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3	Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed Capacity • FTE Summary • Comprehensive Health System Review RFP • Health and Social system infrastructure • Health care system per-capita spending • Territorial Health Investment Fund (THIF) • Health System Transformation • Health and Human Resources • Health System Capacity • Yukon Hospital Corporation funding 	
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Accomplishments

TAB 1
Fall 2024

Health and Social
Services

Key Accomplishments:

- Passed the *Health Authority Act* in April 2024.
- Coordinated with Yukon Hospital Corporation to add an **additional ten acute-care hospital beds and twelve long-term care beds** in July 2024.
- Through discussions between HSS and YFN leadership, a **Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Health** was established to guide the implementation of *Putting People First* and the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon (July 2023).
- The Minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health appointed executive members to a Health Transformation Advisory Committee to implement priorities and direction on the development of Shāw Kwä'a (**pronounced SHOW – KWA -AH**)/Health and Wellness Yukon and continuing to improve health and social services in the Yukon.
- The Government of the Yukon released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan (December 2023), a living document completed in partnership with community partners and summarizes the actions taken to date and future actions to help shape a safe, supportive and thriving downtown sector.
- The Government of Yukon, Yukon Hospital Corporation and health partners released a **Health Human Resources Strategy** with 25 actions spanning five key pillars aimed to boost delivery of care and improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals (December 2023).
- 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 (July 2023).

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Accomplishments

TAB 1
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Health and Social
Services

- Implemented many projects under this strategy to train, recruit, mentor and retain health and social services workers.
- 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).

Primary Care:

- Opened a new **walk-in medical clinic** in Whitehorse to provide accessible and essential non-urgent health care services for those without a primary care provider (December 2023).
- Worked closely with the Francophone community to open the **Centre de santé Constellation Health Centre** in Whitehorse (November 2022).
- 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:

- Working to establish a **Managed Alcohol Program** in 2024.
- Opened a **Supervised Consumption Site** in Whitehorse (September 2021) with Blood Ties Four Directions and expanded services to include **inhalation** as a method of consumption (May 2022) and 7-day per week access as of January 2024 with extended hours from 10:30 am to 9:30 pm.
- Hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses to increase bed availability through **Withdrawal Management**.
- Introduced IV medication protocol and phlebotomy to Withdrawal Management, improving care and reducing visits to Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Provide Mental Wellness and Substance Use Treatment at Whitehorse Correctional Centre

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Accomplishments

Health and Social
Services

- Completed two land-based family camps to support family healing.
- 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) (September 2022).
- We have worked with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness department and a number of youth from Dawson City to host a youth-led retreat that aimed to elevate youth voices around the topics of youth mental health, substance use, and the Substance Use Health Emergency in the territory. (March 2023)
- Expanded access to Opioid Treatment Services from the Referred Care Clinic to 405 Alexander and Blood Ties Four Directions
- Expanded access to a safer supply of opioids to include fentanyl patches and hydromorphone tablets for people living with opioid use disorder.

Continuing Care / Seniors:

- Launched an **online dementia portal** in May 2024, Yukon.ca/dementia, to provide a central information resource to patients, families and caregivers.
- Entered into an agreement with **Alzheimer Society of BC** to collaborate on expanding dementia services (April 2023).
 - This includes the launch of the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline for Yukoners across the territory in need of support.
 - Yukon caregivers of people living with dementia can also access virtual caregiver support groups (December 2023).
- In a **National Institute on Ageing jurisdictional review** of the new National Long-Term Care Service Standard that assessed the delivery of safe, reliable and high-quality long-term care across Canada, the Yukon ranked second, meeting 100 of 117 standards (July 2023).

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Accomplishments

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- 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.
- Launched the Neighbourhood Staffing Model, to support an increase in nursing hours of care/resident/day (2023)
- Reopened 12 long-term care rooms at Copper Ridge Place (January 2023) after temporarily supporting the Child Development Centre in that space following building wide-renovations and successfully recruiting additional staff.
- Significant functional and aesthetic environmental improvements at Copper Ridge Place (2023):
- Began a nursing staffing stabilization initiative to ensure residents continue to receive high-quality care while also actively supporting the health and wellbeing of staff through more sustainable shift coverage. The first month saw a significant decrease in overtime burden on nursing staff (November 2023).
- Leveraged technology and collaboration with the French Language Services Directorate to bring **virtual 'Interpreters-on-Wheels'** into the long-term care homes to **improve communication with residents for whom English is not their first language** (2023).
- Provided the option of **traditional meals to residents** of all the long-term care homes, including regular global substitutions of local game meat for commercially available meat (2023).
- Reinitiated the first complex wheelchair seating clinic for Yukoners since the COVID-19 pandemic (2023)
- Yukon Native Language Centre youth have begun to participate with Elders in long term care homes to speak traditional languages (2023)

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Accomplishments

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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).
- Launched the **Yukon Dental Program** on January 4, 2023, to provide \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- In March 2023, the **Find a Primary Care Provider** program was expanded to provide matches with Nurse Practitioners.
- **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.
- Supported expansion of pharmacists' scope to allow pharmacists to deliver some vaccines, prescribe for minor ailments, extend prescriptions, and deliver controlled substances, amongst others (June 2022).

Social Services:

- Operated a **warming centre** at the Jim Smith building in winter/spring 2024.
- Partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions to enhance their healthy meals program, which will be providing lunch and dinner daily by the end of 2024.
- 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.

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- Provided **Pioneer Utility Grant** recipients for the 2022 calendar year with a one-time 10% top-up payment, which was distributed in February 2023.
- Providing an additional \$100 per month to Social Assistance clients for inflation relief, while a social assistance rate review is underway.
- 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.
- As part of strengthening downtown safety in Whitehorse, hired a **Library Outreach Worker** to provide library patrons with access to services and support.
- The Government of the Yukon provided support in operationalizing a Council of Yukon First Nations led mobile downtown outreach initiative, **Moccasin Mobile**, to provide after-hours and weekend supports.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 12, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with Connective Support Society, 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 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.
- 405 Alexander, previously referred to as the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, offers a low-barrier, 24/7 shelter and supportive living units, and a range of drop-in services for unhoused and street-involved adults.
- 405 Alexander is operated by Connective Support Society 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 including the Referred Care Clinic's Opioid Treatment Services, at 405 Alexander.

Key facts:

- 405 Alexander has capacity for 54 emergency shelter guests per night and has 20 permanent supportive housing units operating under Housing First principles.

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- From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, there was an average of 45.5 emergency shelter guests staying at 405 Alexander per night and 19.4 people per month living in the Housing First units.
- From April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, there was an average of 40.4 emergency shelter guests staying at 405 Alexander per night and 19.3 people per month living in the Housing First units.
- From April 1 to June 30, 2024, there was an average of 43.3 emergency shelter guests per night.
- From April 1 to August 31, 2024, there have consistently been 20 people living in the Housing First units per month.

405 Alexander operation renewal:

- The Government of Yukon is dedicated to enhancing the health, safety and wellbeing of Yukoners by ensuring that services provided at 405 Alexander are effective, culturally responsive and aligned with community needs.
- The Government of Yukon remains focused on addressing the complex challenges of homelessness, substance use and public safety in Whitehorse through continued collaboration with partners, including Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- As part of our work on the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan, the Government of Yukon will be working with community groups, neighbours and NGOs to develop a shelter system model that reflects the changing needs of the Downtown community.

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- Later this year, the Government of Yukon will proceed with its plan to issue an Expression of Interest (EOI) to explore service providers and shelter models. This is part of the government's strategic approach to ensure that services evolve and improve to meet the needs of shelter guests and the community.
- The EOI process allows us to evaluate all potential vendors and shelter system models, ensuring we identify innovative and effective service models that address current gaps.
- The Government of Yukon remains fully committed to implementing the recommendations from the coroner's inquest by the October 2024 deadline. We continue working with Connective to meet these recommendations, ensuring safety, staff training and enhanced policies for shelter guests and the wider community.

Available supports:

- We provide a range of on-site supports at 405 Alexander, including Emergency Medical Services, Home Care, social supports outreach, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach 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

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Alexander and have expanded the services and hours of operation onsite and at the outreach van.

- Guests have access to harm reduction education and supplies, including Naloxone kits and connection to appropriate supports and services.
- Guests have access to social workers and nursing support.
- Shelter guests have access to cultural support and programming, through the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Connective program review (motion response):

- We are working to finalize the review of all of Connective's programming in response to Motion 982 from the spring session. The scope includes a full review of the Housing First program at Wood Street and 405 Alexander and a review of the Emergency Shelter Program and delivery outcomes. It will also include a review of the Department of Justice's SHARP program for Men and Women.
- A final report will be made available and tabled in the Legislature summarizing the results of the evaluations of Health and Social Services Connective-operated programs once they are complete.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has agreements in place with Connective to run:
 - the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter at 405 Alexander;
 - a Housing First program; and
 - the Whitehorse Residential Services program for Yukon Review Board clients.

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- The Department of Justice has agreements in place with Connective to run the Supervised Housing and Reintegration Program (SHARP) at two separate facilities for men and women.
- Each program is being evaluated separately.
- Evaluation is an objective assessment of whether a program is effectively and efficiently meeting desired outcomes. The results of the evaluations will help the Government of Yukon to make evidence-based decisions to continuously improve our programming.
- Connective works closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations to inform and deliver culturally appropriate programs and services throughout 405 Alexander.
- The TPA includes a framework for performance monitoring and evaluation:
 - D3.1 YG will provide the Recipient with the existing Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework reflecting the program outputs and immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes and the indicators by which those outputs and outcomes will be monitored on an on-going basis.
- Health and Social Services officials meet with Connective weekly to review progress on the Coroner's Inquest recommendations. During these meetings, we discuss all the recommendations and ensure both parties are aware of what the other is doing in this area. This includes discussing how we will be respectively responding to the Coroner's office.

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- There is a SharePoint site hosted by Connective that Government of Yukon staff have access to that includes all progress updates since May.
- The Department of Health and Social Services implemented all recommendations by the end of October and formally responded to the Coroner on November 1, 2024.
- Connective releases their regular public newsletter which includes, updates for the community on the response to the jury recommendations following the Coroner's Inquest in April 2024.
- Over the summer and fall months, Connective and CYFN have been co-hosting monthly, hour-long, culturally safe Connection Meetings.
 - The meetings are held on the ground floor of the shelter, open to everyone and offer a "space for service users to come together in a more formal way and speak about their experience accessing services."
 - The Council of Yukon First Nations ensures an Elder is present at each Circle.

Response to the Coroner's inquest jury recommendations:

- In collaboration with Connective, we have responded to the jury's recommendations made following the inquest into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Hager and Darla Skookum at 405 Alexander.
- All recommendations were completed by the end of October 2024.

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- A formal response was sent to the Coroner on November 1, 2024.
- To ensure the work initiated in response to the recommendation of the coroner's jury is sustained in an effective and systematic way, the Department of Health and Social Services has been working to establish a third-party committee to review the work completed by Connective and Government of Yukon to date.
- We have implemented all eight recommendations:
 1. A comprehensive review of 104 policies and related procedures for 405 Alexander has been completed.
 - The review identified gaps and options to address them, informed by best practices.
 - Staff orientation to the updated policy and procedures is currently taking place.
 - Connective is committed to an annual review and ongoing monitoring of the revised policies and procedures to ensure they are meeting the needs of those accessing services.
 2. In collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations, 405 Alexander staff, shelter guests and community partner organizations, Connective's leadership reviewed and revised the list of key staff training and training models used and adopted an annual training plan.

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- Connective will monitor implementation of the adopted training plan and will complete its review to ensure continued effectiveness.
3. Connective established a working group comprised of the organization's staff and Council of Yukon First Nations representatives to revise the process of recruiting and hiring Indigenous employees to reduce barriers for Indigenous candidates.
- Connective will continue working with First Nations partners to assess the impact of these changes.
4. The Government of Yukon reviewed results of two audits completed by Connective over the past ten months evaluating compliance with the provisions of the 405 Alexander TPA.
- Connective has made significant progress in addressing the gaps and issues identified from the January 2024 and October 2024 audits.
5. Connective developed a critical incident reporting framework which informed the policies and procedure revisions.
- The Government of Yukon has the responsibility to ensure an independent external review will take place if future deaths may occur at 405 Alexander.
6. In June 2024, Government of Yukon officials met with Chiefs of the Yukon First Nations to discuss the best approach for connecting with the families and affected First Nations

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communities. Where requested by a First Nation, Connective's leadership met directly with the administrative team to hear community concerns and recommendations on how to improve operations at 405 Alexander.

- In September 2024, Connective implemented additional in-person access to counselling services for the staff working across its programs in Whitehorse.
7. To establish relationships of trust while providing services to shelter guests, Connective engaged Council of Yukon First Nations to support sharing circles at 405 Alexander and improve communication among staff.
- The first Connection Circle was held on June 28, 2024. As well as providing valuable support, and beyond discussing how to meet the inquest recommendations, these meetings continue to help Connective's leadership engage the shelter guests in discussions related to food services, safety and expectations.
 - Managers now attend every shift exchange to ensure consistency in briefings.
8. Connective's leadership has engaged with the Council of Yukon First Nations, Betty's Haven, Blood Ties Four Directions, Kaushee's Place, Queer Yukon, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle on issues of safe space for 2SLGBTQ+ and female identifying shelter guests.

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- This includes establishing a more welcoming environment at the shelter by repainting the main floor areas and adding new signage on the rights and responsibilities of shelter guests.

Coroner's inquest recommendations:

- A coroner's inquest into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Vanessa Hager and Darla Skookum at 405 Alexander began April 8, 2024 and concluded April 25, 2024 with the jury issuing eight recommendations.
- Some of the recommendations include reviewing policy, procedures and training guides within six months, prioritizing hiring Indigenous people and people with lived experience, develop an improved complaint and community process, provide 405 Alexander staff counselling, and create safe spaces for women and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals within the shelter.
- Our government is committed to implementing the jury's recommendations by the end of October 2024.
 - Once completed, we will develop a public report with the outcome of these actions.
- We are working in close collaboration with community partners, Connective, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations governments, non-governmental organizations and people with living and lived experience.

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- The goal is to ensure a safe, supportive and responsive environment for all guests of 405 Alexander while honouring the memory of those who have been lost and upholding the government's commitment to community wellbeing.
- We are establishing a committee, under the existing Substance Use Health Emergency Oversight group, who will be tasked with a review of all Government of Yukon and Connectives responses to the Coroner's Inquest recommendations, as well as support work to review any serious incidents at 405 Alexander in the future as recommended through the inquest.
- As of October 3, 2024, the jury's eight recommendations include the following completed or in-progress actions:

1. A policy review for the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter will be undertaken by Connective Support Society within six months.

- A contractor, hired by Connective, reviewed and updated policies and procedures in preparation for October implementation.
 - The Council of Yukon First Nations provided input and direction on some policies.
 - Policy work included developing operational health and safety policies.
- Reviewed Canadian shelter standards, design and procedures.
- Engaged local organizations with harm reduction and health services expertise.

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- Held focus group and independent feedback sessions with all levels of staff.
- Conducted a service user experience and safety feedback survey.

2. Within six months, Connective Support Society in conjunction with interested Yukon First Nations, shelter guests, staff and other supports services, will research and adopt a training plan assessing current training need, based on best practices, that address both onboarding, orientation and ongoing professional development following a priority list.

- Reviewed and revised training models to support staff in delivering culturally safe, trauma informed, and harm reduction-focused supports.
 - This includes specific training related to alcohol intoxication.
- Developing a customized Cultural Awareness Training, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, to supplement Yukon First Nations 101.

3. Immediately, Connective Support Society will give priority to hiring Indigenous employees and persons with lived experience when posting positions. Additionally, they will work with Interested First Nations to identify ways to attract, support and retain Indigenous employees.

- Established a working group, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, to monitor and refine previous improvements.
- Published an [Indigenous Recruitment](#) information sheet to reduce barriers for Yukon First Nations candidates.

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- Implemented a range of metrics, including tracking Yukon First Nations and Indigenous applicants, to monitor and improve progress over time.
4. In six months, the Yukon Government, through its Transfer Payment Agreement provision, will evaluate Connective Support Society for compliance with recommendations 1, 2, and 3.
- Department of Health and Social Services and Connective have been completing a line-by-line review of the 405 Alexander TPA to ensure all aspects of the agreement are being met.
 - The review is expected to be completed by mid-October.
5. If future deaths should occur at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, the Yukon Government will work with Connective to ensure an independent review. (Critical Incident Review)
- Proposed a revised and standardized incident reporting approach to the Department of Health and Social Services for feedback and review, prior to October implementation.
6. Within two months, leadership from the Yukon Government and Connective will meet with the communities affected by the deaths to hear concerns arising from the inquest. Within six months, Connective will provide access to in-person counselling for all staff as needed.
- Continued to follow Yukon Government's lead in engagement with Yukon First Nations. Where requested, we have met directly with

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Yukon First Nation's administrative teams to gather feedback and input.

- Implemented additional access to in-person counselling services for all staff.

7. Immediately, Connective will begin a monthly talking circle and a structured complaint process. Connective will improve communication among staff by formalizing the pre and post briefing of all shift exchanges.

- Reviewed and revised shift exchange practices, based on staff feedback.
- Implemented Monthly Connection Circles for all service users at 405 Alexander (four to date).

8. In recognition of safety concerns of LGBTQ2S+ and female identifying service users Connective will, within the next six months, identify and create a safe space for their use.

- Enhanced the physical space with fresh painting, new signage, and a compliments, suggestions and complaints box.
- Began ongoing engagements with community organizations and service users around increasing gender-based safety.
- Drawing on the newly released [Human Rights-Based, Gender-Sensitive National Standards for Emergency Shelters Across Canada](#) (July 2024) to inform best practices and knowledge in policies.

Background:

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- The Government of Yukon assumed operations of 405 Alexander in 2019 with the explicit goal of stabilizing operations, and then transferring oversight to a qualified third party.
- Connective Support Society resumed operations of 405 Alexander in October 2022. The Transfer Payment Agreement between Connective and the Government of Yukon expires March 31, 2025.
- The Government of Yukon worked with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation to support community members who attended.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services worked with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation to provide support in their communities and in Whitehorse that was responsive and respectful to community members' needs.

