair.
- Maintained high-quality infection control practices in long-term care homes.
- First Nations 101 training is mandatory for Continuing Care staff and 2SLGBTQIA+ awareness and inclusion education is also available to staff.
- Completed demographic projections in 2022 to assist with planning for the future of long-term care delivery in the Yukon. Work is underway on updated demographic projections, which will be completed in 2023.
- Through the Home Health Monitoring services, Yukoners can access health monitoring and support from home, as well as

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- access one-on-one virtual consultations with health care providers through video conferencing.
- Supported the expansion of the Handy Bus service in Whitehorse seven-days per week, and are providing funding for a second bus.
  - Implemented the Shine a Light on Dementia program to provide education and training to support caregivers. Entered into an agreement with the Alzheimer Society of BC to further expand dementia supports.
  - 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.
  - Implemented a virtual exercise program, available to seniors enrolled in the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
  - Opened Wind River Hospice House at Whistle Bend Place in June 2020
  - 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 can't be provided through Yukon's Home Care Program or by other care providers.
  - Successfully embedded a Palliative Approach to Care model in all Whitehorse long-term care homes.
  - Engaged Yukoners in a review of the Travel for Medical Treatment Program.
  - Completed an internal review of Senior Services and Adult Protection Services and are implementing the recommendations,

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Adult Protection Services is now a stand-alone unit, and funding is being provided to the Seniors' Information Centre to reduce the duplication of services previously offered by Seniors Services. Work to address other recommendations is ongoing.

- o Implemented best practices for ongoing vaccination schedules for seniors and Elders, such as publicly funding Shingrix for all Yukoners aged 65 to 79, offering the Fluzone High Dose vaccine to eligible long-term care residents and individuals over the age of 65, and ensuring long-term care residents were amongst the first Yukoners eligible for COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots.

**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 seniors and Elders to access a full continuum of housing options that are adequate, suitable and affordable.

**Key messages:**

- Housing affects health and we want to ensure all seniors 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 will enable more Yukoners to live independently for longer, reduce pressures on long-term care, and close gaps in the seniors' housing market.
- The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are collaborating on the development of Seniors' Supportive Housing to meet a significant and growing gap in the housing continuum for seniors.

**Key facts:**

- According to Canadian Institute for Health Information, over the next 20 years, Canada's seniors' population aged 65 and older is expected to grow by 68%.
- In the Yukon, the population of those over the age of 75 is expected to triple over the next 20 years.
- Normandy Living - the Yukon's first private seniors' supportive living community, opened in December 2022 with 84 modern suites.

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- We provided funding for an additional 4.0 FTEs for Home Care staff to support eligible residents of Normandy to access services and supports.
- The Government of Yukon has leased 26 affordable Seniors' Supportive Housing units 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.

**Accreditation:**

- 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.
- 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.

**Normandy Living:**

- Normandy Living is a privately owned modern five-story building in the Takhini subdivision and offers a range of inclusive Seniors' Supportive Housing rental options including studio, one bedroom and two-bedroom homes, all of which are offered for lease.
- Normandy Living offers support services such as meals, weekly housekeeping, laundry services, programming, and 24/7 security.

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- Eligibility for the 26 affordable units at Normandy is based on income testing and results of a Clinical Frailty Scale assessment.
- The **Yukon Home Care Program** is available to all Yukoners who meet program eligibility criteria, including Normandy Living residents.
- Yukon Housing Corporation tenants will pay 25% of their income towards rent and 40% towards services including meals, housekeeping, and laundry.
  - On average, clients will pay \$1,420 a month for services and rent combined.
- The Yukon Housing Corporation is paying \$4,126 total for a studio suite and \$4,472 for one-bedroom units, and then recovering rent and services geared to income from their tenants.
  - Cost for services per resident is \$2,990 per month, with Yukon Housing Corporation covering an average of \$2,116 and clients paying an average of \$874.
  - The full monthly rental cost for a studio suite is \$1,136 per month with Yukon Housing Corporation covering an average of \$852 and clients paying an average of \$284.
  - The full monthly rental cost for a one bedroom is \$1,482 per month with Yukon Housing Corporation covering an average of \$1,111.5 and clients paying an average of \$370.5.
  - The cost associated with Normandy Living is roughly 20% of the cost of housing individuals in long-term care homes.
- Normandy Living was supported with private investments of more than \$1.8M, approximately \$34.5M from the Government of Canada through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, \$4.5M from



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the Government of Yukon through the Yukon Housing Corporation, and \$500,000 in development incentives from the City of Whitehorse.

### Vimy Heritage Housing Society:

- Vimy Heritage Housing Society is continuing 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.
- Vimy Heritage Housing Society received a grant of seed money from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that allows the society to continue important design and planning work on its seniors housing project.
- 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.
- The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is holding Lot 511 at the intersection of Leota Street and Casca Boulevard, in the Whistle Bend Subdivision, to support Vimy to complete business and feasibility planning.
  - The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement includes providing funding to the Vimy Heritage Housing Society comparable to similar projects to build non-profit seniors' housing.
- The current proposal from the Vimy Heritage Housing Society is to develop a 73-suite building with parking and green space.

**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 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 done 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 August 2023, our Disability Services Unit had 263 children and 148 adults receiving services, with an additional 25 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 (Challenge), Options for Independence, and Teegatha'Oh Zheh.

- We also support the FASD Action Plan, which includes annual funding of **\$500K** (\$500,000) to advance priority actions.
- The Yukon Supplementary Allowance is paid to every Yukoner who is eligible for assistance and excluded from the labour force. These include 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 August 2023, an average of 54% of social assistance cases (477 out of 881 households) were in receipt of the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
  - In 2022-23, an average of 52% of social assistance cases (480 households) were in receipt of 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 otherwise be supported to live at home may be eligible for long-term care. Eligibility is assessed once applications are received. The Yukon's long-term care homes offer accessible living and programming inclusive of a variety of cognitive and physical disabilities.

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

- The department 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.
- This policy was implemented in January 2022.
- 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.
- In November 2022, we updated the In-Home Child Care financial support and renamed it Individualized Supervisory Care supports.
- Consistent with the In-Home Child Care financial supports, Individualized Supervisory Care funding offsets the costs of hiring a service provider if out of home childcare services are not an option due to the high care and supervisory needs of the child with a disability.
- Funding for Individualized Supervisory Care is specifically for children who cannot attend programs, such as daycare or afterschool care, due to the child's significant care and supervisory needs.
- 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.

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- For this to apply, funding recipients must demonstrate that the care provided is beyond what is expected of a typical parent-child relationship.

#### 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.
- As we begin to reconfigure and enhance the existing Disability Services program, we are leveraging our key resources to provide clients with focused, individualized support.
- 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.
- We are also working on other *Putting People First* recommendations through cross-departmental initiatives 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

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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.

**Service Capacity:**

- Since 2018-19, there has been a 33% increase in Disability Services clients.
- At the end of 2018-19 fiscal year, there were 309 Disability Services clients. As of September 2023, there were 411 clients.
- Resident pediatricians started providing services to Yukon children in 2019. This allowed families of children with severe disabilities and complex comorbidities to access necessary services in-territory who would otherwise need to move.

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder:**

- The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder 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

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work across departments and collaboratively with community partners to harmonize supports for people with FASD.