Death at 405 Alexander:

- A visitor at the Housing First units died by suspected overdose on September 30, 2024.
- The person was not a resident or regular guest at 405 Alexander.
- Shelter staff were alerted to the incident at approximately 8:40 am on Monday, September 30.
- Emergency Medical Services and RCMP responded immediately. Attempts to resuscitate the individual were unsuccessful.
- First aid overdose response was administered on site.
- Video footage from the hallway of events surrounding the incident and response will be shared with RCMP.
- Further details, including confirmation of the cause of death, may become available following investigation by the Coroner's Office.

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- Connective is providing supports to individuals known to use substances in units and discussing safety planning and additional harm reduction steps to prevent or respond to overdoses.
- In the past year incident reporting policies for 405 Alexander have been updated to include a timely and fulsome review of any incidents by staff and supervisors, immediate review and all relevant video footage, collecting and documenting necessary and relevant information and including additional senior management review of all incidents. This new policy and process was applied to the event on Monday and all necessary information was turned over to the RCMP and Coroner's Office for their review and investigations.
- In response to the Coroner's inquest completed this spring, the department of Health and Social Services has been working with a range of NGOs, First Nations, RCMP and other community groups to respond to all recommendations, including independent review of any death at 405 Alexander.

EMS presence:

- Emergency Medical Services has expanded their Paramedic Specialist Clinic hours at 405 Alexander to 20 hours a day.
 - The clinic ensures a Paramedic is on site 20 hours a day and we are working towards expanding this to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
 - The clinic has a spectrometer to test samples of drugs on site. The spectrometer provides a more accurate detection of benzodiazepines, fentanyl and other contaminants.

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- Emergency Medical Services supports the Mobile Paramedic Response Unit at 405 Alexander Street, which is equipped to provide mobile drug testing services, harm reduction supplies and other health care services.
- The Paramedic Response Unit began in October 2022 and operates 10.75 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The Unit is designed to mitigate land ambulance calls and decrease transport to the Emergency Department at the Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The Unit addresses the needs of complex clients, who frequently utilize the 911 system, as well as those requiring social services or other health care instead of emergency care. In such cases, the Paramedics collaborate with the client's care team.
- Although the Paramedic Response Unit attends to a wide range of calls, only 42 per cent of these result in patient transport to the Emergency Department. This highlights the Unit's effectiveness in reducing 911 calls and diverting clients from the high costs associated with primary care in the Emergency Department.
- In 2023, the Unit:
 - responded to 267 calls;
 - transported patients 112 times;
 - transported patients 42 per cent of the time;
 - responded to 3.2 per cent of the total calls; and
 - visited 78 unique addresses.
- The Unit collaborates with Blood Ties Four Directions and the Council of Yukon First Nations to address the Opioid Emergency. They

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distribute Fentanyl Testing Kits and offer follow-up care to clients who have received Naloxone.

Low barrier approach:

- The Government of Yukon and our partners at 405 Alexander 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 at 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 guests 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 of communication that protects the physical, emotional and cultural safety of all shelter guests and staff.

Reports:

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- In May 2023, two independent reports were released evaluating the shelter's effectiveness, its impact on the community and the clients it serves. Both were completed with our involvement and support.
 - Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Evaluation, commissioned by the department of Health and Social Services and prepared by Vink Consulting; and
 - A Path Forward, prepared by House of Wolf & Associates at the request of the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- Findings within the two reports were informed by discussions with clients, shelter staff and community partners.
- We are committed to ensuring the safety of Yukoners and continue to meet with the Council of Yukon First Nations, City of Whitehorse, First Nations governments, Yukon businesses, Connective, the RCMP and the federal government to discuss next steps.
- Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Evaluation by Vink Consulting determined that 405 Alexander is reaching people who are unhoused and street-involved, outlines key outcomes for guests and finds that it is providing benefits to shelter guests, supportive housing unit residents and the government that outweigh its costs. The report found that:
 - Most guests are satisfied with the services provided and the shelter is meeting needs of clients, though some unhoused women are choosing other emergency accommodation options, such as couch surfing.

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- Clients should be more supported to find permanent housing and more could be done on culturally appropriate approaches.
- For every dollar spent on this shelter, the social return on investment amounted to \$2.11. The analysis found that for every dollar invested in a Housing First program, the estimated social return would be higher, at \$2.90.
- Despite 38 per cent of shelter guests reporting that their substance use has increased as a result of accessing the shelter, the report also states that this is more likely a result of homelessness and an overall nation-wide increase in substance use and negative impacts on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A Path Forward assessed the safety and perspectives of community wellness. The report recommended:
 - The purpose of 405 Alexander Street should be determined and communicated.
 - Decentralizing some aspects of service delivery.
 - Safe gathering spaces inclusive of women, LGBTQ2S+ people and sober clients should be considered.
 - Education and engagement events such as town-halls, community walkthroughs and social media campaigns would increase a cross-demographic sense of community, understanding and empathy.
 - Increasing opportunities for cultural connection with land-based components that are within and outside of 405 Alexander is vital for First Nations guests.

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- Harm reduction initiatives such as a Managed Alcohol Program should be considered for substitute therapy programs.
- Implementing a downtown-Whitehorse Community Safety Officer program via partnerships with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council would increase visibility and access to justice and safety services.
- Mitigating opportunities for unsafe gatherings and intimidating behaviour through the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design approach can lead to a reduction in fear and improve quality of life for the community. The approach includes three principles: Natural Surveillance or high levels of observation, Natural Access Control or decreasing the opportunity of crime, and Territorial Reinforcement by creating a sense of pride in a space.
- Implementing a case management approach and data management system between key partners may reduce gaps within overlapping systems and increase efficiency and access to intervention programs.
- Recommendations from A Path Forward that we have completed or are working on include:
 - Along with Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations, we are working on a plan to enhance the area outside 405 Alexander using an environmental design approach.
 - In September 2023, in partnership with Connective, we removed the high back benches from outside 405 Alexander as

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part of a broader environmental redesign intended to support our work to enhance the area.

- Further assessment in responding to concerns about garbage and area cleanliness is underway. Currently, staff perform sweeps for sharps several times a day around the 405 Alexander building.
- 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.

Background:

- The engagement process that helped inform the reports took place between April and September 2022 when the Government of Yukon operated 405 Alexander.

Former Connective employee on trial

- On September 14, 2023, the Department of Health and Social Services was informed that there was an allegation of sexual assault against an employee in a government-funded care facility.
- On September 15, 2023, RCMP arrested the individual.
- Charges were laid against the individual on September 19, 2023.
- The former employee was immediately put on leave pending the outcome of the criminal investigation.

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- Information, guidance and resources were provided to clients, their families and other staff members. Direction on referring clients to the RCMP was also provided.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

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

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Key facts:

- In the 2024-25 first supplementary estimate, we budgeted **\$646.7M** (\$646,744,000) in the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M.
 - This is an increase of **\$52.4M** (\$52,372,000) over the 2024-25 Main Estimates and represents an increase of 8.8 percent.
- In 2024-25 first supplementary estimate we budgeted **\$13.1M** (\$13,121,000) for Capital expenditures.
 - This is an increase of **\$3.7M** (\$3,735,000) over the 2024-25 Main Estimates and represents an increase of 39.8 percent.
- Since 2018-19's first supplementary budget, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased from **\$403.8M** (\$403,796,000) to **\$646.7M** (\$646,744,000) in 2024-25.
 - The 2018-19 figure does not include the restatement of Emergency Medical Services, which was transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services in April 2023.
- We are prioritizing health infrastructure planning and are investing approximately \$5 million to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation in increasing bed capacity and increase access to orthopedic care.
- The first supplementary budget includes an increase of **\$777K** (\$777,000) to provide funding support to the Safe at Home Society to run temporary supportive winter housing at 408 Alexander St.
- Insured Health services has been provided an increase of **\$34M** (\$34,000,000) to continue to respond to growth in the delivery of our legislated programming
- In 2024-25, a total of **\$58.1M** (\$58,108,000) in funding is available through the Canada Health Transfer.

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- We anticipate recognizing sizeable recoveries this fiscal year through federal transfers, including **\$17.5M** (\$17,530,000) through the Territorial Health Investment Fund, **\$7.3M** (\$7,270,000) through the Working Together Funding, and **\$3.65M** (\$3,560,000) through Aging with Dignity.

Bed capacity:**Key facts:**

- The Department is committed to supporting the access to quality care for Yukoners which is underscored by the access to beds in our hospital and long-term care environments.
- As part of our phased approach to increase bed supply, the department worked in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to establish the Thomson Centre 1 Medical Unit providing an additional 10 beds for the hospital's delivery of acute care.
 - In turn, Whistle Bend Place was provided enhanced funding to support the move of residents from Thomson Centre.
- The Department has allocated **\$5.7M** (\$5,675,000) to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address bed capacity pressures and support for orthopedic services.
- Additionally, support has been provided for long-term care optimization at Whistle Bend Place in a two-phased approach starting with **\$2.1M** (\$2,135,000).

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FTE Summary:

Key facts:

	Health and Social Services FTEs						
Fiscal Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Supp #1 2024-25
Total FTE Count	1,413.90	1,419.13	1,526.53	1,677.3	1,573.4	1,616.4	1,645.2
Change from Prior Fiscal Year	61.45	5.23	107.40	63.50	(103.90)	43.0	28.8

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

- In 2024-25 Supplementary Estimate there are **1,645.2 FTEs** compared to **1,616.4 FTEs** in 2024-25 Main Estimates, there is an increase of 28.8 FTEs.
 - There is an increase of 21.80 FTES over two phases to support Long-Term Care optimization
 - **21.8 FTEs** for the transfer of long-term care residents from Thomson Centre to Whistle Bend Place to support the creation of the Thomson Centre Medical Unit 1.
 - There is an increase of an additional 7.0 FTEs supported through the Aging with Dignity federal transfer.
- Over recent years, FTE changes have been driven by major initiatives such as:
 - In 2021-22 and 2022-23, FTE increases were temporary staff related to the COVID-19 response and vaccination rollout.

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- In 2023-24, FTE increases primarily resulted from the Substance Use Health Emergency response.

Comprehensive Health System Review Request For Proposal**Key facts:**

- Health and Social Services maintains 54 specialized buildings and facilities, such as long-term care homes, group homes, clinics, immunization clinics, health centers, and others.
- In consultation with the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon Hospital Corporation, we released a Request for Proposal for a comprehensive health infrastructure review. The Request for Proposal closed on October 17, 2024, and evaluation is ongoing.
- The intention of this review is to provide critical information to guide territory-wide infrastructure investment and upgrades, including hospital improvements over a 30-year period.
 - The 30-year strategic plan will ensure that services and facilities are available when they are needed and can be well maintained, even as our population grows.
- The scope of the report is intended to be a comprehensive look at all infrastructure needs, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which operates the three acute care hospitals in the Yukon, infrastructure needs for services operated by the Department of Health and Social Services, and other healthcare infrastructure needs, such as clinics to support longitudinal family practice.
- The Request for Proposal sets out objectives to provide a better picture of the territory's health system, including determining if there are target areas to explore alternative procurement approaches, with possible consideration of a P3 among other models.

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- Procurement approaches are not a central component of the Request for Proposal but were included as an opportunity to get expert advice and gather information to inform long-term decision making.
- This could include partnering with First Nations development corporations or physician groups to support financing of projects.
- The intent of this objective is to set the expectation for a fulsome report exploring all procurement pathways so that decision makers are fully informed when making capital investments and upgrades over the long term.
- We have an obligation to Yukoners to explore all options fully, including bearing out the challenges associated with different options.
- We are not committed to any procurement approach, including P3s.

Health and Social system infrastructure:**Key facts:**

- Having the right space and facilities is essential for delivering quality care. We recognize the significant need for new health infrastructure in the Yukon, and addressing these needs is a priority for the Government of Yukon.
- Our infrastructure challenges are further compounded by a rapidly aging and growing population, which increases the complexity of service delivery.

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- To manage long-term pressures related to population growth, aging demographics, and rising service delivery costs, we have budgeted **\$9.4 M** (\$9,386,000) for capital expenditures in 2024-25.
- In consultation with the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon Hospital Corporation, we have released a Request for Proposal for a comprehensive health infrastructure review. This review will provide critical information to guide territory-wide infrastructure upgrades, including hospital improvements. The Request for Proposal will be closing in mid-October.
- In summer 2024 we opened the new Old Crow Health Centre, the first new centre opened in the last 24 years. The construction of the centre, along with its accompanying 10-unit residence, was estimated to cost \$55 million.
- We have also been making capital investments to accommodate MRI services and improve our Emergency Department, ICU, and Mental Wellness services.
- The Government of Yukon continues to prioritize work to expand capacity at Whitehorse General Hospital and long-term care homes.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is aware of the Auditor General of Canada's report on the Stanton Territorial Hospital and is taking the time to review the findings.
- We recognize that the authors of the report indicated that the Government of the Northwest Territories was unable to demonstrate that the Stanton Territorial Hospital Renewal Project provided government and residents with good value for money as a public-private partnerships

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- We issued a Request for Proposal for health infrastructure in order to ensure we are studying the problem carefully.
- I appreciate that this matter and the procurement approach for the development of the Hospital in Yellowknife has come up on the legislature floor and thank the members of the opposition for raising their considerations and concerns.
- With regards to the Comprehensive Health System Review Request for Proposal that closed on October 17th we would expect that the party selected to complete the review would also explore reports such as the Independent Auditor's report to inform their overview of procurement approaches.
- The intention of this review is to ensure any decisions taken on health system infrastructure are based on all available evidence.

Health care system per-capita spending**Key facts:**

- In a letter to the editor in August, the president of the Yukon Medical Association quoted a statistic from the Canadian Institute for Health Information on per-capita health spending.
 - The editorial states that 'Canadian Institute for Health Information data outlines that the Yukon has spent the least on health per capita of all three territories. Looking further, the most up-to-date reporting available from the Canadian Institute for Health Information on health system spending outlines that the Yukon was the only jurisdiction in Canada forecasted to spend less on health per capita in 2023 compared to 2022.'

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- This information comes from the 2023 annual report on health expenditure trends.
- We are dedicated to providing efficient acute and primary care close to home wherever possible. This reduces the cost of providing care, requiring less money per patient, while also improving patient experience.
 - Nunavut has 25 fly-in communities, and the Northwest Territories has 13, compared to one in the Yukon. The remoteness of those communities increases health care costs in the other two territories.
- The expenditure numbers reported include broad spending categories. In addition to expenses on physicians, hospitals, drugs, and mental wellness, the indicator also captures spending on administration, health research, training, and occupational health and safety/workers health and safety.
 - The indicator combines both public- and private-sector health spending.
- According to the methodology listed by Canadian Institute for Health Information, the expenditure indicator includes costs for medical travel. The Yukon's relatively high population density and investment in in-territory treatment can, in some cases, reduce the cost of providing care compared to the other territories.

Territorial Health Investment Fund:**Key facts:**

- The Territorial Health Investment Fund has been strategically allocated to address priority areas within the Yukon's health system.

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This will enable targeted improvements and sustainable transformation across key health sectors.

- The Territorial Health Investment Fund is a vital resource in ensuring that our health system is responsive, equitable, and sustainable.
- The Territorial Health Investment Fund funding totals \$10M annually. As funding was only announced late last fiscal year and negotiated this year, Canada has allowed the Yukon to carry-over funds from previous years. Due to this carry-over, Yukon currently has up to \$21.6M in funding available in 2024-25.
- In July 2024, Yukon revised its Territorial Health Investment Fund workplan for 2024-25 onwards to include an initiative that addresses bed capacity pressures. The four initiatives included in the revised workplan are:
 - Creation and transition to a new health authority
 - Implementation of Yukon's Health Human Resources Strategy
 - Implementation of Digital Health and a new patient portal
 - Increase bed capacity in long-term and acute care
- This fiscal year 2024-25, Territorial Health Investment Fund funding has been allocated towards the following initiatives:

Health system transformation:**Key facts:**

- This initiative focuses on promoting holistic health and wellness throughout the territory. A total of \$7.9M of Territorial Health Investment Fund funding in 2024-25 is used to support projects under the health system transformation initiatives.

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- This includes investments made in Cultural Safety, to ensure that cultural safety and humility is embedded in the health care system to create an environment where Yukon First Nations and other indigenous groups are recognized, respected and their culture is reflected in the health care system.
- Health system transformation also includes work dedicated to enhancing Yukon's Digital Health Strategy, beginning with the development of a Data Warehouse.

Health Human Resources:**Key facts:**

- Territorial Health Investment Fund funding is also being used to support the recruitment, retention, and development of health professionals across the territory. This funding is critical in addressing health human resource shortages.
- \$1.9M of this funding has been allocated to offset Health Human Resources initiatives, including:
 - \$559K: Staffing
 - \$584K: MOA diploma and Social Work degree program development and University of New Brunswick Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridging tuition support
 - \$430K: Marketing, website development and domestic and international recruitment
 - \$140k: Yukon Medical Association Full time physician recruiter and physician lead for the Family Medicine Residency program
 - \$84K: Contracts

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- \$94K: Overall implementation

Health system capacity:**Key facts:**

- \$7.8M of Territorial Health Investment Fund funding has been allocated to help increase bed capacity at Whitehorse General Hospital where the demand for acute care beds has been routinely outstripping the supply of available beds. This summer, we successfully opened 10 new acute care beds at Thomson Centre to help offset these pressures.
- These beds were previously dedicated to continuing care. To accommodate those residents, we opened 12 new rooms at Whistle Bend Place resulting in a net gain of 8 new long

Yukon Hospital Corporation funding:**Key facts:**

- The Government of Yukon works to meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Year over year we provide funding through core and additional Transfer Payment Agreements commensurate with the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation as determined by the Yukon Hospital Corporation's Board.
- Since the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the Main and Supplementary budgetary exercises.
- We maintain an ongoing cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as we respond to new or emerging pressures and assess funding needs.