- In 2019, we committed **\$500K** (\$500,000) per year to support the implementation of the action plan.
  - Projects funded since 2019 include:
    - 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 committed to 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 ongoing work done by 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 work 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:**

- As of June 30, 2023, there were 75 children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
  - 93.3% of these children identified as Indigenous.
  - 66.7% of these children identified as Yukon First Nation.
  - 65.3% of these children reside in Whitehorse.
  - In December 2021, there were 84 children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services. 70% of these children self-identified as Yukon First Nation.



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- As of June 30, 2023, there were 117 children residing with extended family members, as opposed to being in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
  - 94.9% of these children identified as Indigenous.
  - 80.3% of these children identified as Yukon First Nation.
  - 47% of these children reside in Whitehorse.
  - In December 2021, there were 146 children residing with extended family members.
- During the 2021-22 fiscal year, our government matched the **\$677K** (\$677,000) in existing federal funding to the eight Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs in the Yukon and funding is ongoing.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a 10% rate increase for community and extended family caregivers was provided. This is over and above the annual inflation rate that is normally provided. The rates are as follows:
  - Whitehorse: \$44.04 per day
  - Old Crow: \$81.20 per day
  - Rural Communities: \$47.14 per day
- In addition to actively recruiting for social workers, we have created 10 new child protection social worker assistant positions. These assistants will support social workers with administrative duties.

**Annual Report:**

- 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.

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- Over the course of five years, the percentage of children requiring out-of-home care staying with extended family doubled. In 2022, approximately 61% of children in out-of-home care were placed with extended family, compared to 28% in 2017.
- This change is part of the larger organizational shift towards placing children and youth with extended family, corresponding to a 40% drop in the number of children and youth in the care of the Director. Similarly, there has been a 24% 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.
- 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.

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**Coroner's Inquest:**

- We recognize the death of Kaiya Stone-Kirk as a tragic event.
- In principle, the Government of Yukon agrees with the recommendations provided by the Coroner into the death of Kaiya Stone-Kirk and are working with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations and other stakeholders on how to improve the safety of infants and children in the Yukon.
- The Government of Yukon has responded to these recommendations and is also committed to further reviewing these recommendations with the Council of Yukon First Nations and other stakeholders.
  - Many of these recommendations also pertain to Family and Children's Services. We are pleased to have respond to the recommendations regarding Family and Children's Services directly from the program, including the actions already implemented, and actions that will be undertaken moving forward.
- The recommended actions that have been implemented through Family and Children's Services include:
  - providing a safe sleep policy to guide child protection social workers;
  - providing in-person training on these safe sleep policies; and
  - providing policies on supplying new and approved sleep equipment to parents and caregivers.
- Recommendations that are in development include:
  - creating policies on Extended Family Care Agreements that speak to safety plans in place for short-term urgent situations,

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which is concurrent with the review of the *Child and Family Services Act*;

- creating a course in collaboration with First nations that must be completed by caregivers who work for Family and Children's Services;
  - establishing resources and creating rosters of people in each community, Liard First Nation as a priority, that can provide temporary care to a child; and
  - considering Yukon First Nation community safety officers when RCMP officers are required.
- We will continue to review the remaining recommendations with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations and other stakeholders consistent with our collaborative work to implement the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*.
  - 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 also has safe sleep conversations with expectant parents and delivers training to parents and caregivers on safe sleep practices.
  - We do not comment on specific cases, but continuously examine our processes with the safety of children being our priority.

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**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 of First Nations children on reserve and in the Yukon.
- 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.**
  - The Agreement is **\$23B, which has been 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.
  - There are some legal steps that must take place before compensation will be distributed, including seeking approval of the Federal Court of Canada. A distribution protocol will be developed to outline specifics on who will be eligible for compensation and how they can apply, which also must be approved by the Federal Court.
- The *Federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, came into force on January 1, 2020.

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- 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.

**Implementation of Child and Family Services Act:**

- After Bill no. 11 was passed by this Legislative Assembly, the CFSA Implementation working group was created to develop the key policies required to implement the CFSA amendments.
- All 14 Yukon First Nations were invited to join the working group, as well as the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate and the Privacy Commissioner who had “observer” status to ensure that we respected children’s rights, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP) and Health Information Privacy and Management Act (HIPMA) concerns, respectively, during our policy discussions.
- The department’s key program policies required to implement the critical legislative changes were completed in time for the CFSA to come into force on November 30, 2022.
  - Although the working group has completed these key program policies, we continue to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations to complete additional work and updates.
- We continue to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the federal government at the Trilateral Table to discuss long-term child welfare reform to promote the wellbeing of Yukon First Nations children and families.

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- There has been great collaborative work between the federal government, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations on reforming the child welfare system in Yukon. It is clear how important this work is by the level of dedication by individuals, organizations and governments.

#### Prenatal Nutrition Funding:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to building upon the eight Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs, expanding access to prenatal care, and ensuring that vulnerable women and infants have access to prenatal services by identifying opportunities to establish new supports in the future.
- In 2021-22, we matched federal funding of **\$677K** (\$677,000) to support the existing Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program in the Yukon. Funding is matched on an ongoing basis and supports the eight programs currently operating in the territory.
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs operate in the following communities:
  - Carcross: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Dawson City: Healthy Families, Healthy Babies
  - Teslin: Teslin Prenatal Program
  - Watson Lake: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Whitehorse: Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre - Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Whitehorse: Teen Parent Centre Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
  - Whitehorse: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Prenatal Nutrition Program

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- Whitehorse: Les EssentiElles.
- These programs support families and assist in setting the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities.
- Starting in the 2023-24 fiscal year, we are providing the Council of Yukon First Nations with **\$150K** (\$150,000) over the next two years as a pilot for high-risk expectant parents who self-refer to Family and Children's Services.
- This project will support wraparound service through the Council of Yukon First Nations that will provide outreach, parenting support and any other advocacy support required for expectant people who are at-risk of becoming involved with protection services after the baby is born.
- The Government of Yukon has provided **\$175K** (\$175,000) in financial support to the Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon for the 2023-24 fiscal year.
  - This funding matches the federal funding that Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon receives through the Community Action Program for Children.
- The Partners for Children program provides a variety of services to promote healthy childhood development, including parenting groups, workshops, trainings, and support for childcare centers.

**Staffing:**

- The current vacancy rate for social workers within Family and Children's Services is 66%.



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- We are in process of hiring Child Protection Social Worker Assistants to support and assist social workers with administrative and financial tasks and services related to child welfare matters.
- 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.
- 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 child and family services and programs, but may not have the child protection services required to protect a child from harm.
- Staff retention is difficult due to vacancy numbers and inability to support long periods of leave and temporary assignment requests.
- Current child protection staff are responsible for after hours support. Current staffing levels have resulted in an increase in after hour scheduling.

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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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### 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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- I would like to thank all our partners for their crucial work to address emergency meal and food provision needs and broader food security issues.
- 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.

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### Food Security and Programs

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#### 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 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 **\$132K** (\$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 2022-23 fiscal year, 15 projects were supported by food literacy grants. These provided food literacy opportunities for over 300 Yukoners with over 200 individuals from rural Yukon.

#### Non-Governmental Organizations:

- The Sally and Sisters program is now administered by Yukon Aboriginal Women's council and funded by the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and the federal government. This program is a sober environment which has been a key factor in the work that is being done by the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. A similar

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low barrier meal program is being run at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.