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- Over the past year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve our reporting processes, enabled by the review work completed by external parties in fall 2023.
- The 2024-25 first supplementary estimate has budgeted **\$120.8M** (\$120,843,000) for Yukon Hospital Services Operations and Maintenance, as well as **\$8.7M** (\$8,689,000) in Capital expenditures for a combined total of **\$129.5M** (\$129,532,000).
 - The first supplementary estimate for 2024-25 includes an increase of **\$10.4M** (\$10,430,000) in Operations and Maintenance and an additional **\$3.6K** (\$3,618) in capital expenditures over the Main Estimates for 2024-25.
 - This increase responds to growth in hospital and surgical services costs and higher costs associated with responding to health human resource challenges.
 - Additionally, we have reallocated funding to alleviate bed capacity pressures.
- Since 2018-19, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Corporation's Operations and Maintenance funding from \$68.2M (\$68,198,000) to \$120.8M (120,843,000), which represents an overall increase of 77.2%.
- While most funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon Hospital Services Operations and Maintenance and Capital budgets, additional funding is also provided through other channels.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we provided a total of **\$123.3M** (\$123,256,000) to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including Operations and Maintenance funding, as well as funding through other Transfer Payment Agreements. This does not include capital funding.

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Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Downtown Safety**Health and Social
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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Both the Department of Health and Social Services and Government of Yukon work with a variety of partners to create a vibrant, safe and inclusive downtown Whitehorse.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is one of several Government of Yukon agencies partnering in this work with others including the Yukon Housing Corporation, Department of Justice and Women and Gender Equity Directorate.
- More broadly, the Government of Yukon is collaborating with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the City of Whitehorse, Yukon RCMP, local businesses and other community partners, like Connective and Blood Ties Four Directions on this critical initiative.
- We are actively addressing public safety concerns and supporting downtown business operations.
 - We are discouraging large congregations by creating alternative or expanding locations for services such as providing support through an Outreach Worker at the Whitehorse Public Library, partnering with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend their

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- Healthy Meals program, and re-opening the Jim Smith Community Warming Space later this fall.
- We are working with non-government organizations to continue finding new locations for food services.
 - We are revitalizing the rental units at 408 Alexander to become a supportive housing program, led by the Safe at Home Society.
 - The Safe at Home Society model focuses on creating a sense of community and support in the building, contributing to a stable and safe environment. This model was successfully used last winter in the former High Country Inn.
 - 408 Alexander will offer safe, stable housing for vulnerable Yukoners, reducing street-level disturbances and enhancing community safety.
 - In addition to providing 24/7 safety and essential support services, guest management will also be provided at 408 Alexander. This will help ensure a secure place for unhoused individuals as winter approaches by offering safe, long-term housing stability.
 - The revitalized 17-unit building will open later this fall once renovations are complete and staffing has been finalized and trained.
 - Tenants will be selected by the Safe at Home Society from the By Name List.
 - We are currently finalizing details of the Transfer Payment Agreement.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services is providing all operations and maintenance funding.

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- We are increasing oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure residents and businesses feel safe and supported.
 - We have provided funding for the Council of Yukon First Nations' Moccasin Mobile Outreach initiative.
 - Yukon Housing Corporation has extended the hours for security services to reduce loitering, anti-social behaviours, and prevent the setup of temporary structures. After-hours patrols continue multiple times per night.
 - The Government of Yukon has recently hired a community safety specialist. This new role will be critical in the collaborative efforts of enhancing community safety and wellbeing.

Community engagement:

- Representatives from the Government of Yukon have met with residents, business owners, Yukon First Nations, NGOs, and City of Whitehorse on several occasions since fall 2023 to better understand the diverse experiences Yukoners have in downtown Whitehorse. With each meeting, we gain new perspectives and ideas on how to create and support a safe, inclusive and thriving downtown.
 - On November 6, 2023, IRP (inspire, reconciliation, potential) facilitated a meeting with the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Justice, Yukon Housing Corporation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Council of Yukon First Nations, Connective, and City of Whitehorse. Kwanlin Dün First Nation was invited but unable to attend.

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- We invited Yukoners to a community conversation on November 21, 2023, where we heard that collaboration and coordination needs to take place to ensure that downtown Whitehorse is a place where all feel safe and welcome.
- In March 2024, we held an engagement with NGOs to elicit feedback and suggestions, and further our collaborative efforts to provide meaningful and effective supports and services where they are most needed.
- The Department of Justice held an additional meeting in March with Whitehorse residents and business owners to continue to elicit feedback and suggestions on improving downtown safety.
- We held a second Community Conversation in June 2024, and listened to Whitehorse residents, business owners and community members share their experiences living and working downtown Whitehorse.

Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan completed actions:

- A Letter of Intent for the Safe at Home Society to become operators of 408 Alexander has been signed between the Safe at Home Society and Yukon Housing Corporation. (June 2024)
- Partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend and enhance their Healthy Meals program to provide lunch and dinner services seven days per week. (June 2024)
- Initiated new Canada Yukon Housing Benefit rent subsidy for people fleeing gender-based violence. (June 2024)

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- Established an Outreach Worker at the Whitehorse Public Library (April 2024)
- Developed a warming centre pilot at the Jim Smith Building. (March to May 2024), with a second year of service planned for winter 2024–25.
- Announced a partnership with Safe at Home Society to develop The Hearth, a permanent supportive housing project which will provide 67 self-contained affordable housing units. (February 2024)
- Extended hours at the Supervised Consumption Site. (February 2024)
- Operationalized a Council of Yukon First Nations led Mobile Outreach Initiative to provide after-hours and weekend supports. (December 2023)
- Signed a Letter of Intent with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada to build a Yukon First Nations healing centre. (December 2023)
- Allocated \$3 million for on-the-land treatment funding provided through the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. (November 2023)
- Extended funding to Safe at Home as part of the Winter Housing Strategy. (November 2023)
- Hired private security services to support local businesses in proximity to Alexander Street (November 2023 – March 2024) and have since transitioned to more outreach-focused efforts with the Council of Yukon First Nations leading the Moccasin Mobile initiative.

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- Coordinated community engagements with downtown residents, people with living and lived experience, businesses, NGOs, Council of Yukon First Nations and many more to discuss concerns and elicit feedback and suggestions to improve downtown Whitehorse safety. (October and November 2023, March and June 2024)

Upcoming actions:

- In December 2023, the Government of Yukon released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan. This plan aims to work alongside our partners to promote a safe, supportive and thriving downtown Whitehorse.
 - The plan is flexible and responsive, focusing on immediate and long-term solutions, such as increasing housing security, expanding support services and increasing public safety.
 - The Action Plan has four priorities:
 - get more people into safe, secure housing;
 - make it clear to Yukoners what support services are available and where;
 - decentralize services; and
 - coordinate approach between accountable partners.
- A Winter Housing Strategy is being developed to help people find shelter through the cold months of 2024–25.
- The Department of Justice will be leading the action within the Downtown Safety Action Plan on developing a city-wide Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.

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- The Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan will complement the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and create a framework to explore new innovative initiatives.
- The Government of Yukon is proposing funding for two additional RCMP officers for the Whitehorse detachment to increase the direct response to immediate concerns of the business community and residents.
- The Department of Justice is seeking legislative support for an additional SCAN Investigator to increase their ability to investigate and respond to illicit activity, such as drug trafficking in downtown Whitehorse.
- The Department of Justice is in discussion with the RCMP, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, political leadership in neighbouring jurisdictions, and members of the judiciary to discuss the public's concerns around repeat offenders and explore potential options that could be worthwhile for the territory.
- The Government of Yukon is working out the final details of a new Crime Prevention Grant Program that will be operated through the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Justice.
 - The Program will provide financial support to businesses and homeowners who are taking steps to make their homes and businesses safer. More details will be available later this fall.
- We are working with the City of Whitehorse to sign a Letter of Intent that indicates our commitment to work together to make downtown Whitehorse safer for everyone.

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Medium-term actions in progress:

- Continue to partner with Yukon organizations such as Safe at Home, Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and others to decentralize services in downtown to operationalize additional locations where people can access food services and identify and communicate alternate locations for additional culturally safe programming.
- Operationalize a Managed Alcohol Program to support, stabilize and reduce harms associated with chronic alcohol use disorder.
- Improve safety on Alexander Street by applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.
- Continue dialogue with downtown residents and businesses, non-governmental organizations, Yukon First Nations and people with living and lived experience.
- Continue to work with partners to discuss appropriate levels of accessibility when it comes to emergency services.
 - The Government of Yukon is having discussions with partners and service providers on barrier access standards and policies for services such as emergency housing.
- Work with the Department of Justice and City of Whitehorse to:
 - develop a community safety and wellbeing plan for the City of Whitehorse, focusing on the downtown;
 - identify accessible community washroom facilities; and
 - explore options around the beautification of Alexander Street.

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- Host a community Restorative Justice Circle to promote cross-learning and healing.

Long-term actions in progress:

- Review accessibility policies for emergency housing facilities and diversify the options that exist to meet support needs.
 - The Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan Creating Home commits the corporation to ensuring 35 per cent of new builds are accessible based on funding requirements.
- Finalize Yukon's rapid response to homelessness strategy by:
 - engaging with partners to develop a multi-pronged strategy based on collective understanding of needs;
 - continuing to implement integrated housing with supports in partnership with Health and Social Services; and
 - securing options for additional supportive and emergency housing.
- Work with the private sector partners on creating more affordable housing options.
 - This action aligns with the vision laid out in Creating Home, the Yukon Housing Corporation's five-year strategic plan.
- Build more Yukon Housing Corporation community housing units to alleviate the Yukon Housing Corporation waitlist and By-Name List pressures.
 - This action aligns with the vision laid out in Creating Home, the Yukon Housing Corporation's five-year strategic plan.

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Decentralized Services:

- We are continuing to work towards finding long-term solutions to decentralize services in Whitehorse.
- Moving forward, we will ensure that all locations offering these services will be culturally safe and accessible.
- The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition publishes a free food guide that is updated monthly.
- Currently, several organizations offer free meals for Yukoners:
 - 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.
 - Blood Ties Four Directions and the Whitehorse Food Bank offers hampers for individuals and families.

Background:

- An independent report, A Path Forward, was prepared by House of Wolf & Associates at the request of the Council of Yukon First Nations.
 - The report evaluated the shelter's effectiveness, its impact on the community and the clients it serves.
 - One of the recommendations was to decentralize some aspects of service delivery.

Jim Smith Building warming centre:

- The Jim Smith Building Community Warming Space will open in early November.
- The Community Warming Space will be available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

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- The space offers computer and internet access, warming areas, snacks and beverages, harm reduction supplies, period products, washroom facilities, games and reading materials.
- Free individual bus tickets will also be available.
 - This meets the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement initiative to replace fare-generated revenue for public transit.
- Two onsite workers, one of which is a Social Worker, will be available to provide supports and ensure a safe and inclusive environment.
- Through this project, we hope to reflect the values of compassion and inclusivity that are at the core of our work.
- As part of the Community Outreach Services team, an outreach worker will continue to be available at the Whitehorse Public Library to assist with supports and service connections.

Background:

- In late January 2024, the warming centre was announced by the Department of Health and Social Services and the pilot began during the spring sitting.
- From March 18 to May 17, 2024, the Government of Yukon ran the pilot project in the Jim Smith Building cafeteria.
 - The warming centre had a total of 1,245 visits (note, the same individual can visit multiple times) with an average of 29 visits per day. A total of 379 bus tickets were also handed out.
- Based on positive responses to the warming centre, a second year of service was planned for winter 2024–25 to open in early November.

Moccasin Mobile Outreach:

- The Council of Yukon First Nations launched the Moccasin Mobile Outreach initiative on February 1, 2024.

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- The Moccasin Mobile Outreach van is operated by the Council of Yukon First Nations and staffed by approximately five Yukon First Nations community outreach workers.
 - The intention of this service is to remove barriers for street-involved people by meeting individuals where and when they need support.
 - The outreach van operates between 8pm and 2am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
 - Outreach workers provide individuals a range of services including referral to shelter services, meal services, RCMP and medical services.
 - The Government of Yukon is committed to collaborating with the Moccasin Mobile Outreach to explore ways to support and strengthen their efforts.

Background:

- 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.

Approved by:Matt KingNovember 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Appendix A: List of Opportunities for the City of Whitehorse to Lead in Downtown Safety

- Beautify Alexander Street
- Install year-round public bathrooms through the downtown core
- Ongoing support (legislative and other) for Emergency Housing projects, like a pallet village
- Increase parking in the downtown core
- Develop improved parking options in the downtown core, encouraging more downtown activity
- Improved and expanded biking infrastructure
- Find ways to further utilize vacant and derelict downtown buildings, such as the tax plan for empty buildings
- Continued improvement for public transit
- Creating legislation for rideshare businesses
- Increase garbage cleanup and other beautification in downtown
- Investigate and implement traffic calming measures in strategic locations (ex: controlling the crosswalk on 4th and Alexander)
- Investigate opening a warming centre, as this typically is done by municipalities in other jurisdictions

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

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

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Addressing Housing Barriers in Health Human Resource Recruitment:**Key facts:**

- One of the key challenges in attracting health professionals to the Yukon is the limited availability of affordable housing, particularly in rural communities. This is a critical barrier to both recruitment and retention efforts.
- The Department of Health and Social Services provides housing for Nurses and other critical workers in rural communities.
- When available, the Yukon Hospital Corporation has dedicated short-term staff accommodation units in Whitehorse, Watson Lake and Dawson. It is available for short locum staff, agencies and staff from the Department of National Defense under the MOU to advance their work experience.
- Meeting housing demands is an ongoing challenge. The Department of National Defense staff are scheduled at times when the organization can support them, including housing availability.
 - In seasons of peak housing demand to support itinerant staff, the Yukon Hospital Corporation may choose not to have the Department of National Defense staff on-site.

Bursaries:**Key facts:**

- Our government provides funding for the Medical Education Bursary, the Nursing Education Bursary, and the Health and Social Profession Education Bursary programs.
- Consistent with the Health Human Resource strategy, these programs are under review to ensure that they meet current needs and objectives.

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- During the 2024– 25 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services has budgeted \$89,000 through the Medical Education Bursary, the Nursing Education Bursary and the Health Profession Education Bursary programs to provide financial supports for up to 16 new recipients each year.
- In 2023– 24, a total of 46 Yukoners received bursaries for studies in health care fields:
 - \$82,500 went into 14 medical bursaries;
 - \$65,000 went to 16 students pursuing nursing education and
 - \$50,000 went to 16 students pursuing other health care professions.
- Currently, our bursary programs do not include a Return of Service Agreement that requires graduates to return to the Yukon to deliver care.
- Our government is working to expand our programs to create greater incentives for students to return to work in the Yukon.
- Yukon residents studying medicine or intending to study medicine can apply to other funding programs administered by the Canadian Medical Foundation, the First Nations Health Program at Whitehorse General Hospital and the Yukon Foundation.
- The Government of Canada is offering a student loan forgiveness program for doctors and Nurses who reside in a community with a population of 50,000 or less to entice more Doctors and Nurses to rural communities. It is expected to expand to other health professionals in the future.

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Department of National Defence's Canadian Forces health services:**Key facts:**

- This program welcomes health professionals from the Department of National Defence's Canadian Forces Health Services group to work in Yukon health care settings to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills between their deployments.
- Through this partnership, Canadian Forces Health Services Nurses and other regulated health professionals have been working in the Yukon to learn, advance and share their expertise while enhancing our health care service across the territory.
- Department of National Defence Nurses have been working in the Watson Lake and Dawson community hospitals since May 2024.
- A Medical Radiation Technologist has joined the diagnostic imaging team at the Whitehorse General Hospital under the memorandum of understanding.
- The program has been successful for both the communities and the visiting Nurses and has supported workplaces.
- Length of visits depend upon placements and can be for a few weeks to months at a time. The number of health professionals participating will depend on availability and interest.

Foreign Credential Recognition Program:**Key facts:**

- The Government of Yukon has entered a **\$3.6M** funding agreement with the Government of Canada to deliver a four-year pilot project called the Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

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- The program aims to strengthen and streamline pathways for internationally educated health professionals to enter Yukon's health and social services workforce.
 - This project is expected to run until January 2028.
 - This program is jointly led by Health and Social Services and Economic Development and includes the Internationally Educated Health Professionals navigator program.

Health Human Resources Strategy:**Key facts:**

- The Yukon Health Human Resources Strategy was released in December 2023.
- The strategy provides a systemic, coordinated and informed roadmap towards a health and social services system that will meet Yukoners' current and future needs.
 - The strategy builds on existing progress in the Yukon's health and social service sectors and includes key metrics to track progress and success, which will be reported publicly.
- The strategy is built on five key pillars, which aim to boost the delivery of quality care and services and attract more health professionals to live and work in the Yukon.
 - Retain: Build and support skilled, passionate, healthy, diverse and inclusive teams.
 - Recruit: Grow and attract a passionate, engaged and qualified workforce reflective of the needs of Yukoners.
 - Plan: Collect the right data to support long-term workforce planning, identify gaps and make evidence-based decisions.

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- Innovate: Promote and implement new ways of working and learning.
- Learn: Create more growth, training and educational opportunities for Yukoners to learn locally.
- Within these pillars are 25 actions to be implemented jointly over the next three years by the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and our partners on the Health Human Resources Steering Committee.
- We are working with our partners to strengthen our collective recruitment efforts by building a centralized recruitment website, increasing and focusing our marketing and attending more recruitment events.
- In December 2023, we conducted surveys and focus groups with health and social professionals to gather ideas and input on potential retention initiatives as part of the Health Human Resources strategy.
 - The reports from these activities are now in the final editing stage and staff have provided many achievable solutions, some of which have been implemented or are being planned.

Background:

- The Health Human Resources budget includes funding to support the following initial initiatives:
 - **\$559K** for staffing.
 - **\$224K** (\$224,050) for consulting including a physician recruiter for the Yukon Medical Association.
 - **\$584K** (\$584,000) for university programming, including the Social Worker Degree Program and the Medical Office Assistant Diploma Program and Yukon University and funding for a Licensed Practical Nurses-Registered Nurses bridging program through the University of New Brunswick.