- 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.
  - At 405 Alexander three meals 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 3:00 pm to 3:45 pm.
  - Lunch for women and children on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at Sally and Sisters, and on Wednesday and Friday 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.

**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.

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- 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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.
- At this time, a review of the Meals on Wheels program is planned to make new recommendations on the program. This review is scheduled for late 2023 to early 2024.

**Transfer Payment Agreements:**

- We also 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 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.

**Bagged Meals from the Family Hotel:**



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- In spring 2020, COVID-19 public health measures forced emergency meal programs through the Sally & Sisters program and 405 Alexander Street to temporarily halt or reduce services.
- In response, the department entered into an agreement with the Food Bank Society of Whitehorse in April of 2020 to October 2020 for the Society to distribute bagged meals to homeless and street-involved Yukoners as a precursor to the Meals-To-Go program from the Family Hotel.
- This arrangement was to promote social distancing at 405 Alexander, as one of the COVID-19 pandemic measures.
- The department entered into an agreement with the Family Hotel in November of 2020, which ended on November 30, 2022, at its scheduled end date and was not renewed, as recommendations for COVID-19 mitigation had evolved since April 2020.

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

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon remains committed to ending and preventing homelessness in the Yukon and working closely with partners.

**Key messages:**

- We continue to work in partnership with Yukon First Nations, other governments and the non-government sector to address homelessness in the territory and help people access the services they need.
- Our government 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.
- 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 to Yukoners.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment and efforts to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.

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**Key facts:**

- As of July 21, 2023, there were 269 people on the By Name List experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse, 34 of whom were children.
- The majority of those experiencing homelessness are in temporary shelter such as couch surfing, shelters, hotels/motels, public institutions like corrections and treatment centers or are in transitional housing.
- 80% of those on the By Name List are experiencing chronic homelessness.
  - This means approximately 188 individuals have been homeless for at least six months or have been homeless 18 out of the previous 36 months.
- From January to March 2023, there was an average of 66.6 shelter guests per night across the Yukon according to the department's Quarterly Housing Report.
  - In 2021-22, there was an average of 58.5 shelter stays per night across the Yukon.
  - In 2022-23, there was an average of 72.1 shelter stays per night 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 households per month.
- Safe at Home conducted the fourth Point-in-Time Count in Whitehorse on April 18, 2023, which was conducted over a 24-hour period. 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.

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- In 2023, there were 197 individuals experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.
- In 2021, there were 151 individuals.
- In 2018, there were 195 individuals.
- In 2016, there were 219 individuals.

**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.
- We also 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.

**Hotels:**

- We are aware that some Yukoners rely on or choose to live or stay in hotels.
- Between April and August 2023, an average of 2.4% of social assistance clients had a hotel stay each month.
  - In 2022-23, an average of 3.7% of cases had a hotel stay each month.
  - In 2021-22, an average of 8.1% of cases had a hotel stay each month.
  - In 2020-21, an average of 8.5% of cases had a hotel stay each month.

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- 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/motels play in our housing continuum.
  - Health and Social Services is a participant in these discussions.

**Housing First:**

- Housing First is a modern approach to addressing poverty proven to be cost-effective. Its focus is to provide unhoused people immediate access to permanent homes without pre-conditions such as sobriety.
- The Cornerstone Development opened summer 2022 in Whitehorse and provides supportive living and accessible housing.
- Yukon Housing Corporation is undertaking a Housing First project in Watson Lake and will be supported by the Department of Health and Social Services.
  - The 10-unit Housing First Complex 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 complex will have 8 studio apartments, 2 one-bedroom apartments, have common areas and space for staff offices.

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- 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.

**Housing with Services Stock:**

- Housing with services stock includes beds and units funded by the Department of Health and Social Services and does not include Yukon Housing Corporation, Grey Mountain affordable housing stocks or long-term care beds.
- There are **101 shelter beds** available in the territory.
  - There are 54 beds at 405 Alexander, 15 beds at Kaushee's Place, and 11 beds at Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Youth Emergency Shelter in Whitehorse.
  - There are 11 beds at the Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake, 5 beds at Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Jëje Zho, and 5 beds at the Dawson Women's Shelter in Dawson City.
- There are **19 units for second stage housing for women and their children** fleeing violence in the territory.
- There are **57 supportive housing units** available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.
  - 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.

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- Supportive housing is an important part of our housing continuum, as it delivers person-centered services in the most cost-effective manner.
- This includes 20 units at 405 Alexander, 16 units at the Wood Street Housing First location, and 21 beds at Cornerstone.
- There are **31 approved caregiver homes** for adults with disabilities.
- There are **41 supportive housing beds** available in Whitehorse for those with disabilities.
  - This includes 3 beds at Max' Place, 4 beds at Granger Haven, 14 beds through Options for Independence, 3 beds at Aurora House, 5 beds at Aspen group home, 10 beds at Saint Elias group home, and 2 residences for Yukon Review Board clients.

### **OAG Report:**

- On May 25, 2022, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report on housing in the Yukon.
- The department accepts all 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, including consideration for enhanced government alignment.
- 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.

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- 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 is the result of more than three months of engagement with housing partners. It was shared with the Office of the Auditor General in late November 2022 and released publicly.
  - This plan outlines how our government will address the recommendations from the OAG report, timelines, and status.
  - 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 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



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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.
- 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:**

- 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.
  - As of July 21, 2023, there were 269 people on the By Name List experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.
- In February 2023, the Safe at Home Society began providing short-term supportive housing at the former Coast High Country Inn.
- 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.

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- 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.
- The Safe at Home Society offers tenants with access to a variety of 24/7 on-site supports, including support with locating permanent housing.
- We will continue to work with the Safe at Home Society as we plan for the future. The current agreement will run until March 31, 2024.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

**Fall 2023**

## 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.
- In response to the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement, engagement on the Yukon's Social Assistance rates started in late summer 2023 with clients on Social Assistance.
- Reviewing 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 helps 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 2023-24, we budgeted **\$22.8M** (\$22,762,000) for legislated grants related to social assistance in the territory.
- In 2023-24, we budgeted **\$4.7M** (\$4,717,000) in total for the Yukon **Seniors Income Supplement** and **Pioneer Utility Grant**.

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### Income Supports (Social Assistance)

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- In 2023, there was an increase in the Consumer Price Index of 6.4% in Whitehorse. As of November 1, 2023, there will be a 6.4% increase to basic assistance rates.
  - 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) were in receipt of the **Yukon Supplementary Allowance**.
  - In August 2023, there was an average of 881 social assistance cases (households), comprising an average of 1,219 recipients (individuals).
    - An average of 54.1% of social assistance cases (477 households) were in receipt of the **Yukon Supplementary Allowance**.
  - In 2021-22, there were 1,350 **Yukon Seniors Income Supplement** recipients and 2,146 **Pioneer Utility Grant** recipients.
  - Between January and June 2023, there was a monthly average of 1,225 **Yukon Seniors Income Supplement** recipients.
  - As of January 17, 2023, there were 2,260 **Pioneer Utility Grant** payments issued for 2022.
  - In 2017-18, the total average number of clients receiving social assistance was 928, including 817 in Whitehorse and 111 in communities.
  - In 2022-23, the total average number of clients receiving social assistance was 911, including 780 in Whitehorse and 131 in communities.
  - So far in 2023-24, the total average number of clients receiving social assistance is 902, including 770 in Whitehorse and 133 in communities.