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- \$280K (\$280,000) for recruitment efforts, with a focus on Canadian recruitment and partnerships in India, Ireland and the United Kingdom.
- \$244K (\$244,048) for administrative costs associated with strategy implementation.
- Additional funding for long-term initiatives will be made available through future budgetary processes as the strategy is implemented.
- Employees wishing to pursue a higher level of education (outside of the bridging program) can access funding through the learning development fund, financially supported by Health and Social Services and Organizational Development Branch.

Health Human Resource Steering Committee:**Key facts:**

- The Health Human Resources Steering Committee comprises representatives from Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon University, First Nations, L'AFY, Yukon Hospital Corporation and several government departments.
- The Committee is looking at all aspects of Health Human Resources including retention, recruitment, planning, learning and innovation. They provide overall direction and oversight to the implementation work stemming from the strategy.
- The work of this committee aligns with the ongoing collaborative efforts of Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, which are supported by recent federal investments that identify health human resources as a shared priority.

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Health Human Resources steering committee YEU withdrawal

- Yukon Employee's Union (YEU) and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) issued a press release on October 7 announcing their withdrawal from the HHR steering committee.
- We respect the concerns raised by the Yukon Employee Union and Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada and remain committed to ensuring that labour voices are heard in the implementation of the Health Human Resource Strategy. We view unions as essential partners in shaping solutions for the healthcare workforce.
- While we are disappointed by their decision to step away from the committee, the door remains open for continued dialogue. When the time is right, we will welcome their return to the table to continue our important work together.
- From the outset, our goal has been to include a range of stakeholders, including union representatives, in the Health Human Resources Steering Committee. We acknowledge that improvements are needed to ensure more meaningful and active participation from all parties.
- The Department of Health and Social Services met with representatives of both YEU and PIPSC on September 9 to address concerns about union participation on the steering committee.
- While YEU was unable to attend the September 25 steering committee meeting, they did commit to providing feedback by October 23. They also expressed that they did not have the capacity to provide feedback within the eight working days requested.

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- Representatives from the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PIPSC) or Yukon Employees' Union (YEU) attended five Human Health Resources (HHR) Steering Committee meetings in 2024.
- Department staff engaged with YEU and/or PIPSC representatives on three separate occasions in 2024 to discuss the HHR strategy, its implementation and the roles of SC members.
- The HHR Steering Committee includes representation from the following organizations:
 - Yukon Government (various departments)
 - Yukon Hospital Corporation
 - Yukon University
 - Yukon Medical Council
 - Yukon Registered Nurses Association
 - Yukon Medical Association
 - Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN)
 - Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN)
 - Association franco-yukonnaise
- The Health and Social Services Department and Yukon Hospital Cooperation co-chair the HHR Steering Committee. Meetings are typically held every one to two months.
- The co-chairs invite additional agenda items at the start of each meeting.
- The committee has been flexible in making time for emerging issues raised by member organizations during meetings.
- The Committee is looking at all aspects of Health Human Resources including retention, recruitment, planning, learning and innovation.

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They provide overall direction and oversight into the implementation work stemming from the strategy.

- The steering committee remains dedicated to finding long-term, sustainable solutions for Yukon's healthcare system. This work is essential for ensuring the future of health care services in our territory.
- The use of staffing agencies is a temporary measure to address urgent healthcare staffing needs, especially in light of the global shortage of health professionals. However, we are actively working toward longer-term solutions that prioritize sustainable, full-time and unionized employment in the healthcare system.
- Despite this setback, we will continue to move forward to achieve the goals of the Health Human Resource Strategy. The work is too important for Yukoners, and we are committed to making progress together.
- We are deeply committed to improving the work environment for Yukon health care professionals, including competitive wages, work-life balance, and secure employment.
- The Health Human Resource Strategy remains focused on finding lasting, effective solutions for healthcare workers and the quality-of-care Yukoners receive.
- We believe we are stronger when we bring together diverse voices and experiences from across the healthcare system. The involvement of unions and other stakeholders remains vital to ensuring the success of this strategy.

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India internationally educated health professional recruitment:**Key facts:**

- We are working on an arrangement with the University of New Brunswick to add up to 15 nursing seats a year to their dual degree program with a university in India.
- Students in this program would do practicum work in the Yukon and graduate with full accreditation with a dual Indian and Canadian degree and practical and cultural experience to work in the Yukon afterward.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has engaged in positive meetings with Apollo Hospitals, which is the largest private health care provider in India.
- Apollo presents many promising opportunities for recruitment, education and technology support for the Yukon.
- Our primary focus is piloting a recruitment pathway for Nurses, initially with the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Internationally educated health professionals:**Key facts:**

- Internationally educated health professionals have historically played an important role in the delivery of health care in Canada. We recognize that leveraging their expertise is a priority for all Governments across Canada.
- We are working with regulators and our federal, provincial and territorial partners to discuss pathways to licensing physicians, including internationally educated physicians.

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- The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Registered Nurses Associations are working to evolve regulations to improve entry pathways for Nurses both nationally and internationally.
 - Amendments will allow Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners to apply directly for licenses in the Yukon, reducing system barriers and expanding prescribing abilities to enhance health support and broaden essential health care roles.
- We are establishing a navigator program for Internationally Educated Health Professionals already living in the Yukon. We have a list of self-identified individuals, and the navigators will reach out to them imminently.
- Continuing Care has provided educational reimbursement funds to Internationally Educated Nurses to help them meet the educational requirements for obtaining their Canadian license and have been offering extra mentoring once they are hired.
- Internationally educated health professionals who are underemployed and living in the Yukon can contact HHR@yukon.ca to connect with a team collecting information on how best to support them.
- From January 31, 2023 to August 26, 2024, we hired 24 internationally educated professionals into Nursing Home Attendant positions.

Letter of Intent with Nova Scotia:**Key facts:**

- On July 26, 2023, our government signed a Letter of Intent with the Government of Nova Scotia to work collaboratively on Health Human Resources.

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- Nova Scotia has adopted innovative strategies to create new opportunities to address recruitment and retention.
- Officials from both jurisdictions have developed a comprehensive set of issues and have partnered and shared information on several of these topics. Collaboration continues at the working level.
- Three officials from Health and Social Services attended the Healthcare Recruitment and Retention Community Conference in Truro, Nova Scotia on April 23– 24, 2024, which was primarily related to recruitment of health sector workers and integration of internationally educated professionals. These learnings are being applied to a framework for transitions to practice for Internationally Educated Nurses and new Canadian nursing graduates. It will be adapted to other professions in the future.
- We are also in contact with officials in the province to explore options for a more efficient physician licensing arrangement for Yukon-bound doctors.

Licensing:**Key facts:**

- As of November 3, 2024, newly graduated Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners, as well as student nurses can register directly to practice in the Yukon. Pathways for Nurses to work in the Yukon have opened with the proclamation of the *Amendment to the Registered Nurses Profession Act*, which was assented to last fall.
- Internationally educated Nurses can also apply directly to register to practice in the Yukon. This includes those who may already be or live here but are working in other fields.

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- Under the old legislation, Nurses and Nurse practitioners were required to be registered in another Canadian jurisdiction before they could apply to work in the Yukon. With the amendment to the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* this extra step is no longer required.
- The Registrar of Medical Practitioners actively participates in national and cross-jurisdictional organizations and initiatives aimed at harmonizing and streamlining licensing pathways.
- We recognize that Nurses are fundamental to a high-functioning healthcare system. We are working with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to find ways to streamline licensing for Registered Nurses.
- Our goal is to minimize any administrative burden that draws resources away from care while ensuring that health professionals are appropriately regulated, and Yukoners have access to safe, high-quality health care.

LPN-RN bridging**Key facts**

- The Government of Yukon has finalized the agreement with the University of New Brunswick for two cohorts of a Yukon “Learn Where You Live” LPN to RN Pathway starting September 2024.
- Seventeen Yukon LPNs will start this pathway in the first cohort and up to 20 LPNs can be supported in the second cohort starting fall 2025.
- Through this pathway the first set of LPNs are expected to graduate with their degree in Nursing and be eligible to write their Registered Nurse licensing exam in summer of 2027. The second group will graduate in summer 2028.

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- This program supports existing Yukon LPNs who are already committed to the territory and working in the system to obtain their next level of education without leaving the Yukon.
- The program will incorporate classroom, Virtual Reality clinical simulation and in-person clinical learnings throughout.
- The University of New Brunswick program is cutting edge in the country using technology to support virtual learning.
- Yukon University is exploring options for a Yukon based nursing degree program while these classes commence.

Partnership with Canadian educational institutions:**Key facts:**

- We are working with Yukon University to expand programming to support Yukoners to pursue health-related careers.
- The Government of Yukon funds Yukon University to offer a Practical Nurse Diploma.
- Yukon University offers, in partnership with the University of Regina, a Bachelor of Social Work degree. We are supporting Yukon University to enhance this program to better meet the needs of Yukoners and deliver a more locally based program as a Yukon University degree program.
- Yukon University offers a Health Care Assistant program which provides Yukoners with the skills needed to be front-line caregivers.
- Since the beginning of 2023, Continuing Care has supported more than 10 staff in moving from Nursing Home Attendants into Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse positions. Additionally, 10 staff

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members are currently preparing for the National Council Licensure Examination this year.

- We are supporting Yukon University to offer a Medical Office Assistant program in 2025 with the intent to lower the administrative burden on all health professionals in the long term.
- Yukon University's Board of Governors approved the University to pursue a nursing degree program.

Physician recruitment and retention:

Key facts:

- The Government of Yukon has provided funding to the Yukon Medical Association to explore the development of family medicine residency program.
 - In the fiscal year 2023 – 24, we provided \$5,000 to launch exploration and in 2024 – 25, we allocated an additional \$20,000.
 - We are also collaborating with the Yukon Medical Association on options and educational partners to solidify associated costs.
- Our government has also invested \$120,000 to support the Yukon Medical Association in enhancing physician recruitment for locum physicians. This investment has resulted in;
 - Thirty – two physicians supporting the hospitalists program since January 2024.
 - On hundred and seven locums have been booked to cover leave for physicians in Whitehorse in 2024.
 - Additional support for extensive onboarding of locums including support to obtain licensing, hospital privileges etc.

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Services

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Health and Wellness Yukon**Health and Social
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Government Priority:

- One of the key recommendations in Putting People First (Action 1.2) is to create an arm's length agency to manage and deliver health and some social services in the Yukon – a health authority for the Yukon.
- Health system transformation is also supported by engagement work to advance Community Health and Wellness Plans for care delivery based on a community-identified vision.

Key Messages:

- The Government of Yukon is working in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon First Nations and health partners to create an effective, efficient, integrated and person-centered health and social services system, based on equity and respect for all Yukoners.
- The health authority will serve as a principal health service provider and contributor to the overall health system's transformation.
- The Indigenous name for the Yukon's health authority is Shāw Kwä'ą, pronounced SHOW – KWA – AH, and means all is well/all is good, in Southern Tutchone.
- In French, the name for Health and Wellness Yukon is Santé et mieux-être Yukon.
- With the passage of the *Health Authority Act*, we are continuing the process to develop Shāw Kwä'ą/Health and Wellness Yukon/ Santé et mieux-être Yukon as the centerpiece of Yukon's health and social services system transformation. This initiative will take significant engagement, consultation and collaborative effort over several years.

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- Over time, the new health authority will:
 - improve the health care and social services system with the goal of eliminating the systemic racism that exists today;
 - provide every Yukoner access to a regular care team and quality services when needed;
 - ensure services are integrated, connected and culturally safe;
 - strive to provide care closer to a person's home or their community;
 - Provide meaningful involvement for communities and people with lived experience to inform the development and operation of the health authority; and
- Setting up the health authority is a complex initiative. We are going to take the time to do it right.
- In the interim, work to support the development of Community Health and Wellness plans is advancing.
- Community Health and Wellness plans are community-specific planning documents that inform the health and wellness planning, priorities, and needs of each community.
 - The Community Health and Wellness plans development process will support and empower communities to define wellness for their community and identify the health and wellness outcomes that they want to work towards.

Community wellness planning:**Key facts:**

- Community Health and Wellness Planning engagement is the next phase in implementing the Health Authority.

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- Every Yukon community has unique characteristics, needs, resources, and challenges that must be considered to effectively address their health and wellness concerns.
- Community Health and Wellness Plans are tailored, site specific documents that articulate a community's vision for health and wellness.
- Community Health and Wellness Plans aim to provide a process and mechanism for a community to build a vision and provide direction for health and wellness in their community and participate in health and wellness planning that takes into account all of the community assets and needs.
- Wellness is broadly defined as the state of being in good health as an actively pursued goal. This active pursuit could include, but is not limited to, healthcare service provision, education, safety and justice issues and cultural initiatives. Communities will work on their own definition of "wellness" as part of the community wellness planning process.
- For many, wellness is defined as a balance of physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional factors.
- We will develop Community Health and Wellness Plans through community engagement with health and social services providers, non-governmental organizations, First Nations governments, private sector providers, other government partners and members of the public.
- We have partnered with the Council of Yukon First Nations to ensure cultural safety and consistent liaison with Yukon First Nations throughout this process.

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- First Nations are essential government partners in the development of community wellness planning processes and will be engaged to provide input on the Community Health and Wellness Plans and the territorial Yukon Health and Wellness Plan.
- To gather the most correct and relevant data, opportunities to engage will be pursued in a variety of ways. This could include surveys, focus groups, one on one interviews and other qualitative and quantitative methodologies appropriate to gathering robust data.
- We aim to make the engagement process as accessible and culturally safe as possible to make sure input is properly gathered.
- The community wellness planning process is nearing completion, and active engagement will begin in the coming months.
- We anticipate all communities that want a community wellness plan, will have one within two years.
- Community Health and Wellness Plans will be owned by the community once complete.

Background:

- Community Health and Wellness Plans are a key priority and central to the transformation of the health system and a driver for addressing community needs.
- The Community Health and Wellness Plans are a key priority under the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- Community Health and Wellness Plans will support and encourage communities to improve and maintain their collective health and wellness. This will be achieved by each community through the collective visioning and defining of wellness, followed by prioritization of health and wellness outcomes.
- A subsequent implementation plan may be developed to further support prioritization and the implementation of actions offered by the all the partners

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including: Yukon First Nations Governments, Government of Yukon, municipalities and other partners, as decided upon or accepted by communities.

- Community Health and Wellness Plans will feed into to the Yukon Health and Wellness Plan, a multi-year plan that will set the vision and principles for Yukon's health and social services system, population health and health in communities. This plan will set government priorities and be a source of accountability.

Cultural Safety and Humility:

Key facts:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to embedding cultural safety and humility in the health and social system to create environments where First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples feel recognized, respected and celebrated for their cultural identities.
- This work includes engaging with Yukon First Nations governments to prioritize actions and initiatives outlined in Putting People First for implementation.
- Health and Social Services has been investing in embedding cultural safety and humility. Our work to date includes:
 - Requiring staff to take First Nations 101 as a prerequisite to work in the Yukon.
 - Elder knowledge sharing occurs weekly at the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Sarah Steele building.
 - A Cultural Counselling Consultant position is embedded in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
 - Continuing Care is working towards an Indigenous Relations recruitment competency to recruit First Nations healthcare professionals.
 - Continuing Care holds Monthly Sharing Circles.

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- Family and Children's Services works together with the Council of Yukon First Nations to regularly revise the Core training to ensure that appropriate cultural awareness content is provided to social workers. First Nations family support/community liaison workers are also invited to enroll in the Core training course.

Health Authority financial controls:

Key facts:

- In Spring 2024, the Department of Health and Social Services passed the Yukon's *Health Authority Act* and work is underway to stand up this new entity.
- The Act includes stipulations and high-level processes to ensure fiscal and administrative responsibility, transparency and accountability.
- The *Health Authority Act* includes sections outlining processes geared towards the oversight of the health authority operation, management and expenditure.
 - It is required as per s. 51(1) that the Board must ensure that the accounts and financial transactions of the health authority are audited in accordance with the regulations under this Act or the Yukon Act (Canada) at least once a year.
 - S. 68 grants the Minister the ability to appoint one or more persons to inquire into and report on the quality of the management and administration of or provision of any health and social services by the health authority should they deem it as being in the public interest.
- The Act allows the health authority to borrow money for its purposes and use its property as security. However, borrowing is subject to

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49.01A(b) of the *Financial Administration Act* requiring the approval from the Management Board.

- This power will also be subject to regulations which will be drafted through the lens of fiscal responsibility and accountability.
- Finally, with regards to any concern around the buildup of a deficit, s. 57 of the *Health Authority Act* specifically outlines that the health authority must not incur an annual operational funding deficit.
 - Should the authority anticipate that it will incur a deficit, it must notify the Minister of Health and Social Services immediately and take action identified under the Act to address the deficit.

Background:

- The Northwest Territories legislative assembly has called on the auditor general of Canada to review the territory's health-care system and more specifically, a performance audit on the management of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority and its delivery of care services.
- The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority's growing deficit was deemed unsustainable.
- All jurisdictions across Canada are dealing with increasing complexity in care delivery leading to high health care costs and the Territories are not immune.
- Officials at the Department of Health and Social Services have been in communication with counterparts at the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority; we will take this opportunity to learn from our partners as we work to implement Shāw Kwä'ą.

Health Authority update:

Key facts:

- The process to develop Shāw Kwä'ą/Health and Wellness Yukon/ Santé et mieux-être Yukon as the centerpiece of Yukon's health and

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social services system transformation will take significant engagement, consultation and collaborative effort over several years.

- Setting up the health authority is a complex initiative. We are going to take the time to do it right.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working with First Nation partners through the Health Transformation Advisory Committee to develop an implementation plan including the governance mechanisms and board criteria as outlined in the Health Authority Act.
- This spring as part of the 2024-25 main estimates, there was an increase of 22.5 Full Time Equivalents for the purpose of supporting Putting People first, health system transformation, the health authority as well as the development and implementation of the Health Human Resources strategy and the Cultural Safety branch.
 - Hiring an executive team for the health authority has not yet commenced.