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### Income Supports (Social Assistance)

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#### Guaranteed Annual Income:

- *Putting People First* recommendation 5.7 recommends 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, health and social research programs, and others.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is conducting preliminary research regarding a guaranteed annual income program.
  - As part of this work, we have 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:

- The Yukon's Social Assistance rates are among the highest in the country. According to a March 2023 study on Canadian income assistance programs, our earned income exemptions, which support people re-entering the workforce, are also greater than many other jurisdictions.
- 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 is also increased by 6.4%, effective as of October 2023

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- The Yukon's Social Assistance rate increases over recent years include: a 1.9% increase in November 2019, a 1.6% increase in November 2020, a 1.9% increase in November 2021, and a 5.7% increase in November 2022.
  - Financial assistance through Yukon's Social Assistance program vary 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 will be \$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.
  - 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 is \$604.
  - Our government provided Social Assistance and Seniors Income Supplement clients with a one-time \$150 top-up payment to address inflation and the rising cost of living in November 2022.
  - This top-up was issued with November 2022 benefit payments.
    - To further address the impacts of inflation on Yukoners, we provided Pioneer Utility Grant recipients for the 2022 calendar year with a one-time 10% top-up payment, which was distributed in February 2023.
  - The provision of **Discretionary Aid** within the Yukon's Social Assistance program is an available option for those currently in receipt of Social Assistance and may be used to address situations of transient need.

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### **Income Supports (Social Assistance)**

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- 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 inflationary relief measures, the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement includes implementing 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 who are age 65 or older in the year of the grant can apply and may apply every year thereafter.
  - Applications are accepted between July 1 and December 31.
  - Eligible applicants receive one payment, typically within a few weeks 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 expenses than singles.
- The Pioneer Utility Grant increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in January each year.
- To address the high rate of inflation in 2022, we provided Pioneer Utility Grant recipients with a one-time top-up of 10% in February 2023.
- The maximum amount available for the Pioneer Utility Grant in 2023 is \$1,253.56 in Whitehorse and \$1,337.48 outside Whitehorse.

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- 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 Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement is scaled based on the applicant's Guaranteed Income Supplement rate.
- An additional \$808,000 has been budgeted in the 2023-24 Main Estimates to reduce inflation and interest-related financial pressures for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients.
- Monthly inflation relief payments are targeted to Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients. These additional payments will be about 39% of the Income Supplement.
  - The maximum monthly inflation relief payment is \$119 per month.
  - The additional relief payments are being applied from April 2023 to March 2024.
- Following the October 2023 Consumer Price Index adjustment of 6.4%, the maximum monthly payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients will be \$307.08.
  - The maximum monthly payment, including the additional inflation relief payment will be \$426.08.



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- The inflationary relief payment targeted to recipients of the Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement of 38.75% is comparable to the average increase of 37.13% of costs for fuel (61.1%) and energy (18.9%) between October 2021 and October 2022.
  - Approximately 1,100 Yukoners are receiving Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement payments.
  - For the month of October 2023, adjustments and regular supplement amounts will be provided in two distinct payments.
  - We recognize that receiving these payments in two installments may be a concern for recipients, and we are working to ensure Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients are notified quickly.
  - Delivering these payments in two installments will ensure recipients receive the full amount from all adjustments during the month of October while ensuring our systems are aligned to support this payment moving forward.
  - Going forward, Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement payments will be issued as a single payment each month.

**Rising Rental Costs:**

- Our government recognizes the importance of affordable, suitable and stable housing for Yukoners and is committed to the implementation of Coordinated Access to housing for homeless and precariously housed Yukoners.
- The shelter allowance for clients in receipt of Social Assistance is provided by regulation and varies by household size and location and is indexed to inflation.

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- Recipients may also qualify for additional assistance for fuel and utilities (for a single person living in Whitehorse \$453 to \$604 per month, as of November 1, 2023, depending upon the season).
- According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' April 2022 Yukon Rent Survey, the Yukon's median rent was \$1,300 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.
- The department is a participant of 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 August 2023.
  - The focus of this initial engagement is on Schedule A and B rates which prescribe (or authorize) the amount of assistance eligible Yukoners may receive. 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.
- 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.

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- We are finalizing a plan to respond to the *Putting People First* recommendations related to income supports.
- 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:**

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

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

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****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 are working with stakeholders including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, physicians and other health care professionals using MEDITECH Expanse (previously referred to as the 1Health project) to advance health care technology across our health system.
- We appreciate the adaptability and hard work of all of the Yukon's health and social service providers as we implement these changes.
- Yukoners are at the core of these important changes to our health care system.
- The ongoing implementation of MEDITECH Expanse supports a more seamless care experience for Yukoners as they navigate our health care system.
- We are also working to develop a Digital Health Strategy for the Yukon to inform where future investments should be made, ensure readiness and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon, and set the path for digital transformation in the Yukon.

**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.

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****MEDITECH Expanse and Digital Health Strategy**Health and Social  
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- Community Nursing is primarily paper based.
- Our remote setting, reliance on out-of-territory specialists, and pandemic experience has increased the need and use of telehealth services.
- A digital health strategy can help us work through these challenges and support work on:
  - improving access,
  - improving capacity,
  - creating efficiency, and
  - strengthening our partnerships in the delivery of care.

**MEDITECH Expanse:**

- MEDITECH Expanse is an important component of an integrated health information system that connects 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 are able to 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.

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2023****MEDITECH Expanse and Digital Health Strategy**

Health and Social Services

**Digital Health Strategy:**

- As work continues on the MEDITECH Expanse, a Digital Health Strategy is required to inform where future investments should be made, ensure readiness and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon, and set the path for digital transformation in the Yukon.
- A Digital Health Strategy can help with the current strains and pressures that the health care system is facing.
- In February and March 2023, we engaged with physicians, nurses, Health and Social Services staff and people with lived experiences on a Digital Health Strategy for the Yukon. Key themes from the engagement included:
  - Building Blocks for Digital Health Care Transformation
  - Existing Systems and Structures Challenging Digital Health Transformation in Yukon
  - Critical Voices we need to involve next.
- A Digital Health Strategy Steering Committee has been established and the Committee is working toward the creation of the Yukon's first Digital Health Strategy.

**System Security:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services participates in the Federal, Provincial, Territorial cyber security meetings on a weekly basis.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has weekly, quarterly and sometimes daily updates to our systems and contracts in place with cyber security partners.

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**MEDITECH Expanse and Digital  
Health Strategy**

Health and Social  
Services

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- 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, and 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]

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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, 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 and supports 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 committed to 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 also has internal strategies that include, but are not limited to, 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 newly graduated staff to enter into the Yukon Hospital Corporation's workforce

**Key facts:**

- In 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$93.64M** (\$93,637,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding.
- In 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) in Capital funding for Yukon Hospital Services.
- As of April 1, 2023, 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.
- In the first quarter of 2023-24, the Yukon's three hospitals have supported 10,915 emergency department visits (9,604 at Whitehorse General Hospital, 612 at the Watson Lake Community Hospital, and 699 at the Dawson City Community Hospital).
  - In 2022-23, the Yukon's three hospitals supported 41,743 emergency department visits (36,326 visits at Whitehorse

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General Hospital; 2,735 visits at the Watson Lake Community Hospital; and 2,682 visits at the Dawson City Community Hospital).

**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.
  - Patients who are receiving 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.
  - The First Nations Health Program is available to assist patients on a 24-hour basis and do all they can to help support discharge planning from the Emergency Department.
- 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 clients to access transportation back to their community, accommodation, and assistance with navigating hospital services.
  - Our government provides funding to United Way to operate the 211 service, which is available to assist Yukoners to connect

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with programs and available local services such as shelters and accommodations.

- The department and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have started the Bridge to Home quality improvement initiative with BC Patient Safety and Quality Council focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home and community.

**Emergency Room:**

- Our emergency departments are open every hour of every day to provide care to everyone.
- Most visits to the emergency department are appropriate for this setting, but 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 considered less urgent but are still appropriate uses of the emergency department.
- On average during the 2022-23 fiscal year, 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 in just over five hours (arrival to transfer to inpatient unit).
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has not been required to close the emergency department at any of the three hospitals in the Yukon.

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**Mental Wellness Unit:**

- Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$27.77M** (\$27,770,700) 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.

**Hospital Staffing:**

- Hospital staff continue to deliver excellent patient care and their efforts are ensuring Yukoners have access to hospital services.
- 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.

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- 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 first quarter of 2023-24, there were 26 permanent nursing vacancies throughout our three hospitals for a nursing vacancy rate of 16%.
  - 16 at Whitehorse General Hospital;
  - 4 at Dawson City Community Hospital;
  - 6 at Watson Lake Community Hospital.
- The majority of the vacant positions noted above are being filled by temporary employees and, when this is not possible, with short-term agency nursing staff.
  - Just because there is a vacancy, it does not necessarily mean a shift is going unfilled. A reported vacancy does not mean 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.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working with our government and other health system partners to address the health human resource

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crisis and develop strategies to support Yukoners to grow into health care careers.

**Hospital Staff Survey:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation's last Employee Engagement Survey concluded in February 2023.
  - Prior to this, the last survey was conducted in August and September 2020. Gaps in 2021 and 2022 were due to COVID-19.
- The survey is intended to provide employees with an opportunity to share feedback and identify opportunities for improvement at both departmental and organizational levels.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has historically not publicly released the results of these surveys, as this important feedback is used to contribute to organizational improvements and to support further staff engagement.

**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 work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association and physicians to address 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 remains a daily priority.

**Cardiology:**

- Cardiology services are provided by visiting specialists. Wait times and wait lists fluctuate based on the frequency of visits by the visiting specialist.
- Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by three visiting cardiologists who provide six visits per year, and two visiting pediatric cardiologists who offer two visits per year.
- As of summer 2023, a total of 439 individuals have received services through the program.
  - In 2022, a total of 1,531 services were supported through the program.

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- The wait time to access a visiting cardiologist is approximately six months. The target is two months.
- As of June 30, 2023, there are 329 individuals on the wait list to access these services (up from 280 during the previous year).
- 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 and hospitalist physicians, 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 has been 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” (DOD) 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.
- 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.



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- As occurred in 2008, the changing nature of the ways in which physicians practice and increasing complex needs in health care necessitate a shift in how inpatient care is provided and we are supportive of that shift.
- It is our understanding that the Medical Staff at Whitehorse General Hospital have agreed that come January, should there not be sufficient number of physicians who have been contracted to provide hospitalist services, some family physicians may need to resume providing inpatient care to support their own patients and those who are unattached to a family physician.
- In partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation an Expression of Interest has been sent out to local physicians to solicit interest. We are working with our partners to share this Expression of Interest across the country as well to fully resource the Hospitalist program.
- The current costs for inpatient physician insured health services is \$1.5M and the new costs for physicians is expected to be approximately \$2.6M.
- 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 shall 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

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consultation with allied health providers. Changing the model will also reflect the ways in which 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.
- A 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 continues with our commitment 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.

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- The reduction in services is to support the safety of patients during more complex or specialized procedures.
  - Providing complex infusions requires a planned and appropriately resourced program and are specialized due 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.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation came to this decision by placing priority on ensuring safe and quality care.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation undertakes regular reviews of programs and services should the circumstances change.
- 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.

**MRI:**

- Yukon hospitals follow national guidelines in triaging MRI referrals to ensure those with the highest need are supported first.
- As of September 30, 2023, a total of 1,349 MRIs have been completed during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
  - In 2022-23, a total of 3,198 MRIs were completed.

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- 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 September 30, 2023, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 40 days.
- Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 90 days as possible. As of September 30, 2023, these are being completed within 136 days.
- 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.
  - The challenges related to Health Human Resources and the availability of these sub specialized resources in Canada is challenging, however preserving access to this service is a priority.

**Mammography:**

- Yukon Hospitals provide both Diagnostic and Screening Mammography services (mammograms).
- Yukon Hospitals follow national guidelines for breast cancer screening.
- Currently, wait times are exceeding national targets.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 2,400 Mammograms.
- As of September 30, 2023, Yukon Hospitals have completed 1,622 Mammograms so far during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Diagnostic Mammograms aim to be completed within 7 days of referral and are being completed within target.

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- Annual & High-Risk Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 12 months. As of September 30, 2023, Annual and High-Risk Screening Mammograms are being completed within 16 months.
- Routine Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 24 months. As of September 30, 2023, Routine Screening Mammograms are being completed within 33 months.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to work with the Department of Health and Social Services in establishing a Memorandum of Understanding for Breast Cancer Screening Services. The intention of this Memorandum of Understanding is in part to provide appropriate funding to ensure mammography services are provided within nationally established wait times.

**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 a service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets plan.
- Access to services is based on level of need.
- Wait times for non-urgent services is approximately 10 months.
- When necessary, medical travel is available to Yukoners in communities who need to access these services in Whitehorse.
- Sexual, reproductive, prenatal and termination services are available through a number of General Practice Physicians.

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**Ophthalmology:**

- In 2019, we implemented a two-year plan to successfully reduce wait times for cataract assessments. This plan was extended to support managing wait times.
- We are meeting our target of completing cataract assessments within four months.
- We are working towards meeting our target of completing cataract surgery within six months. At this time, surgeries are being completed within 12 months.
- Between 2019 and 2020, a combined total of 870 cataract surgeries were completed.
- 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.
- As of summer 2023, a total of 175 cataract surgeries have been completed so far during the 2023-24 fiscal year.

**OR Capacity:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to plan for the future of Surgical Services at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation's resources and funding support up to 3,200 surgeries per year, including planned and unplanned surgeries.
  - At the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year, 3,841 surgeries were completed.
  - As of the second quarter year to date of 2023-24, a total of 2,157 surgeries were completed.

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- Between February 13 and March 31, 2023, Whitehorse General Hospital temporarily reduced the number of scheduled (elective) surgeries due to staffing challenges. These surgeries were rescheduled.
- We continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address the widespread pressures associated with the local, national and global health human resource crisis. A number of OR nursing vacancies are being filled using agency resources at a premium cost.
- 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.
  - As of June 2023, there have been two surgeries deferred due to inpatient bed capacity.