Health Transformation Advisory Committee:

Key facts:

- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee is made up of the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and three Yukon First Nation senior officials appointed by the Chiefs Committee on Health and selected based on their experience and expertise.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee's mandate includes providing recommendations to the Minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health to create Shāw Kwä'ą and identify opportunities for overall health system integration and improvement.

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- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee facilitated information sessions for many First Nations, NGOs, stakeholders and other interest groups.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee is now turning its attention to the implementation of Shāw Kwä'ą and other related initiatives.

Background:

- In June 2023, the Health Transformation Advisory Committee was formed through recommendations from the Minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health.
- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee is comprised of three parties, the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and appointees by the Chief Committee on Health. It held its first meeting on July 26, 2023, and developed a Terms of Reference document and a workplan. Work is underway to establish the mechanisms necessary to stand up the authority.
 - The committee met regularly to steer policy and legislative development until the legislation was complete and tabled.
 - The committee led joint engagement on behalf of the Government of Yukon, the Hospital Corporation and the Chiefs Committee on Health on the development of the *Health Authority Act*.
- The workplan is a deliverable as per the committee Terms of Reference and is a live document that will guide the work of the committee to operationalize Shāw Kwä'ą and implement Putting People First recommendations more broadly.

Legislation:

Key facts:

- The *Health Authority Act* is the framework legislation to establish the governance and structure of the health authority.
- The Act prescribes critical aspects of the health authority including,

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- The establishment of a competency based Board of Directors that will include diversity and residency criteria.
 - The responsibilities and powers of the health authority,
 - Financial operations and management and
 - Transition and coming into force.
- The Act aims to support the transformation of the health and social system in a manner consistent with advancing reconciliation through strong partnerships with Yukon First Nations.
- The intention is to:
 - develop a system that protects, promotes and improves physical and mental health and wellness of Yukoners; and
 - ensure equitable access to services.

Partnerships:**Key Messages:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to informing and working in partnership with other health system partners, such as the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and other professional associations.
- The new health authority will be required to address racism and develop a cultural safety framework.
 - We are working closely with First Nations through the Chiefs Committee on Health and the Health Transformation Advisory Committee to start work in this area.

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Background:

- In June 2023, the Chiefs Committee on Health was established to provide direction and oversight regarding the transformation of the health and social system in the Yukon.
 - The Chiefs Committee on Health operates at the equivalent of the Yukon government's ministerial level. The committee is comprised of the following members, appointed by Yukon First Nations Leadership:
 - Chair and Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Pauline Frost
 - Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Barb Joe
 - Carcross/Tagish First Nation Deputy Chief Darla-Jean Lindstrom
 - Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Wolf Councilor Tanya Silverfox
- The Chiefs Committee on Health will work to form the Yukon First Nations' health committee now that the *Health Authority Act* is in effect.

Pensions:

Key facts:

- We are dedicated to preserving a similar level of pension benefits for all employees affected by this transition.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has a different pension plan than the Government of Yukon employees working for the Department of Health and Social Services.
- The Hospital pension plan is sponsored by the Hospital and its Pension Committee of the Board of Trustees, whereas the Public Service Superannuation Plan that Government of Yukon employees participate in is sponsored by the federal government.
- The Government of Yukon is exploring potential pension solutions for Shāw Kwä'ą / Health and Wellness Yukon / Santé et mieux-être Yukon.

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- We are working with experts in the business field to explore pension options, ensuring they are fiscally sustainable, attractive to workers, supported by unions, and equitable for staff who transition to the health authority. This includes understanding how the benefits of the plans that employees currently participate in could be continued, if possible.
- Once our analysis is finished, we will share relevant details with key stakeholders to facilitate discussions.
- The intention of a pension plan for Shāw Kwä'ą / Health and Wellness Yukon employees is to have a similar level of pension benefits and stability.
- We will consult with the affected unions and communicate with employees when we know more.

Background:

- The legislative framework governing employment relations at Shāw Kwä'ą will be subject to *The Yukon Employment Standards Act*, and the *Canada Labour Code*.
- Under the *Canada Labour Code*, successorship rights exist for all bargaining unit employees giving protection to terms and conditions of employment through a transfer of operations.
 - Unionized employees will continue to be unionized, and will maintain their negotiated collective agreements entitlements, comparable pension benefits, and comparable benefits package. If this results in inequities such as different pay for similar work, then those inequities will be addressed at bargaining with the unions representing the employees

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Staff transition:**Key facts:**

- We understand that staff have questions about the changes that will occur with the implementation of the new health authority. We are prioritizing the well-being and support of our workforce as we navigate this transformation.
- We are focused on achieving a health and social system that is integrated, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist and puts Yukoners at the centre.
- This work is in its early stages. We are committed to working with staff, the health and social services workforce, our health system partners, Yukon First Nations, and others. This engagement will occur directly with staff and through union engagement.
- Since commencing this work, we have approached health system transformation with a change management lens that recognizes the importance of building awareness amongst the workforce and supporting employees through the planning and eventual transition.
- Short- and long-term communications approaches are being developed to support this work. We continue to hold internal meetings and provide updates to the workforce as they are available.

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Transition budget:

Key facts:

- There is a total of 11 new time-limited FTEs to support Putting People First, Health and Wellness Yukon, implementation of the Health Human Resources Strategy, and Cultural Safety and Humility.

Purpose	FTEs
Health System Transformation: Implementing PPF, Health and Wellness Yukon + Cultural safety (THIF funded)	28.5
Existing THIF-funded positions	(17.5)
Net new	11

Union engagement:

Key facts:

- We started communication with the Yukon Employees' Union regarding Putting People First and the transition to an independent health authority in February 2022. As we advance the transition, we will increase the frequency of engagement as necessary and have maintained regular communication with the Yukon Employees' Union since fall 2023.
- In accordance with our Collective Agreement, we are committed to consulting with the Yukon Employees' Union and will provide it with formal notice of consultation regarding the transfer of any programs involving bargaining unit employees when appropriate, focusing on matters such as pay, benefits, and pensions.

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- Between March 2024 and April 15, 2024, we hosted seven staff engagement sessions or open house nights, welcoming both Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services staff. There were seven additional staff open houses held between April 16 and April 30.
 - For some of these, the Department of Health and Social Services visited communities, prioritizing visits to the community hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City
- Beginning on May 23, 2024, representatives from the Public Service Commission, the Department of Health and Social Services, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Employees' Union and the Professional Institute of the Public Service Canada have been meeting monthly to discuss the labour impacts of a transition to a Health Authority. This group will continue to meet throughout the transition and for up to one year after the transfer takes place.
- The Department has also begun hosting a series of five presentations for the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation staff on the quality learning framework to seek feedback starting in July and running into September.

Unions, pay and benefits:**Key facts:**

- In accordance with our Collective Agreement, we are committed to consulting with the Yukon Employees' Union and will provide them with formal notice of consultation regarding the transfer of any

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programs involving bargaining unit employees when appropriate, focusing on matters such as pay, benefits, and pensions.

- We are also committed to honouring and protecting the rights of management and confidential excluded staff. Every member of our team, whether frontline, support or management, plays an essential role in ensuring we can continue to provide high-quality person-centered health care to Yukoners.
- Preserving similar levels of pay, benefits and pensions are essential to our transformation goals. We are committed to consulting with unions and keeping staff informed as we move forward on these details.
- The health care providers and staff currently working in the system are our greatest asset. Ensuring an effective transition of staff, including working closely with unions, will be one of the key activities during this interim period.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- In January 2022, our government declared a Substance Use Health Emergency in response to an increase in substance use related harms in the territory, including a significant increase in opioid-related deaths.
- In August 2023, in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon released the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- In response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, we have implemented Car 867, increased access to Opioid Treatment Services and access to safer supply, opened the second supervised consumption site in Canada equipped to support people who consume drugs by inhalation and extended the hours of operation at the Supervised Consumption Site, held two Mental Wellness Summits, initiated a Paramedic Response Unit in the downtown core including at 405 Alexander and increased access to harm reduction supplies.

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- We have developed the territory's first residential Managed Alcohol Program, set to become operational in fall 2024.
- This is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone. We appreciate the work of our partners: Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Connective, the RCMP, Yukon First Nations and all levels of government towards addressing this public health emergency.

Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy:

- Included in the Department of Health and Social Services Operation and Maintenance Main Estimates for the 2024-25 budget are:
 - an increase of **\$1.2M** (\$1,201,000) and a previously approved increase of **\$267K** (\$267,000) for 6.0 FTEs to continue to advance the work on the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy;
 - **\$4.3M** (\$4,347,000) for the Land-Based Healing Funding Initiative; and
 - **\$1.3M** (\$1,266,000) to fund 5.5 FTEs for the Residential Managed Alcohol Program.
 - These increases are recoverable through the Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians Agreement. This bilateral agreement was announced in July 2023, and signed March 12, 2024.

Current data:

- From April 2016 through the end of 2023, there have been 98 Yukoners who have died due to opioids.

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- From January 1 to August 14, 2024, there have been six confirmed substance-use related deaths, all involving opioids.
 - In 2023, there were 23 confirmed substance-use related deaths in the Yukon. 20 of these involved opioids.
 - In 2022, there were 24 confirmed substance-related deaths in the Yukon.
- From January 1 to June 30, 2024, there were 34 visits to Yukon hospitals for drug poisoning and 1,118 alcohol-related visits.
 - For the same period in 2023, there were 56 drug poisoning visits and 1,010 alcohol-related visits.
 - In 2023, there were 82 visits to Yukon hospitals for drug poisoning and 1,916 alcohol-related visits.
- From January 1 to August 31, 2024, Emergency Medical Services responded to 182 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 738 alcohol-related calls.
 - For the same period in 2023, Emergency Medical Services responded to 241 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 556 alcohol-related calls.
 - In 2023, Emergency Medical Services responded to 327 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 813 alcohol-related calls.

Actions to date:

- On September 24, 2024, two information sessions were held about the Planet Youth Initiative for community members, organizations, and leaders interested in creating a healthier future for Yukon youth using an evidence-based approach.

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- In June 2024, in partnership with the federal government and local NGOs, we launched the new Canada Yukon Housing Benefit rent subsidy for people fleeing gender-based violence.
 - The program, administered through Yukon Housing Corporation, will provide more than \$2 million annually to help survivors of gender-based violence to obtain and maintain safe housing.
- In February 2024, the Supervised Consumption Site expanded their hours to be open seven days a week from 10:30am to 9:30pm, including statutory holidays.
 - 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 July 2024, staff at the Supervised Consumption Staff have reversed 84 overdoses onsite and have had no fatalities.
- In January and June 2024, the Department of Justice increased frontline support staffing within Yukon Community Corrections through the addition of two time-limited positions: a support and outreach worker was hired in January 2024, and a Clinical Counsellor in June 2024.
 - The two positions work to meet the needs of those transitioning out of the justice system and will travel to communities to provide support to Yukon Community Corrections clients.
- In 2024, Thay K'i Anint'I (Thigh-KEY- anna-tay) and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services created a partnership to promote cultural healing journeys specializing in recovery after care.
- In 2024, 39 of the 44 applications received for the Land-based healing Fund Initiative were approved by the Council of Yukon First

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Nations. A total of \$3,740,000 has been allocated to support these projects.

- We continue to support on-the-land healing and treatment options in the territory.
- In 2024, the Department of Justice is funding two additional RCMP officers and the Department of Health and Social Services' Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' branch is funding two nursing positions to expand capacity to Car 867.
 - With the additional staffing, the program has now expanded from five eight-hour days to seven days a week, with 10-hour shifts to provide greater coverage during peak need hours.
 - In October 2022, we launched Car 867. This Mobile Crisis Response Team pairs trained RCMP officers with nurses to provide real-time assessment of individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems.
- In 2023, an additional investigator for the SCAN Unit was hired with funding from the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- In January 2022, we increased access to Opioid Treatment Services at 405 Alexander by expanding prescriber coverage to two days per week.
 - We also expanded opioid medication coverage to include Sublocade in January 2022.
 - In February 2022, we expanded medically indicated Opioid Treatment Services delivery and access through outreach workers and nurses at the Referred Care Clinic to outreach clinics at 405 Alexander and Housing First on 5th Ave.

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- We are strengthening the Safer Supply program and Opioid Treatment Services team with nine new positions. These positions include one Registered Nurse supervisor, two Registered Nurses, two Licensed Practical Nurses, one Community Engagement Worker and one Administrative Assistant.
- We have organized three territory-wide public awareness and education campaigns.
- We held Youth Roots: A Substance Use Prevention Gathering over two days in November 2022. We explored innovative and emerging approaches with Yukoners, partners and subject matter experts.
- We hosted two Mental Wellness Summits on February 14 and 15, 2022 and September 21 to 23, 2022 to hear from leaders, partners, subject matter experts and people with lived and living experience.
- We have increased access to Withdrawal Management beds by hiring additional licensed practical nurses.
- The seasonal 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.

Community outreach:

- We will continue to support Yukon First Nations governments to improve health and social services in Yukon communities.
- We are supporting the Council of Yukon First Nations Moccasin Mobile Outreach initiative, which launched February 1, 2024.

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- The Moccasin Mobile Outreach van is operated by the Council of Yukon First Nations and staffed by approximately five Yukon First Nations Community Outreach Workers.
- The Outreach Workers provide individuals a range of services including referral to shelter services, meal services, RCMP and medical services.
- The outreach van operates between 8pm and 2am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.
- The intention of this service is to remove barriers for street-involved people by meeting individuals where and when they need support.
- The Government of Yukon is committed to collaborating with Moccasin Mobile Outreach to explore ways to support and strengthen their efforts.
- We support Blood Ties Four Direction's initiative to increase distribution of take-home fentanyl testing kits in rural Yukon communities.
 - Blood Ties Four Directions provides harm reduction services in Whitehorse through the Outreach Van, and Mental Wellness Substance Use Services staff working in Whitehorse and communities also provide harm reduction supplies and training.
- Expanding Opioid Treatment Services, including a Safer Supply program, to communities outside of Whitehorse is an element of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

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Services**Implementation committee:**

- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy implementation committee is formed of project partners who are responsible for carrying out the actions in the strategy.
 - The committee functions as a space for information sharing and collaboration for bringing the actions in the strategy to life.
- We have hired a dedicated project manager to coordinate the implementation of the strategy.
- The recommended actions for the committee will be brought forward by the project manager and members will be responsible for providing advice and recommendations to their Deputy Ministers or other organizational leadership.
 - The committee will seek consensus and viable alternative options on actions but will not have formal decision-making authority.
- Membership in the committee is by invitation and will include:
 - Project manager, Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy;
 - Department of Health and Social Services: Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Emergency Medical Services, Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation, Health Promotion, Corporate Services, etc.
 - Department of Justice: Community Justice and Public Safety;
 - Council of Yukon First Nations;
 - Blood Ties Four Directions Centre;
 - Thay K'i Anint'l (thigh-KEY-anna-tay);
 - RCMP;
 - Yukon Hospital Corporation;

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- Yukon Housing Corporation;
 - person(s) with lived experience; and
 - other community partners, as needed.
- Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation has an evaluation framework that will be used to assess implementation.
- The committee will establish regular meetings every six weeks, with additional meetings called with smaller working groups as needed. Frequency of meetings will be determined and adjusted as needed by the Chair and committee members.

Managed Alcohol Program:

- The Managed Alcohol Program is a long-term program geared toward supporting individuals who live with severe and treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder.
- A Managed Alcohol Program has been developed in Whitehorse and is anticipated to be implemented in fall 2024.
 - This initiative will help protect one of the Yukon's most vulnerable populations and will support public health and resource allocation.
- The program's 10-bed residential facility is located at 509 Hoge Street in Whitehorse, the former location of the St. Elias group home.
 - Renovations for the residential program have been completed, including an area for alcohol service.
 - This area will allow participants to approach the service area and be provided with predetermined and measured amounts of alcohol based on the individualized care plan.

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- All residents and staff of the St. Elias group home have moved to new locations.
- Managed alcohol programs typically dispense wine, beer or spirits. Participants of the program will have access to medically prescribed volumes of alcohol that will be served under supervision.
- A participant's consumption and intake patterns will be considered in creating their individualized care plan, including their preferred beverage.
 - A dosing schedule will be overseen by an addictions medicine provider at the Referred Care Clinic.
 - Individual dosages will be calibrated to reduce the likelihood that the participant leaves the residence to obtain additional alcohol.
- The hiring process is near complete, and once staff have been onboarded and trained, the Managed Alcohol Program will open. We anticipate this date to be within the coming weeks.
- When the program begins, dinner will be provided for the participants. Individual autonomy is highly encouraged in the program and participants will be expected to do their own laundry, breakfast and lunch.
 - Assistance and prompts can and will be provided if required.
- A referral process will be developed similar to other Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services programs.
- Participant assessments for this program will be done by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff in partnership with allied health care providers.

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- Assessments on prospective participants who would benefit from the program are underway and case management is being provided to all those who may be eligible in the meantime.
 - Numbers are expected to fluctuate based on intake procedures and participants' interest and experience in the program.
 - Despite being eligible for the program, individuals may decline to participate as they may not want to live in a group living environment.
 - In the initial months of operation, the department anticipates there could be higher attrition amongst participants.
- The Managed Alcohol Program will be supported by an interdisciplinary team. While the structure and composition of the teams may change as we evaluate the program, we anticipate the teams will be dedicated to:
 - intake and assessment;
 - support workers; and
 - medical oversight.
- The program will be staffed with trained support workers, nurses, social workers and a supervisor.
- Medical oversight for the Managed Alcohol Program will be provided through the addictions medicine prescribers out of the Referred Care Clinic.
- Medical supports for the program will initially be provided through the Referred Care Clinic.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is working with Human Resources to recruit program staff for the Managed Alcohol Program.

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- On July 29, 2024, the Public Service Commission completed their classification process for all program staff. Job ads for these positions promptly followed.
- A clinical supervisor has been hired and hiring for support workers is in progress.
- To operate safely, the program must ensure appropriate staffing is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is working to finalize policies and procedures.
- Experience with this program will contribute to the design of future sites and inform the phased implementation of smaller managed alcohol programs proposed in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has been working with long-term care staff to support residents' access to managed alcohol since December of 2022. To support a managed alcohol program within Continuing Care, these four eligibility requirements must be met:
 1. The resident must have a diagnosis of Alcohol Use Disorder.
 2. The resident must be unable to seek other treatment for alcohol dependence.
 3. Alcohol is prescribed by a physician as medically necessary.
 4. The Physician must continue to follow and regularly reassess as necessary.

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Background:

- This is one of the actions under the initial 14 in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. The action proposes to create a 'residential managed alcohol program' and considers a phased implementation of smaller or drop-in managed alcohol programs in other communities as needed.
- As part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement, the government committed to opening a Managed Alcohol Program by spring 2024.

Naloxone:

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

Oversight committee:

- A Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy oversight committee has been formed for additional assessment and oversight of the strategy's implementation. The intention is to provide accountability

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and oversight for Substance Use Health Emergency-related actions from various perspectives including Council of Yukon First Nations, RCMP and Yukon Government.

- The objectives of the oversight committee are to:
 - share information and contribute to the ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy;
 - review status updates and Situation Reports from the strategy's Project Manager on the 43 recommended actions;
 - assess the progress of the implementation and coordination of the strategy with a whole of government and territory-wide lens, and provide feedback, guidance and expertise as needed; and
 - identify and consider potential future recommended actions and amend or include these actions in the strategy if appropriate.
- Committee membership currently includes representatives from the Council of Yukon First Nations, RCMP and various departments within the Government of Yukon, including, but not limited to, the departments of Health and Social Services and Justice.
- The committee also ensures the strategy is coordinated with the federal Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy and several other territorial initiatives:
 - Putting People First
 - Territorial Youth Strategy
 - Creating Home: Yukon Housing Corporation Strategic Plan 2023 –24 to 2027 –28
 - Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan

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- Aging in Place Action Plan
- Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy
- Coroner's inquest report April 2024

Resources:

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

Strategy actions:

- Our government collaborated with health system and community partners on the development of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.

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

Toxic drug supply:

- Our community continues to grieve the loss of our loved ones. My deepest condolences to all those who are mourning friends and families affected by substance use and the toxic drug supply.

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- o I urge Yukoners to exercise the utmost vigilance, never use alone and always ensure someone is available who can respond in the event of an emergency.
- The Yukon Coroner's Service has confirmed four deaths occurring between September 23 and October 4, 2024, were the result of toxic illicit drugs.
 - o All four cases occurred in Whitehorse, all involved cocaine use, three also involved fentanyl; two also involved flurofentanyl; two also involved bromazolam (a benzodiazepine); and one also involved alcohol.
- The Yukon Coroner's Service is investigating two more deaths suspected of involving toxic substances in the same 11-day period.
 - o Toxicology results are pending for these two cases, but evidence suggests that cocaine may have been used near the time of their deaths.
- These cases do not appear to be linked to one another, suggesting that toxic substances are circulating in Whitehorse.
- From January 1 to October 4, 2024, there have been 12 confirmed substance-use related deaths, all involving opioids.
 - o In 2023, there were 23 confirmed substance-use related deaths in the Yukon. Twenty of these involved opioids.
- Drug-checking supplies are available through all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services locations, Blood Ties Four Directions, the Outreach Van, 405 Alexander and Emergency Medical Services.
- Free naloxone kits are available in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services locations, Community Health Centres, Yukon Hospitals, Kwanlin Dün First Nation Health Centre, the Referred Care Clinic,

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Blood Ties Four Directions, pharmacies, 405 Alexander, the Outreach Van, and Yukon Liquor Corporation locations.

- You can also call the National Overdose Response Service (NORS) 1-888-688-NORS (6677) for support before using substances.
- We want to remind Yukoners there is an increasing presence of xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer that has been detected in significant quantities.
 - o Xylazine is not an opioid and cannot be treated with naloxone. This raises the risk for those using substances, as naloxone may not be effective in addressing the effects of xylazine.
 - o Naloxone should still be used in suspected overdoses.

Approved by:

 Matt King

 November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Appendix A: Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy table

	Action	Status	Next Steps/Milestones (updated September 24, 2024)
Prevention			
1	Implement Planet Youth in Yukon communities.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are currently developing plans to identify two pilot communities, proposals and assessment criteria. Two information sessions were held in Whitehorse and online on September 24, 2024.
2	Continue to support Yukon communities in creating and implementing community health and wellness plans.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A roadmap outlining the process, scope and roles is being developed to share with partners and communities. Partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon has been established. Travel to communities planned for fall and winter 2024–25.
3	Continue to launch communication and educational campaigns addressing substance use and mental wellness issues.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent awareness and educational campaigns have included Opioid Treatment Services awareness, alcohol medications, 988 outreach support and Rapid Access Counselling. We are working to advance communication projects and investigating opportunities to engage with partners in the upcoming months.
Harm reduction			
4	Implement a Managed Alcohol Program.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hiring of staff is underway. The program is expected to be launched in fall 2024.

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5	Further expand the operating hours of Whitehorse's Supervised Consumption Site.	Complete as of January 7, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete. • The Supervised Consumption Site's hours have been expanded from 12pm-9pm, to 10:30am to 9:30pm, seven days per week including statutory holidays.
6	Further expand access to Opioid Treatment Services, including safer supply and Opioid Agonist Therapy.	6a in progress, 6b not started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) Mental Wellness Substance Use and Social Services has worked to expand medically indicated Opioid Treatment Services' delivery and access through outreach workers and nurses at the Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse, with outreach clinics at 405 Alexander and Housing First on 5th Ave. • b) Currently, Opioid Treatment Services are not available through primary care health centres in rural communities. Community Nursing is working on developing a policy framework to make this possible.
Treatment and recovery support			
7	Ensure the availability of Opioid Agonist Therapy wherever Yukoners seek assistance.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans, including procurement, are being developed for a Mobile Opioid Treatment Services Clinic.
8	Continue to increase support for Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment options.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In December 2023, a Letter of Intent was signed between the Government of Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations and federal government for a Yukon First Nations-led treatment centre. • Launched in November 2023, the Land-based Healing Funding initiative will provide \$4.3M in funding to Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation-led organizations in 2025–

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			<p>25. The first intake for 2024 has already been conducted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is underway to raise the capacity collectively to deliver land-based healing by Yukon First Nations groups and governments across the Yukon through this agreement, in addition to funding existing projects.
Community safety and wellbeing			
9	Continue to invest in preventing gender-based violence and improving services for victims of crime.	Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A What We Heard report on expanding the Sexualized Assault Response Team services to communities was released in February 2024. An implementation plan incorporating this feedback is anticipated for 2025. • Funding under the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence includes a transportation project that will provide low-barrier support for victims to travel to Whitehorse or another community (such as Dawson) to access existing services. The funding allocation is administered by Victim Services, in collaboration with several NGOs. • Work is ongoing to increase and improve transportation options and improve overall access to the services needed to support victims of gender-based violence and crime. • In June, in partnership with the federal government and local NGOs, we launched the new Canada Yukon Housing Benefit rent subsidy for people fleeing gender-based violence, considered to be a contributing factor in substance use.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program, administered through Yukon Housing Corporation, will provide more than \$2 million annually to help survivors of gender-based violence to obtain and maintain safe housing. The program is expected to support at least 328 households per year by providing up to \$2,000 per month for the first 12 months, followed by a decreasing benefit for an additional six months.
10	a) Increase frontline support staffing; and b) create more safe and sober housing options for individuals grappling with substance use issues when transitioning from the criminal justice system back into communities.	a) Complete b) Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Justice is improving supports for those transitioning into the community through reform of the bail system. The department has increased frontline support staffing within Yukon Community Corrections through the addition of two time-limited positions: a support and outreach worker was hired in January 2024, and a clinical counsellor in June 2024. The two positions work to meet the needs of those transitioning out of the justice system and will travel to communities to provide support to Yukon Community Corrections clients.
11	Continue to collaborate with Yukon First Nations governments to expand therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches in response to substance use-related treatment needs.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy includes funding for a Senior Community Engagement Specialist, who will work with Yukon First Nations governments interested in developing or expanding therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches. Existing restorative justice and therapeutic courts' initiatives include addressing impaired

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			<p>driving, substance use treatment, trauma recovery, intimate partner violence prevention programs for men, healing camps at Jackson Lake, the Community Wellness and Domestic Violence Treatment Court, and other programming in partnership with First Nations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, the Department of Justice is in partnership discussions with Carcross Tagish, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin to continue exploring new approaches.
12	Continue to support effective and accountable policing and enforcement responsive to community needs and taking into account the Yukon's modern treaty environment.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community policing in First Nation communities is supported through Community Tripartite Agreements among the First Nations, Government of Yukon, and Government of Canada. Where there is interest, discussions regarding enforcement and policing are occurring with First Nations. Work is ongoing to address legal and policy questions related to the enforcement of First Nation laws and policing in the territory. Funding for a senior negotiator and a strategic policy advisor is included in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy. These positions will support engagement with First Nations regarding issues of jurisdiction and the authority for enforcement of First Nation laws, as well as other justice-related issues. Recruitment is ongoing.
13	Expand the capacity of the Mobile Crisis	Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car 867 pairs trained RMCP officers with nurses to provide real-time assessment of

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	Response Team (Car 867).		<p>individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems. Car 867 follows up on calls occurring outside their operational hours if the client provides a phone number or can be located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand capacity, the Department of Justice is funding two RCMP officers and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is funding, and has filled, two nursing positions. • With the additional staffing provided by the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, the program has expanded from Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm to seven days per week, with 10-hour shifts to provide greater coverage during peak need hours.
14	Increase the Government of Yukon's capacity to investigate and for civil remedies to disrupt the distribution of toxic illicit drugs and organized crime in Yukon communities.	Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action is fulfilled through the existing Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods (SCAN) Unit. • Currently, the SCAN Unit has signed protocols with 10 Yukon First Nations, with an eleventh protocol expected soon. These protocols provide investigative services in First Nation communities. • The SCAN Unit is working with communities to update their protocols. • Funding from the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy includes an additional investigator for the SCAN Unit, who was hired in 2023.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2022, the Minister of Justice committed to a full review of the <i>Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act</i>, which is ongoing.
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Wait times to access health and Social Services

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Key Messages:

- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are currently experiencing wait times and wait lists across a number of service areas. I recognize that this is hard on Yukoners trying to access care. The department and skilled staff are taking steps to reduce the impact in the short term and long term.
- As of September 18, 2024, a total of 2,069 individuals have been matched to a **primary care provider** through the program. There are 3,916 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 12 percent of the Whitehorse population.
- **Midwifery** has a waitlist of approximately five people per month. As of September 26th, 2024, approximately 30 people are on the waitlist with due dates from October 2024 to May 16, 2025.

Audiology:

Key facts:

- All clients referred for hearing assessments are triaged and prioritized based on clinical need. As of November 2024, wait times for hearing assessments are:
 - urgent care- up to 1 week;
 - pediatrics- up to 3 weeks;
 - high priority- up to 3 weeks;
 - medium priority- 18 to 24 months; and
 - low priority- 2+ years.
- Clients can obtain hearing assessments privately at their own expense or using private insurance coverage.

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Continuing Care:

Key facts:

- As of October 2, there are four clients on wait lists for **long-term care**, with an additional four clients who have deferred admissions but remain on the wait list.
- Referrals for **Home Care** services are triaged, aiming to provide access to services within:
 - 1 to 2 days for complex, high-risk clients;
 - 1 week for medium-risk clients; and
 - 2 weeks for low-risk clients

Hospital services:

Key facts:

- Hip fracture repair in-territory is based on clinician assessment alongside the Yukon Hospital Corporation's Urgent Surgical Bookings Guidelines.
- **Cataract surgery** in-territory has a wait time of approximately nine months with a goal to reduce this to six months.
- The Territory's **Orthopedic program** is aiming to perform surgeries within six months. As of November 2024, the wait time for hip surgery is 12 months and knee surgery is 18 months.
- As of November 2024, **cardiology** wait times in-territory are approximately six months, however cardiologists triage patients and prioritize based on urgency, patients can be sent out of territory as needed.
- Annual and High –Risk Screening **Mammograms** are being completed within 14 months with a goal of 12 months. Routine Screening

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Mammograms are completed within 27 months with the goal of completion every 24 months.

- **MRI** wait times are as follows:
 - Urgent MRI cases aim to be supported within seven days and are completed within this target.
 - Semi-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 30 days as possible, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 47 days.
 - Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 180 days as possible, these are being completed within 140 days
- Wait times for **Obstetric-Gynecologists** for non-urgent services are approximately 10 months with a goal of reducing this to six months.
- The wait time to access a visiting **rheumatologist** is approximately 15 months. The target is six months.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen an improvement in wait times across medical imaging services, specifically CT scans, X-ray, MRI and Mammography driven by the introduction of new equipment and supported by improved staffing.

MWSU and access to psychological services:

Key facts:

- **Withdrawal Management** Services operates on a drop-in, first come-first serve basis. Clients wanting access to Withdrawal Management Services may be admitted immediately, or typically within 24 – 48 hours if all beds are occupied at the time. Individuals wishing to access Withdrawal Management Services but live outside of Whitehorse can call to reserve a bed before travelling from their home community.

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- To access **psychiatric** services through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services there is approximately a one- to three-week wait time depending on urgency.
- The average wait time at Summit Health Associates is approximately 13 months. More urgent consultations are triaged to be seen earlier.
- **Community hubs:** At this time, there is no waitlist for mental wellness 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.
- There is a two-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 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 no waitlist for services through the Watson Lake hub for adult referrals. There is no waitlist for child and youth clients in Watson Lake.
- **Rapid Access Counselling** services are available within 72 hours and are accessible in person, online or by phone.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Health System**Health and Social
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Key messages:

- Our health care system is facing challenges, including the needs of our workforce, increased demand for services and the territory's growing and aging population.
- The Yukon's population has grown by 25 per cent in the past ten years, our population is also aging with seniors and elders who are increasingly able to stay in their homes and communities.
- We have achieved significant progress thanks to the providers and teams in the health system who provide exceptional care to Yukoners.
- This year, we opened the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic and the new Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre.
- Through the Health Human Resources strategy, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association and several other organizations, we are working on new and innovative ways to educate, recruit and retain health care workers.
- In September, we announced an extension of operating room hours to help improve timely access to surgeries.
 - Yukon Hospital Corporation hired a cohort of internationally educated nurses to fill remaining vacancies in Operating Room nursing staff.
- The Yukon Medical Association's enhanced physician recruitment for locum physicians has resulted in 32 physicians supporting the Hospitalist program since January 2024. 107 locums have been booked to cover leave for physicians in Whitehorse in 2024.

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- The Joint Management Committee, whose members include representatives from Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Medical Association and the department of Health and Social Services, have been working collaboratively to identify priorities that will maintain and improve the provision of health care services in the Yukon.
- Through the Long-Term Care room optimization project, we were able to simultaneously provide 10 new acute care beds for Whitehorse General Hospital and 12 long-term care rooms at Whistle Bend Place to accommodate the move of 10 residents from Thomson Centre and open two new long-term Care rooms.
- Starting on November 3, 2024, internationally educated nurses and newly graduated Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners can register directly to practice in the Yukon.

Key facts:

- The Government of Yukon, Yukon Hospital Corporation and health partners released a Health Human Resources Strategy with 25 actions spanning five key pillars aimed to boost delivery of care and improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals.
- As of September 27, 2024, there is only one FTE permanent nursing vacancy in surgical services. This has reduced the higher cost of travel nurses or agency nurse resources needed.
- Community Nursing currently has a 19 per cent vacancy rate for Primary Health Care Nurse positions. This has been reduced from 32.5 per cent reported in July of 2023 and 47 per cent reported in October 2022.

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- Community Nursing has used 560 Agency Nursing days between April 1 and September 30, 2024. This is a decrease from 632 Agency Nursing days in the same period in 2023.
 - While the department has used fewer Agency Nursing days this year, the total cost for agency nursing is higher in 2024 than in 2023.
 - Agency Nursing costs an average of \$1,243 per day in 2024 to date. The cost in the same period in 2023 was \$1,013/day.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen a steady year over year increase in spending on agency nurses starting in 2019-2020 to present.
 - In 2023-24 the Yukon Hospital Corporation spent \$10.6M to acquire nursing staffing support agency.
 - In this 2024-25 fiscal year up to August the corporation has allocated \$5.5M to agency nursing staffing.
- The main triggers to bring in an agency nurse are:
 - A shortage in an area that cannot be filled locally, especially on short notice.
 - To allow staff to take vacations, especially during peak periods such as summer, Christmas, and spring break. The Yukon Hospital Corporation recognizes this action to prevent burn out as an important workforce retention strategy.
- From January 31, 2023, to August 26, 2024, we hired 24 internationally educated professionals into Nursing Home Attendant positions.

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- In Continuing Care, the Care and Community branch has an average vacancy rate of four per cent this fiscal. The Home Care Branch has an average vacancy rate of six per cent this fiscal, with all the regulated nurses' positions currently filled.
- We opened a new walk-in medical clinic in Whitehorse to provide accessible and essential non-urgent health care services for those without a primary care provider.
- We are prioritizing health infrastructure planning and are investing approximately \$5 million to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation in increasing bed capacity and increase access to orthopedic care.
- The funding allocated for Yukon Hospital Corporation reflects the Corporation's anticipated budget for 2024-25.
- Changes in funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation in 2024-25 mains compared to the first supplementary estimate are driven by need and capacity considerations.
- Since 2018-19's first supplementary budget, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased about 60 per cent, from **\$403.8M** (\$403,796,000) to **\$646.7M** (\$646,744,000) in 2024-25.
- There is a total of **\$10.4M** (\$10,430,000) in increases from the 2024-25 main estimate including:
 - **\$5.7M** (\$5,675,000) to increase bed capacity;
 - **3.4M** (\$3,406,000) to support the alleviation of staffing pressures;
 - **\$553K** (\$553,000) for pension solvency and interest;
 - **\$400K** (\$400,000) for breast cancer screening; and

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- **\$396K** (\$396,000) for the transfer of tumor testing to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- We are hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses to increase bed availability through Withdrawal Management.
- We introduced IV medication protocol and phlebotomy to Withdrawal Management, improving care and reducing visits to Whitehorse General Hospital.
- We leveraged technology and collaboration with the French Language Services Directorate to bring virtual 'Interpreters-on-Wheels' into the long-term care homes to improve communication with residents for whom English is not their first language.
- 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.
- Supported expansion of pharmacists' scope to allow pharmacists to deliver some vaccines, prescribe for minor ailments, extend prescriptions and deliver controlled substances, amongst others.