**Orthopedics:**

- The Yukon is currently supported by two resident orthopedic surgeons with additional coverage provided by locums.
  - The first resident orthopedic surgeon was introduced in 2017.
  - The second resident orthopedic surgeon was introduced in 2019.
- In 2017-18, a total of 28 joint replacement surgeries were completed in-territory.
- 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.
- As of the second quarter of 2023-24, there have been 46 total joint procedures completed, including 26 total hip and 20 total knee replacements.
- As of the second quarter of 2023-24, the cast clinic has supported 1,542 visits during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
  - In 2022-23, a total of 2,480 visits to the cast clinic were supported, which was more than any year prior.
- The orthopedic agreement currently allows for 100 total joint replacement procedures per year. This allocation has incrementally increased since introducing the program in 2017.
- In addition to scheduled orthopedic surgeries, they also provide urgent and emergency consultation and surgeries.
- The current wait time to access a total knee or hip replacement is between 15 and 21 months. As of October 3, 2023, there were 257 individuals on the wait list for a total knee or hip replacement.
- We have met with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the resident orthopedic surgeons to discuss wait times and access to orthopedic services.
- The Orthopedic Working Group consists of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the orthopedic surgeons. This Group is working together to assess program capacity and plan for the future.
- Orthopedic surgeries are triaged based on level of need with the most urgent care needs addressed first.



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- In some cases, the orthopedic surgeon may recommend that a patient be sent out-of-territory for care, if there are complicating or complex factors that require a level of care that cannot be provided in-territory.

### 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.

**Approved by:**

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

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

## Housing Issues

## Yukon Housing Corporation

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### Recommended response:

- There are challenges the Yukon's housing continuum, including:
  - a lack of affordable rental supply;
  - high house prices and mortgage rates; and
  - homelessness and a lack of access to housing with services.
- Exceptionally high building costs and rising interest rates are creating significant challenges for new housing projects, for both Yukon Housing Corporation and its partners.
- We continue working hard to move projects forward - through collaboration and strong partnerships - to provide relevant solutions to Yukoners' housing needs.

### Additional response:

- Our government is seeking to increase housing options across the continuum and to make housing more affordable for Yukoners. (See [Tab #0](#))
  - We continue to work to increase housing and land supply and to provide rental subsidies and support programs for homeowners to offer more affordable options for Yukoners.
  - Following the 2022 Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) report, the Corporation and Department of Health and Social Services continue to progress implementing the OAG's recommendations. ([Tab #09](#))
- 

### Context:

- On a square footage basis, contractors' bids for YHC projects have more than doubled in the last two years alone.
- The rental vacancy rate in the Yukon for all building types is currently 2.2 per cent (YBS Spring Rental Survey).
- The Banks 5-year average mortgage interest rate increased from 4.75 per cent in February 2022 to 6.24 per cent in May 2023 (Weekly Updates).

### Housing Issues

Yukon Housing Corporation

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#### Background:

- In 2022-23, the Yukon Housing Corporation lapsed 34 per cent of its revised capital budget.
  - This was largely due to cancellation and scaling back of projects being supported through the corporation's loans and grants programs.
- New housing projects led by YHC's partners – including the Safe at Home Society and the Vimy Heritage Housing Society – continue to face delays.
- The 5th and Rogers RFP received only a single application. It is currently under review.

Approved by:



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Colin McDowell  
A/ President, Yukon Housing Corporation

September 8, 2023

Date approved

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Our Clean Future Implementation**

**Tab 76**  
**Fall 2023**

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

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### **Recommended response:**

- Our Clean Future is the Government of Yukon's path to address the climate emergency.
- The strategy is continually being strengthened year after year as we assess our progress, review new research, consider the input of others and identify new and innovative solutions.
- We have committed to an ambitious target of reducing our emissions by 45 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030.
- We have also committed to ensuring the Yukon is highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030, because we know the North will face climate impacts.

### **Additional response:**

- It is important to look back on our progress to date and remain diligent in implementation when it comes to addressing climate change.
- We have legislated greenhouse gas emissions targets and associated reporting through the Clean Energy Act. (See EMR BN #31 / ENV #23)
- We launched the five-year Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership this year which will enhance the agriculture sector's resiliency and adaptation to climate change. (See EMR BN # 20)
- In collaboration with Yukon's public utilities, we exceeded our target to install seven megawatts of renewable electricity capacity through the Micro-Generation program by 2030. ( See EMR BN #37)
- We launched the Better Buildings program to offer affordable financing for energy retrofits on Yukoners' homes and buildings.

# **Session Briefing Note**

## **Our Clean Future Implementation**

**Tab 76**  
**Fall 2023**

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

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- We established a geohazard mapping program to understand risks from climate change to the Yukon's transportation corridors.
- We advanced emergency preparedness by progressing on 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 on developing flood maps for all flood-prone Yukon communities. Flood maps for the Southern Lakes, Carmacks, and Teslin will be published this fall and in early 2024. The next communities for flood hazard mapping will be Old Crow, Ross River and Dawson/Klondike, with work occurring in 2024-25.
- We completed the installation of a biomass heating system at Elijah Smith Elementary School in May 2023.

### **Third response:**

- Since the release of Our Clean Future in 2020, 43 actions have been completed, 87 are in progress and six are yet to begin.
- Although we have made progress on many of our commitments, there is still significant work required to meet our 45 per cent greenhouse gas emissions target reduction by 2030.
- We are working with industry to establish a mining emissions intensity target for quartz and placer mining operations.
- 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 work with experts, stakeholders and partner governments across the territory and beyond, to identify opportunities to accelerate and intensify our efforts to reach our ambitious targets.

# Session Briefing Note

## Our Clean Future Implementation

**Tab 76**  
**Fall 2023**

Environment and Energy,  
Mines and Resources

- We established the Yukon Climate Leadership Council to provide advice and perspectives to support us in meeting our greenhouse gas emissions targets. We are working to integrate the work of the Council directly into Our Clean Future and continue to implement existing actions that align with their recommendations.
- With the end of the second Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change in 2022, we are exploring how to continue mentorship opportunities on climate change for the important voice of youth.

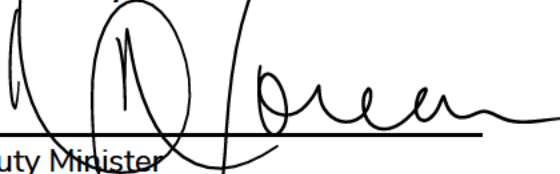
### Context — this may be an issue because:

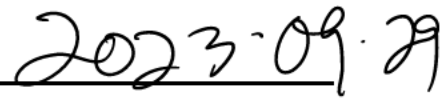
- Climate change is of high interest to Yukoners; they will want to know the government's progress in delivering on Our Clean Future commitments.


### Background:

- Our Clean Future was released on September 14, 2020.
- Our Clean Future contains 136 actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the Yukon to be highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030.
- The Our Clean Future 2020 Annual Report was publicly released on August 12, 2021. The 2021 Annual Report was publicly released on September 12, 2022.

Approved by:

  
Deputy Minister  
Department of Environment

  
Date approved

  
Deputy Minister  
Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

September 29, 2023

Date approved



# Session Briefing Note

## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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### Recommended:

- All Yukon households continue to see their budgets stretched by higher prices, with lower-income households often feeling the worst effects.
- At the same time, our government continues to track inflation and its impact on Yukoners, so that we can take steps to ease the burden, as we have been doing for the last year.
- The Government of Yukon continues to work hard to make life more affordable for Yukoners and has announced an extension of the temporary \$150 Inflation Relief Rebate to reduce the impacts that inflation continues to have on Yukoners.
- All non-government residential and commercial electricity customers will see a \$50 credit on their bills starting in November 2023 and running through December 2023 and January 2024.
- Several other measures included in the 2023-24 Budget are helping to make life more affordable for Yukoners.
  - funding for food in Yukon schools;
  - the timber harvesting incentive and a support program for commercial fuelwood harvesters and retailers to boost the fuelwood supply;
  - a quarterly top-up of \$150 to eligible recipients of the Yukon Senior Income Supplement;

## **Session Briefing Note**

### **Inflation and Affordability**

#### **(Corporate Note)**

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- o a \$100 monthly increase to eligible Social Assistance recipients;
  - o increasing the Yukon Child Benefit to \$867 per child and tying the benefit amount in future years to the rate of inflation; and
  - o a 10 per cent increase to monthly payments to caregivers with children in out of home care.
- The Government of Yukon has also made significant and ongoing financial investments in Early Learning and Child Care. The new Universal Child Care Program has reduced fees to less than \$10 per day on average.

#### **Additional response:**

- This government first established a strong record of making life more affordable for Yukoners with almost \$10 million-worth of inflation relief made available in last year's budget.
- This included more funding for Food Network Yukon, a 10 per cent top up to the Pioneer Utility Grant and rebates on the purchase of firewood.
- Yukoners are also receiving inflation relief from the federal government. This includes the accelerated Canada Workers' Benefit, the elimination of interest on student loans, a doubling of the GST tax credit, dental care and the Canada Housing Benefit for renters.



## Session Briefing Note

### Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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

- Inflation has fallen from many decade highs but remains elevated in Canada and in the Yukon.
- Energy prices remain elevated, and higher costs for food and shelter have become prominent drivers of overall inflation in recent months. These are all areas where higher prices are more obvious to consumers.
- Housing affordability has been a concern in the Yukon for several years.
- While remaining above historic norms, inflation of 3.8 per cent in September matched the national figure and was the lowest year-over-year increase in the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index (CPI) since January 2022 (3.7 per cent).

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#### Background:

##### Key government initiatives addressing inflation in the Yukon

- 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.
- A significant portion of the Government of Yukon's Five-Year Capital Plan is allocated to housing and land development in order to continue to help address the supply side of the housing equation.
- Yukon Housing Corporation is investing across all parts of the housing continuum, including increase to supportive housing, subsidized Community Housing, and rental subsidy programs.
- This builds on previous programs to improve affordability for Yukoners under previous budgets.
- Last year, the Government of Yukon announced almost \$10 million in new inflation relief measures targeted at vulnerable groups.

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## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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Finance

- The inflation relief rebate covered seven months at a total cost to Government of \$7.6 million. The inflation relief rebate automatically applied a \$50 credit to all residential and commercial ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy electricity bills.
- Yukoners on social assistance received a one-time payment of \$150.
- Seniors were supported by a 10 per cent top up in the Pioneer Utility grant and a one-time payment of \$150 to recipients of the Yukon Seniors Income Supplement.
- Yukoners who heat their homes with wood are eligible for a \$50 rebate per cord of fuel wood purchased from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023. Yukon also introduced the Timber Harvesting Incentive that gives commercial timber harvesters \$10 per cubic metre.
- The pilot program that gave an extra \$500 per month to Extended Family Caregiver agreement caregivers and foster caregivers was extended by 6 months to March 31, 2023.
- In June 2022, the Yukon government extended the Tourism Accommodation Sector Supplement and Tourism Non-Accommodation Sector Supplement programs, administered through Economic Development.

### **Yukoners are also supported by Federal Government affordability programs:**

- Accelerated Canada Workers Benefit payments and new minimum entitlement started in July 2023 (\$4 billion over six years, starting in 2022-23).
- All Canada Student Loans and Canada Apprentice Loans became permanently interest-free starting in April 2023 (\$2.7 billion over five years and \$556.3 million ongoing).
- GST Tax Credit: The GST tax credit has doubled for six months in the current benefit year. Additional payment will be provided in one lump sum, before the end of the benefit year. Targeted to individuals and families with low incomes

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### Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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(below \$39,826, and gradually phased out above that level). Single Canadians without children will receive up to an extra \$234, and couples with two children will receive up to an extra \$467 this year. Seniors will receive an extra \$225 on average.

#### Government initiatives which are indexed to inflation:

- Higher inflation impacts various government of Yukon programs through indexation, (indexation is updated each April unless otherwise noted), including:
  - o Tobacco Tax is updated each January
  - o Comprehensive Municipal Grant Regulation (with a one-year lag).
  - o The minimum wage.
  - o Subsidies for medical travel.
  - o Pioneer Utility grant.
  - o Residential rent caps.
  - o Seniors benefits (updated each October)
  - o Social Assistance Payments (updated each November)
  - o Student Financial Assistance (updated each school year)

#### Inflation outlook

- Following record annual inflation for Whitehorse of 6.8 per cent in 2022, the same increase seen nationally, monthly inflation has remained elevated in 2023. [September's inflation of 3.8 per cent was the lowest since January 2022 and matched the national increase. Prior to September, Whitehorse inflation had exceeded the Canadian figure for fourteen consecutive months.](#)

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### Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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- 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 have been key drivers of overall inflation in 2023. Stronger growth in these three components in the Whitehorse CPI, account for much of the difference between the overall levels of inflation for Whitehorse and Canada in recent months.
- The Bank of Canada continues to be aggressive in trying to get inflation under control. With a 0.25 percentage point increase in July, the Bank has raised the target for its overnight rate 4.75 percentage points since January 2022. At 5.0 per cent, the overnight rate is at its highest level since early 2001.
- Most forecasters still expect inflation in Canada will move towards historic norms over the next couple of years as the effect of higher interest rates move through the economy. Canadian inflation is expected to decline from near 7 per cent in 2022, to 3.5-4.0 per cent in 2023. Inflation in 2024 is expected to return to within the Bank of Canada's target range of 1-3 per cent.
- While inflation in Whitehorse has been stronger in recent months, it generally follows the national trend. Current expectations are for inflation to come in at 5.5 per cent in 2023, before falling to 2.5 per cent in 2024.

#### Carbon Taxes and Grocery Prices

- The effect of the carbon tax on CPI has contributed to inflation, but only modestly and mostly through the direct effect on fuel prices.
- According to the Bank of Canada, the direct effect of carbon tax is adding 0.15 percentage points to inflation this year.

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- An economist at the University of Calgary<sup>1</sup>, estimates that accounting for indirect effects brings this impact to 0.2 percentage points.
- For food in particular, the entire \$65 per tonne carbon tax increases monthly spending on groceries by at most \$20 per month, and likely closer to \$5 per month after accounting for emissions allowances provided by the federal Output Based Allocation system.<sup>2</sup>
- Overall, food price increases appear to be predominantly driven by other factors as prices have increased across North America independent of the implementation of a carbon tax.
- In the US, with no carbon tax system in place, food prices have increased by 26 per cent since the carbon tax came into effect in Canada in January 2018. In Canada the increase has been a similar 28 per cent.
- Whitehorse recorded an 18 per cent increase in food prices since January 2018 while Urban Alaska reported a 28 per cent increase.