Completed Improvements:**Key facts:**

- Short-term improvements have been made within the existing surgical areas to mitigate challenges including:
 - Flexible OR suite to help move day procedures like endoscopy out of the main ORs.
 - Scope reprocessing unit developed adjacent to the flexible OR suite.

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- Introduction of a post-anesthesia care unit and trained post-anesthesia staff to improve the quality of patient care post-surgery.
 - Improved patient access and flow through patient registration, pre-operative clinic and outpatient clinics like cast clinic and minor procedures being co-located in a surgical services hub.
- Work is ongoing with the orthopedic group to determine how best to support the staff and patients given the rising demand for orthopedic surgery. This includes investment in increasing the number of total knee and total hip replacement surgeries completed each year.
- Strategies to support staff recruitment and retention include:
 - Efforts made to recruit, retain and develop Operating Room Registered Nurses from within through a mentorship program. These efforts have been successful; currently there is one vacant nursing position within surgical services.
 - Interim plans implemented to better support the service and the staff through extension of resourced surgical hours. Staff are regularly scheduled later in the day, which decreases use of overtime resources and risk of staff burnout.
 - Surgical hours were recently expanded, along with surgical staff increases, to stabilize the operations of the Operating Room and reduce pressures on staff.
- The number of surgical cases completed each year increased by 55 per cent between 2017-18 and 2023-24.

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- We recognize there is outstanding work to be completed as laid out in this report, with the priority being four operating rooms which meet modern design and safety standards and additional inpatient beds
- We continue to work collaboratively with Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association on innovative ways to respond to pressures in the system and incrementally expand surgical services capacity.
- I would also like to draw attention to the work that has already been done to enhance healthcare infrastructure across the territory and improve access to care,
 - This summer 2024, the new Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre opened its doors to the community. This space was completed in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and boasts an integrated poly clinic approach focused on the delivery of culturally safe care.
 - We have undertaken major renovations to open healthcare spaces including Constellation Clinic in November 2022 and the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic which launched in December 2023 and moved to its permanent location in April 2024. The Midwifery Clinic underwent renovations in Fall 2023 and resumed service in the new space in February 2024.
 - We have also leveraged and optimized existing spaces such as the Managed Alcohol Program, projected to open its doors later this year and the creation of 10 new acute care beds accessible to the Whitehorse General Hospital and 12 long-term care beds this past July 2024.

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- In 2022 in partnership with Blood Ties Four Direction we opened the Supervised Consumption Site.
- These health infrastructure upgrades are all large-scale projects where health and social services staff and health system partners work hard every day to make a difference for Yukoners.
- We are committed to continue investing in health care infrastructure upgrades as demonstrated through the Request for Proposal calling for a renewed Health System Infrastructure Plan covering a 30-year time horizon taking into consideration existing reports such as the Hospital Corporation's Surgical Services Renewal Project.

Approved by:**Matt King****2024-11-22**_____
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services_____
[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Digital Health Strategy and Software**Health and Social
Services

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 advancing progress on establishing a digital health strategy for the Yukon, to ensure the transition and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon is secure and seamless and set the path for digital transformation in the Yukon.
- We continue to work with stakeholders including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, physicians and other health care professionals using MEDITECH Expanse (previously referred to as the 1Health project) to efficiently deliver patient-centred care across our health system.
- Yukoners are at the core of these important changes to our health care system, which serves to improve the delivery and efficiency of care.
- The work to implement MEDITECH Expanse underpins a more seamless health care experience for Yukoners.

Data security training:**Key facts**

- Mandatory cyber security training for all Health and Social Services employees was rolled out in August 2024.
- The Department of Health and Social Services participates in weekly federal-provincial-territorial cyber security meetings.
- The department has weekly, quarterly, and sometimes daily, updates to our systems and contracts in place with cybersecurity partners.

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- A new security system called DriveLock has been implemented to safeguard and manage USB storage devices.

Background

- 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.

Digital Health Strategy:**Key facts:**

- A Digital Health Strategy is required to inform where future investments should be made, ensure the transition and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon is supported and set the path for digital transformation.
- A digital health strategy can help us work through challenges and support work on improving access and capacity, connecting services and systems, creating efficiency, and strengthening our partnerships in the delivery of care.

Background:

- In February and March 2023, we engaged with digital health stakeholders across government and in the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as people with lived experience on a Digital Health Strategy for the Yukon.
- A Digital Health Strategy Steering Committee has been established and the Committee is working toward the creation of Yukon's first Digital Health Strategy.

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- The department engaged further with physicians in fall of 2023. We will also speak to Community Nursing, NGOs and First Nations governments.

Incident reporting:**Key facts**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to implement a comprehensive incident reporting system.
- The system will allow patients and clients to directly influence quality and safety improvements across the health system.

Gender and patient information accuracy

- 1Health is an Electronic Health Record system that uses the MEDITECH Expanse platform.
- Yukon Hospitals' staff use the system to register patients, order tests, schedule appointments, track medications, and issue identification armbands.
- The Meditech Expanse system at Yukon Hospital Corporation is set up to capture preferred pronouns, gender assigned at birth and legal gender.
- Gender is entered into the system by self-disclosure. A patient can disclose their gender during registration, to health care professionals, or at any time during their visit to a Yukon Hospital.
 - Registration clerks can amend patient information at any time and the data will be maintained on the patient record.

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- If patients or caregivers become aware of any incorrect personal or health information listed in Meditech Expanse, they should notify the registration clerk or health care professional to have it corrected.
- Patients who receive gender-affirming care from a primary care provider outside the hospital may need to inform the hospital of changes to their personal information.
- All outputs (e.g. armband, facesheet, labels, requisitions) from Meditech Expanse will print with the patient's legal gender information in the demographics. The only time birth gender information is available are at points where clinically relevant - such as for laboratory tests and imaging.

MEDITECH Expanse implementation:**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.
- We are working with physician clinics to securely connect their existing software systems with MEDITECH.
- Continuing Care currently uses the GoldCare system for patient charting. Continuing Care and Community Nursing can use the MEDITECH Expanse for liaising and registration purposes, and have access to the Lab Information System for printing lab labels and receiving lab results.
- Community Nursing is primarily paper based.

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Background:

- MEDITECH Expanse is an important component of an integrated health information system that can connect health records across care settings.
- MEDITECH Expanse is a core system which integrates lab, diagnostic imaging, acute and other clinical information across multiple care settings, supporting a comprehensive health record for Yukoners.
- MEDITECH Expanse is live at Whitehorse General Hospital, Dawson City Community Hospital and the Watson Lake Community Hospital.

Medical Transfer Protocol Suite (MTPS):**Key facts:**

- A Quality Assurance, Measurement, Reporting and Evaluation framework has been built into Emergency Medical Services processes using information available through MTPS.
- Yukon Emergency Medical Services implemented MTPS in December 2022.
- Prior to MTPS, decisions were made based on the national Canadian Triage Acuity Scale system which is used by acute and emergency departments across the country to prioritize patient care requirements.
- MTPS is designed to address a range of medical transfer needs, from basic to critical care.
- Through MTPS, dispatchers manage flight plans, logistics and communication with the determined destination. This approach enables paramedics to focus on care and preparations.

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Background:

- Most air ambulance services in Canada operate using similar centralized coordinated dispatch systems.
- Priority dispatch, the provider of Medical Transfer Protocol Suite, is the same company that has been used by Emergency Medical Services for over 20 years.
- This system-based approach enables a standardized, consistent and trackable response by Emergency Medical Services.
- Dispatchers use MTPS as a tool to inform and support logistics and decision-making. Incident information and key questions are used by dispatchers to quickly identify resources required for the appropriate response.
- This approach then guides dispatchers in providing all post-dispatch and pre-arrival instructions.

Telehealth and remote care:**Key facts:**

- Community Nursing currently provides virtual health services through telehealth across Yukon communities.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is currently planning on expanding the Home Health Monitoring Program used in the Chronic Conditions and Disability Program, which provides Yukoners the ability to have various conditions monitored from their homes.
- The department is also researching virtual care implementations and meeting with other jurisdictions in order to gain knowledge on barriers, successes, technologies and patient experiences.

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Background:

- Increasing the use of virtual care and developing options for Yukoners to connect with care from their homes and in their communities is a commitment through Putting People First.
- Virtual Care was identified as a priority by the Digital Health Steering Committee.

Approved by:

Matt King

October 15, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Emergency Support Services**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Emergency Support Services are available to provide temporary assistance to Yukoners to access food, accommodation, transportation and other necessities during an emergency such as an evacuation.
- We continue to strengthen our emergency preparedness and response capabilities through partnerships with First Nations governments, municipalities, and emergency management organizations to better serve the needs of all Yukoners.

2024 Emergency Events:**Key facts:**

- Klondike Valley Flooding
 - In April 2024 there was a risk of ice jam flooding in the Klondike Valley, east of Dawson City. Emergency Support Services were ready to be delivered to anyone who would have been displaced by flood waters.
 - Emergency Support Services were provided for property impacted by this event.
- Old Crow Flooding
 - In May 2024 there was a risk of ice jam and snow melt flooding to the Porcupine River. Emergency Support Services worked with the Emergency Coordination Centre and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on planning efforts for the potential flooding event.

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- Emergency Support Services assisted by filling resource requests from Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, including shipping cots up to Old Crow.
- Emergency Support Services were available in Whitehorse to support anyone who wanted to leave Old Crow during the high-water advisory to avoid any potential flooding impacts.
- Mayo/Stewart Crossing Evacuation Alert
 - At the end of June 2024, there was an evacuation alert for Mayo and Stewart Crossing. Emergency Support Services worked with the Emergency Coordination Centre to plan for a potential evacuation.
 - Emergency Support Services were provided to elders and home care clients from Mayo who chose to leave the community during the evacuation alert.
- House Fires

Since January 2024 Emergency Support Services have been provided to people impacted by several house fires in the territory.

After Action Reviews:**Key facts:**

- After a major Government of Yukon response, an after-action review takes place to review the response and highlight lessons learned. The after-action reviews from the 2023 evacuation of Old Crow and the 2023 evacuation of Mayo were released this summer.
- We look forward to incorporating the lessons learned from these after-action reviews into our program.

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

Service Outages:**Key facts:**

- We are aware that the Yukon has been experiencing network service disruptions and are working to improve our redundancy by progressively installing satellite internet at Health Centres in communities.
- Currently, we have successfully installed StarLink satellite internet in eight community health centres, and the Emergency Medical Services stations. This is to ensure that health care services remain connected and accessible during outages.
 - Work is underway to connect the Carcross, Old Crow and Teslin Health Centres to StarLink in the coming months.
- We continue to work with Community Services to provide timely public messaging during both planned and unplanned outages. This ensures that people in affected areas know where and how they can access health services when regular communication lines are compromised.

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Emergency Support Services

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Services

Background

- Communications outages have increased in frequency and severity in 2024.
- Some communications disruptions can impact 911 service.
- Satellite internet access will better enable emergency and essential health services to continue through phone and internet outages.

Red Cross:

Key facts

- Our government has entered into an agreement with the Canadian Red Cross for the period of July 2023 to March 2026 to provide support to Yukoners during emergencies.
 - The Transfer Payment Agreement with the Red Cross is valued at **\$1.35M** between 2023-24 and 2025-26.
 - Support is provided for up to 72 hours for food, shelter, clothing and emergency supplies if Yukoners are displaced from their primary residence due to climate change emergencies such as fires and floods.
 - The program includes a ‘friendly call’ service to connect people with trained personnel who provide emotional support, encourage healthy coping strategies, and connections to resources and existing services.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****OAG Report on COVID-19 Vaccine
Roll-out**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to updating and improving its emergency and pandemic response plans based on lessons learned and best practices developed during public health emergencies.

Key messages:

- The Department of Health and Social Services is working to implement the recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General's report on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
- A review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* is currently underway to better prepare for future health emergencies. The findings of this review will be released in 2025.
- We are actively enhancing emergency management capacity through the Yukon Emergency Measures Organization by collaborating with municipalities and Yukon First Nations governments.
- Drop-in vaccine appointments are available at certain times and locations. We are exploring additional alternative options to online and phone booking for vaccine appointments to increase access for vulnerable populations.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to building an anti-racist system, in partnership with Yukon First Nations, to integrate cultural safety and humility into organizational leadership, culture and policies.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****OAG Report on COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-out**Health and Social
Services

- We continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with First Nations to establish data sharing agreements to improve emergencies coordination.

Key Facts

- The Health and Social Services Emergency Management Plan has been written and internal engagement is ongoing, with a target of completion by the end of 2024.
- Risk management work continues, including updating risk assessments by program area and treating the risks identified, including adding elements to business continuity plans.
- The department is leveraging the pandemic experiences to enhance current and future pandemic response strategies by providing options for individuals seeking vaccination.
- As part of integrating cultural safety and humility into health systems,
 - The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit organizes a weekly Elder knowledge sharing at the Sarah Steele building.
 - All Registered Nurses licensed to practice in the Yukon are required to take FN 101 as part of their registration process.
 - Community Nursing has imbedded San 'Yas Indigenous Cultural Safety training in staff onboarding processes.
 - The Chiefs Committee on Health continues to provide guidance and oversight to support changes needed to improve patient-client responsiveness, experiences and outcomes.
 - The Health Transformation Advisory Committee embeds the interests, priorities and perspectives of Yukon First Nations into the

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Health and Social Services

foundation and operations of the new health authority, Shà w Kwà 'a/Health and Wellness Yukon/Santé et mieux-être Yukon.

- With support from the Emergency Measures Organization, we are assisting communities in updating their emergency plans, which include emergency response plans along with communications planning for responders and the public.
- The Emergency Measures Organization has successfully connected with and reviewed 65 percent of the municipal and First Nation plans.
- The Government of Yukon continues to work with interested First Nations towards establishing and finalizing data sharing protocols and agreements to enable more robust collaborative response to public health needs.

Background:

- In 2023, the Office of the Auditor General issued a report on the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in the Yukon and provided seven recommendations to be implemented by the Government of Yukon.
- The Office of the Auditor General found that the Yukon's COVID-19 vaccination rollout was effective and well-executed while providing our government with important recommendations to support future vaccine rollouts.
- The audit's focus was on whether the departments of Health and Social Services, Community Services and the Executive Council Office managed the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in an effective and equitable manner to protect the health and well-being of Yukoners.
- The Government of Yukon accepted the recommendations provided by the Office of the Auditor General.

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**OAG Report on COVID-19 Vaccine
Roll-out**

Health and Social
Services

Approved by:

 Matt King

 November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Public Health**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We are collaborating with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to work towards building comprehensive screening programs.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has established a partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to provide a comprehensive breast screening program for the territory.
- As part of our commitments under Our Clean Future, the Department of Health and Social Services is tracking climate-related illnesses and has compiled training resources for health care providers on the health effects of climate change.
- Environmental Health Services administers public health inspection programs in several areas including public drinking water, food safety and sewage disposal. These programs are designed to ensure consistent standards are applied in these areas to keep Yukoners healthy.
- The Government of Yukon continues to monitor the Eagle Gold heap leach for short term and long-term effects on human health. Although this is a dynamic situation, based on the available data, there are no immediate concerns in terms of water quality for impacts on human health.

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- Results from surface water samples taken to date meet the current Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality for contaminants of concern.
- The Government of Yukon offers support services for those wanting help to quit smoking or vaping (nicotine) through a program called Quitpath.

Action Hepatitis Canada report

- Efforts are ongoing to enhance testing, early detection and linkage to care for individuals at risk of hepatitis C and hepatitis B after review of the action hepatitis recommendations.
- Community outreach programs aimed at high-risk populations include the following:
 - A Yukon Communicable Disease Control Nurse is on-site once a week at Blood Ties Four Directions to support testing and linkage to treatment for sexually transmissible and blood-borne infections, including hepatitis C. Yukon Communicable Disease Control collaborates closely with Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Referred Care Clinic teams to support outreach activities.
 - Hepatitis B vaccination is part of the routine childhood immunization schedule. Additionally, adults who are at higher risk, such as healthcare workers and individuals with chronic health conditions are also eligible for the hepatitis C vaccine.
- Hepatitis C universal prenatal testing has been implemented for some time, with the Yukon being one of the few provinces and territories in Canada to do so.

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- The Yukon collaborates with national health organizations to align its strategies with best practices and guidelines. This includes participating in initiatives led by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).
- Yukon is supported by a close relationship with British Columbia Communicable Disease Control and has a contract with an Infectious Disease Specialist who visits Whitehorse regularly to provide access to care for all clients who require hepatitis C treatment in the territory, this includes corrections. This allows for access to specialized care for those who do not have a primary care provider and Yukon Communicable Disease Control works closely with the providers of those who do have a primary care provider.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control has dedicated nursing staff who manages care for current clients and support them with their drug coverage, treatment adherence. This team also completes outreach to clients who have not yet initiated treatment or who have had difficulties completing treatment.
- For clients outside of Whitehorse, travel to Whitehorse is required for clinical investigations that can only be completed in Whitehorse (i.e. abdominal ultrasound). These clinical investigations are required by the Infectious Disease Specialist and are supported by current guidelines.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control works closely with Community Nursing to support care for clients outside of Whitehorse. Much of the client's care and prescriptions after the initial visit can be completed in community, including any follow up bloodwork.