### INFLATION RELIEF ACROSS GOVERNMENT

#### Programs currently in place:

##### Tourism and Culture:

#### Community Tourism Destination Development Fund

- In October 2022, the Department of Tourism and Culture announced the creation of the Community Tourism Destination Development Fund, which is slated to run for an initial 3-year term.
- The new annual funding program is available to local businesses, First Nations governments, First Nation Development entities, municipalities and not-for-profit

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<sup>1</sup> Trevor Tombe

<sup>2</sup> Energy and Environmental Policy Trends: Indirect Carbon Tax Costs Reduced By Policy Design, Kent Fellows and Trevor Tombe, University of Calgary

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organizations for projects that will improve tourism-related services and infrastructure.

- Projects can focus on infrastructure like accommodations, attractions, activities and amenities, and special consideration will be given to umbrella projects, where multiple organizations are working together.

### Creative and Cultural Industries

- In November 2021, the Department of Tourism and Culture released Creative Potential; Advancing the Yukon's Creative and Cultural Industries, a 10-year strategy to support the growth and development of the creative and cultural industries in the Yukon.
- The CCIS identified 4 strategic objectives and 22 key actions, which reflect input gathered through extensive public and sector engagement.
- We also identified 10 actions in support of pandemic recovery to be completed over 3 years as Phase 1 implementation, which includes:
  - Modernizing existing funding;
  - Offering new funding streams;
  - Industry branding and promotion;
  - Marketing and export strategies;
  - Workshops; and
  - Labour market supports.
- In 2023-24, 3 new funding programs will provide \$450,000 annually to the creative and cultural sectors, including:
  - Express Micro-grant;
  - Indigenous Artists and Cultural Carriers Micro-grant; and
  - Creative and Cultural Career Advancement Fund.



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### **Inflation and Affordability**

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#### **Additional Funding Programs**

- Tourism and Culture also provides annual supports to the tourism and culture sectors through Transfer Payment Agreements (TPAs) with many NGOs across the Yukon and through a number of regular funding programs, including:
  - Advanced Artist Award;
  - Arts Fund;
  - Arts Operating Funds;
  - Cultural Industries Training Funds;
  - Culture Quest;
  - New Canadian Events Fund;
  - Touring Artist Fund;
  - Historic Properties Assistance Program;
  - Historic Resources Fund;
  - Museums Contribution Program;
  - Special Projects Capital Assistance Program (SPCAP); and
  - Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund;

#### **Yukon Development Corporation:**

#### **Inflation Relief Rebate**

- The Inflation Relief Rebate (IRR) provides \$50 per month to all non-government residential and commercial electricity customers to help ease the impacts of rising inflation.
- The IRR was subsequently extended for March, April, and May 2023. The budget in 2023-24 is comprised of:

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## Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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- \$2,056,000 for program costs in April and May 2023 (costs for March 2023 are included in the 2022-23 Supplementary Estimates #2).
- \$3,246,000 for a further 3 additional months. We will continue to monitor inflation and costs of living, and we anticipate this will show on electricity bills next winter when electricity bills are typically higher.

### Economic Development:

#### Paid sick leave program

- 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 is available to employees regardless of whether their employer offers paid sick leave.

### Energy, Mines and Resources:

#### Energy retrofits and funding to improve efficiency and offset costs

- 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 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.



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- For commercial and institutional buildings, the Energy Branch offers rebates for greenhouse gas-reducing retrofits and renewable heating.
- Between January 1, 2018, and June 30, 2023, 176 high-performance retrofits to residential, commercial and institutional buildings have been completed across the territory.
- Innovative programs like the Better Buildings Program, combined with our Good Energy rebates, make energy retrofits more accessible and affordable for Yukoners.
- For First Nation and municipal buildings, the Energy Branch offers retrofit and funding support through its Community Institutional Energy Efficiency Program.
- To help increase the supply of firewood, we distributed \$315,000 to 33 Yukon businesses under the Timber Harvest Incentive program in 2022-23. We are offering this program for another year as it increased timber harvest volumes and prompted new harvesting businesses to emerge. No new applications have been received yet for this year, but we did not anticipate to see them until the fall when the businesses start operating again.
- The Government of Yukon and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency combined financial contributions to launch a new \$200,000 support program offering funding for commercial harvesters and retailers.
- The program will help forest sector businesses with the cost of purchases and repairs from local suppliers for harvest equipment, vehicles and trailers, personal protective equipment, and other equipment. For larger harvesting businesses, the funds can also be used for things like planning and administrative costs.
- Applicants have until March 31, 2024, to apply or until available funds are exhausted.

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Yukon Housing Corporation:

**Projects under the Five-Year Capital Plan which support housing affordability and those in need include:**

- The 47-unit housing complex at 401 Jeckell Street in Whitehorse opened in January 2023. The building provides new homes to Yukoners, including 5 three-bedroom, 12 two-bedroom, 16 one-bedroom and 14 bachelor units.
- A Yukon Housing Corporation Housing Initiatives Fund recipient, Right On Property Group, has completed Boreal Commons, a new 87-unit rental development in Whitehorse's Whistle Bend neighbourhood. This large-scale housing project will help address the need for more rental housing in the Yukon, including for more affordable and accessible units.
- Normandy Living, the Yukon's first private seniors' supportive living community, has officially opened its doors in Whitehorse with 84 modern suites, including housing units for First Nations Elders and affordable units for low-income seniors.
- Triplex housing units in Watson Lake, Mayo and Whitehorse were completed in spring 2022 and are providing affordable homes to families in each of these communities.
- A 10-Plex Mixed-Use Housing complex in Old Crow is under construction.
- Construction of a 10-Plex Housing First Project in Watson Lake started in the summer 2023 and is expected to be completed by fall 2024;
- Two accessible duplexes in Mayo and Carmacks were completed this summer and are now available for YHC clients.

**Other highlights from the plan**

- More homes will be created for Yukon families in rural communities through the construction of three duplexes in Dawson City and Faro. These homes are on track for completion in summer 2024.

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### Health and Social Services:

- A 37.5 per cent top-up to eligible Yukon Senior Income Supplement recipients' monthly payment;
- a \$100 monthly increase to eligible Social Assistance recipients; and
- a 10 per cent increase to monthly payments to caregivers of children in out of home care.

### 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:
  - Providing tourism sector leadership;
  - Rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism;
  - Supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and
  - 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:

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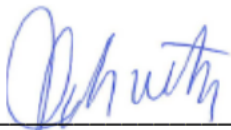
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- Tourism Accommodation Sector Supplement (TASS);
- Tourism Non-Accommodation Sector Supplement (TNASS);
- Culture and Tourism Non-profit Sector Supplement;
- Great Yukon Summer (GYS) program;
- Great Yukon Summer Freeze program;
- ELEVATE program; 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:**



Deputy Minister, Finance

October 26, 2023

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 more work to do, our efforts are resulting in meaningful change and creating better programs and services for all Yukoners.
- In honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation this year, 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 our actions being taken across the Yukon government and in close collaboration with First Nations governments and organizations in areas including child welfare, health, education and justice.

**Additional response:**

- The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations 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 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.
- CASA 2023 contains a commitment to work with First Nations to continue to implement the TRC recommendations through targeted investment.

## **Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Update on Calls to Action**

Executive Council  
Office

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- It is expected that the media and opposition will be interested in the fall 2023 public update, which will be the first comprehensive public update since 2016.

### **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) have 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

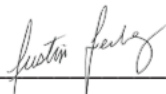


**Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
– Update on Calls to Action**

Executive Council  
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- 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

October 10, 2023

Date