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Background:

- Action Hepatitis Canada released a report on the progress towards viral hepatitis elimination in Canada in 2023. The report identified noted that the Yukon is not on track to meet hepatitis B or C targets.
- Action Hepatitis Canada prepared an interim report during their visit in the Yukon in June 2024 on the accessibility of Hepatitis C treatment for at-risk populations in rural Yukon, based on conversations with YCDC staff, helpers, knowledge keepers and people with lived experience in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Dawson City and Mayo.

Canadian Partnership Against Cancer:

- Cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada.
- Comprehensive cancer screening programs are fundamental to our health care system.
- The Government of Yukon is working to ensure that Yukoners at every stage of life have the health care they need for early detection and effective management.
- The Government of Yukon is working with Yukon First Nations to develop First Nation specific, self-determined cancer priorities. Since 2018, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer has funded the Yukon First Nation Cancer Care Project, which aims to develop a Yukon First Nation Cancer Strategy, facilitate discussions on cancer and identify priorities for action.
- The Yukon First Nation Cancer Care Project continues to partner with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and other key stakeholders to implement project specific initiatives to improve the experience and outcomes for Yukon First Nations and their families affected by cancer.

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- We have one project manager and one new cancer Epidemiologist funded through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

City of Whitehorse water treatment system:

- 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 is supporting the City to ensure the water supply is safe with upgrades established over a reasonable timeline to ensure compliance with Regulations.
- We recognize the required upgrades will take time to complete and additional information on timelines will be available once the design phase begins.
- Should future testing results indicate immediate action is required, Environmental Health Services with the support of the Chief Medical Officer of Health would issue appropriate direction, public advisories and outline next steps.

Commercial tobacco smoking and vaping cessation programs:

- Quitpath is a smoking, vaping (nicotine) and commercial tobacco cessation program that offers free personalized one-to-one client-centered, strengths-based and culturally relevant coaching from a Whitehorse quit coach.
- The program provides hands-on tools and a guide for an individual to become commercial tobacco- or vape-free. 24 weeks of free nicotine replacement products are offered including a combination of nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, spray and inhalers.

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- The Quitpath program offers evidence-based information, tips and tools to assist an individual to successfully quit or reduce smoking, chew tobacco, vaping or any commercial tobacco product use.
- There is additional support available through the Smokers' Helpline on weekends and early mornings. They also offer an online quit program and live web-chat services.
- At present there is limited evidence available on the long-term health effects of vaping compared to smoking, however we are aware of impacts of nicotine use,
 - Nicotine has serious impacts on overall youth health and brain development.
 - Nicotine contributes to broader substance use. It is well established that nicotine plays an underlying role in contributing to opioid, cocaine and alcohol use. Youth who smoke or vape are particularly susceptible to an increased risk of opioid, cocaine and alcohol addiction.

Background:

- Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and a major risk factor for chronic diseases, linked to over 40 debilitating conditions. In 2020, about one in six Yukoners aged 15 and older smoked occasionally or daily.
- Vaping nicotine is marketed as a smoking cessation aid but lacks regulation and its effectiveness is unclear. In the Yukon, youth vaping rates are high, and vaping is linked to harmful effects on various organs, mental health issues and nicotine dependency, leading to financial costs for users.
- The *Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement Act* received assent in the Yukon Legislative Assembly in spring 2024. The agreement doubles the federal tax on vaping products, with half of taxation revenue returned to the territory.

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Drinking water in schools:

- Lead is a heavy metal that occurs naturally at low levels in the environment. However, prolonged exposure to lead can cause harm, particularly in children. Long-term exposure to lead in drinking water can be unsafe for the developing brain and school drinking water can be a possible source of lead exposure for children.
- The departments of Health and Social Services, Education and Highways and Public Works are currently conducting thorough re-testing of water fixtures in every school in the territory, as well as in early learning and childcare centres in Yukon Government-owned buildings. Any fixtures that do not meet the Canadian guidelines will be fixed or upgraded right away.
- Drinking water at Yukon schools was tested for lead in 2018 and 2019. These results are available on Yukon.ca. We will also share the current and ongoing test results publicly when they become available.
- Beyond this immediate response, the Government of Yukon is developing a long-term monitoring program to regularly test drinking water in Yukon government owned buildings, to ensure it continues to meet Canadian guidelines now and in the future.
- In addition to testing for lead, this program will assess a range of water quality parameters based on the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.

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Eagle Gold:

- A heap leach failure and slide were reported on June 24, 2024, at the Eagle Gold Mine near of Mayo.
- Government of Yukon staff were on the ground at the Eagle Gold mine shortly after the failure of the heap-leach facility to assess and monitor the situation.
- Environmental Health Services has been actively engaged in the interdepartmental response.
 - The water quality is being monitored by the Department of Environment for impacts on fish and wildlife and the Department of Health and Social Services is monitoring for impacts on human health.
- Environmental Health Services officials worked with the Mayo Water System Operators to collect and analyze water samples.
 - Water samples indicate no concerns for drinking water quality in regulated systems. All tested parameters, including cyanide, met the Guidelines for the Canadian Drinking Water Quality.
- Based on the information currently available and the location of the incident, the regulated drinking water supply for the Village of Mayo and the surrounding area is not impacted.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has contracted an external technical expert to review data on cyanide and other contaminants of potential concern present in the environment due to the mine failure to assess the potential short- and long-term risks to human health from the heap leach failure.
- The first phase of the human health risk assessment is complete and concluded that there were no contaminants of concern detected at

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levels that pose a human health risk downstream of the mine, based on water monitoring data collected in July and August.

- The report did not include groundwater data, as the scope was limited to water sources that could come into direct contact with humans.
- The report has been shared with other involved YG departments and with Na-Cho Nyak Dun staff, and the results will be shared publicly in early November.
- The assessment also included the development of monitoring thresholds for cyanide and heavy metals at surface water sampling locations that are being used to guide our communications to First Nations, local residents and downstream water users.
- The monitoring thresholds for concentrations of contaminants of concern are applied at an upstream monitoring location near the mine, in order to extrapolate the likely contaminant concentrations at downstream sites.
- Monitoring thresholds for most contaminants at the upstream location are between 50 to 100 per cent higher than the expected downstream concentrations, due to factors such as stream flow rates and dilution from other incoming creeks.
- Environmental Health officials and the Chief Medical Officer of Health continue to monitor the situation to identify any potential impacts to public health. This includes the continued review of any technical information and water sampling results, as well as situational reports, as they become available.
- While levels of cyanide, mercury and cobalt in Haggart Creek have occasionally exceeded water quality objectives or aquatic life guidelines in fall 2024, they do not pose a heightened risk to the

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health of residents or individuals using the land and water downstream of the mine.

- While data does not indicate any risk to human health from consuming fish from Haggart Creek, out of an abundance of caution the Chief Medical Officer of Health has advised against eating fish caught near the mine site.
- As of the end of October 2024, observed concentrations of contaminants of concern in Haggart Creek are significantly lower than drinking water quality thresholds.
- Ground and surface water monitoring in the area will continue. Reassessment of potential human health risks will be repeated as new data and information becomes available.

Background:

- In a heap leach operation, ore is dug out of an open pit, crushed and placed into piles on top of a protective liner. The ore is then sprayed with a cyanide solution, which dissolves gold from the ore. The cyanide gold solution is collected at the bottom of the heap and sent to a facility, where the gold is separated, and the cyanide is reused.
- The June 24 failure involved a slide of the ore stacked in the heap leach facility. The slide caused some ore to spill over the embankment at the base of the facility.
- Cyanide is an acutely toxic chemical which interferes with the body's ability to use oxygen, leading to effects such as cardiac disturbances, seizures, unconsciousness and ultimately death.
- Other contaminants of concern that may have been released into the environment, including some heavy metals, may also pose health risks over time.

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Environmental Health Services:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring the health and safety of Yukoners by maintaining high standards of food safety in all eating establishments. Environmental Health Officers conduct regular inspections to uphold these standards and protect public health.
- Health inspections are a critical tool in our mandate to prevent foodborne illnesses and ensure that all food service operations comply with the Eating and Drinking Regulations and the Food Retail and Food Service Code. These inspections help identify areas where improvements are needed to maintain public safety.
- Environmental Health Officers use a risk-based approach during inspections, focusing on both critical and non-critical infractions. While non-critical infractions are minor and do not pose immediate health risks, critical infractions are addressed immediately to prevent any potential hazards.
- The Government of Yukon believes in working collaboratively with businesses to achieve compliance. Through education and guidance, we help food service operators understand their responsibilities and implement best practices, ensuring long-term adherence to health standards.
- While our primary approach is to support businesses through education, in cases where there is a significant health risk, Environmental Health Officers are empowered to issue closure orders to protect public safety until the issues are fully resolved.

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- We are committed to continuous improvement in food safety standards across the territory. Environmental Health Services Branch works diligently to foster a culture of safety and compliance within the food service industry, ensuring that Yukoners can have confidence in the safety of the food they consume.
- The inspection process is designed to support continuous improvement in food safety and hygiene standards. Most businesses in the Yukon take their responsibilities seriously and are committed to complying with regulations to ensure the health and safety of their customers.
- Between January and September 2024, Environmental Health Officers have completed over 300 inspections of establishments that provide food to the public.

HIV Rates

- The Yukon's annual counts of new HIV cases reported are consistently below five for the past 10 years.
- The Yukon has not seen an increase in the annual number of confirmed cases over the last 10 years.
- The five-year average incidence rate for HIV in Yukon has consistently been lower than the national average since 2014.
- HIV cases in the Yukon primarily affect those individuals with higher risk behaviours, such as unprotected sex with someone infected with HIV or sharing equipment to inject drugs.
- From 2019-2023, the age range of HIV cases in Yukon is 23 to 72 years old, with a median age of 48. The majority of cases were male.

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- The Government of Yukon provides free and confidential HIV testing through:
 - Primary health care centers, Yukon Communicable Disease Control and public health clinics across the territory.
 - Community-based outreach programs such as Blood Ties Four Direction and Kwanlin Dün Health Centre, and clinics held at 405 Alexander by the Referred the Care Clinic and Kwanlin Dün Health Centre, targeting higher-risk individuals. Testing may also be offered at Whitehorse Correction Centre and through Withdrawal Management Services.
- In recognizing the importance of funding preventative treatment, our government introduced coverage for Yukoners to access PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) medication free of charge.
 - PrEP medication is available as a preventative treatment for those at risk of contracting HIV.
 - PrEP, when taken consistently as prescribed, is highly effective for lowering the risk of individuals getting HIV.
- Providing antiretroviral treatment to all people living with HIV and PrEP to individuals at high-risk of getting HIV has been shown to reduce deaths and new infections by more than 90 per cent.
- The medications for PrEP are listed on the Yukon Drug Formulary.
- Yukoners can receive a prescription for PrEP from their doctor or nurse practitioner and receive the medication from a pharmacy.
 - For those living in remote communities, prescriptions can be filled at a pharmacy and mailed out. Prescription renewals can then occur through a doctor or nurse practitioner at community health centres.
- Individuals diagnosed with HIV receive:

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- Referral to the visiting Infectious Disease Specialist services through YCDC. Newly diagnosed individuals are seen as a priority at the next clinic (within two months of diagnosis).
- Access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) through the Yukon Drug Plan, ensuring that treatment is available to those without private insurance.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to focus on harm reduction strategies, including:
 - safe sex education;
 - public health campaigns to raise awareness about HIV transmission risks and reduce stigma surrounding the disease; and
 - collaboration with local NGOs, such as Blood Ties Four Directions, to provide outreach, support and education to at-risk populations.

Measles:

- On February 23, 2024, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada published a statement on the global increase in Measles.
- Measles is the deadliest of all childhood rash/fever illnesses and is highly contagious. It can cause fever, cough, rash, sore eyes and can lead to dangerous complications, including death. Measles spreads easily through the air by coughing, sneezing and talking, even without close contact. Vaccination is the best way to protect against measles and prevent its spread.
- Overall, Yukon children have good vaccine coverage.
- The Government of Yukon proactively informed parents of school-aged children by sending letters to schools and early learning centres, reminding families of the importance of vaccination.

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- To have the best protection against measles, two doses of measles containing vaccine (MMR or MMR-V) are required.
- Two doses of measles containing vaccine is considered "complete" for anyone born in Canada after 1970.
- An adult may access the vaccine with coverage under the Yukon Immunization Program if they are not considered protected against measles (either due to vaccines or natural immunity).
- Community Health Centres maintain a stock of measles vaccines available by appointment which can be made over the phone.
- As of September 12, 2024, there have been no known cases of measles in Yukon in the last 20 years.

Background:

- Measles vaccines (MMVR & MMR) are funded by the Yukon Immunization Program and can be accessed in rural Yukon at Community Health Centres and in Whitehorse at the Whitehorse Health Centre.
- People at risk of complications from measles include:
 - Babies under one year of age
 - People with a weakened immune system
 - Pregnant people who are not adequately vaccinated against measles.

Nutrition programming:

- The department has many nutrition programs running across the territory, some of which are connected to food security and food literacy programming.
- The department's Health Promotion Unit has received five-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

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access to food literacy initiatives in rural communities and support on-going local efforts within the Yukon.

- This fiscal year, 10 projects have already been supported by food literacy grants, with another intake in September 2024.
- During the 2023–24 fiscal year, 22 projects were supported by food literacy grants. These supported food literacy for over 300 Yukoners with over 200 individuals from rural Yukon.
- During the 2022–23 fiscal year, 15 projects were supported by food literacy grants.
- The Health Promotion Unit also supports school food programs across the territory. \$157,000 was provided during 2023–24 fiscal year for the Yukon Food for Learning Association.

Rapid Antigen Tests for COVID-19:

- The Government of Yukon's free distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for COVID-19 will end on October 27, 2024, as the current stockpile expires, and no new federal supplies are available.
- Most other Canadian jurisdictions have already discontinued the distribution of free rapid tests.
- Self-testing for COVID-19 is no longer recommended, stay home when you are sick to reduce the spread of all respiratory illnesses. We are now managing COVID-19 like other respiratory illnesses (Flu/RSV) due to availability of effective vaccines.
- COVID-19 and influenza vaccines remain available at no cost, and Yukoners are encouraged to stay up to date with their vaccinations to protect themselves and their communities from severe outcomes of respiratory illnesses.

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- Diagnostic testing for COVID-19 will remain available through the healthcare system for individuals who require it for clinical care.
- The free distribution of RATs was part of a federal program that ended on December 31, 2023. The Yukon government has been distributing remaining federally provided product, which will expire on October 27, 2024. There are no further supplies coming from the federal government, we are focusing on proven public health measures including vaccination and diagnostic testing will be available when warranted to provide appropriate clinical care.
- Yukoners will be able to purchase RATs at participating pharmacies, though availability may vary by location. Pharmacies may determine their stock based on demand and availability from suppliers.
- For individuals who are interested in self-testing at home, test kits can be purchased privately through pharmacies, we recommend that anyone feeling sick, regardless of whether they self-test, stay home until they are no longer symptomatic.
- Since the beginning of the program, over 501,042 test kits have been distributed across the Yukon, with nearly 15 per cent of those reaching our communities outside Whitehorse.
- It's important to note that the use of rapid antigen tests at our population level is no longer considered a recommended measure to control the spread of COVID-19.
- This decision is aligned with guidance from Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health, who advises that RATs are not effective as a widespread tool in mitigating community transmission.
- Should individuals choose to continue using RATs, they can still access them out-of-pocket cost of approximately \$10 to \$12 per test.

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- The decision to discontinue the free distribution of RATs allows the government to focus on measures that are more effective for public health, particularly as we shift toward long-term management of COVID-19.
- Public health strategies will continue to evolve based on the latest evidence and expert advice to best serve Yukoners.

Syphilis outbreak:

- The Yukon has seen increasing rates of syphilis across the territory since 2022.
- The infectious syphilis rate decreased slightly in 2023; however, it remains elevated and well above the national rate.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working to release an online report on sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. The report includes data on both infectious and non-infectious syphilis rates.
- 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, identified in the Yukon.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Chief Medical Officer of Health are working on a coordinated approach to address syphilis, including:
 - a territory-wide campaign to raise awareness about the growing number of cases and encourage Yukoners to get tested;

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- alerting health care providers to treatment guidelines and screening recommendations;
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control collaborating with OneYukon and KDFN to launch a Syphilis/HIV Point of Care Test pilot as well as examining other 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.

Background:

- Early detection and treatment of syphilis in pregnancy can help prevent more severe congenital syphilis outcomes.
- Routine screening for people without symptoms involves a blood test, and for those with symptoms may also involve a swab of a sore or ulcer if present.
- Treatment is effective with a well-tolerated antibiotic.
- Yukoners can contact their health care provider, Community Health Centre or Yukon Communicable Disease Control to arrange testing or if they have further questions.

Whooping cough:

- Pertussis, or whooping cough, is on the rise across the country, with cases confirmed in the Yukon in the past two months.
- As of November 15, the Yukon Communicable Disease Control has reported eight lab-confirmed cases. While most cases have been linked to travel, some have not been connected to a known source, indicating the possibility of community transmission.
- The Yukon Communicable Disease Control has confirmed a case of

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whooping cough, or pertussis, involving an Air North flight passenger from Whitehorse to Vancouver on November 6, 2024.

- Passengers seated in rows 17 to 22 have been identified as having a greater risk of exposure to pertussis.
- The Yukon Communicable Disease Control and Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a press release, advising passengers on the flight to monitor for symptoms of whooping cough, which typically appear seven to 10 days after exposure.
- Whooping cough symptoms can range from mild, cold-like symptoms to severe coughing fits, which may require medical attention.
- Higher-risk individuals in these rows on this flight, such as those in the third trimester of pregnancy, infants under one year of age and those living with these groups, should contact their healthcare provider or Yukon Communicable Disease Control for guidance on antibiotics
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control is actively investigating this case and will continue to assess the situation closely. We will keep Yukoners informed as we learn more.
- Our primary goal is to ensure the safety and health of Yukoners. We encourage anyone with concerns or symptoms to reach out to Yukon Communicable Disease Control.
- Yukon has consistently maintained high vaccination rates among school-aged children
- We are closely monitoring the situation and working with communities across the territory.

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- Vaccination is the safest and most effective way to prevent severe illness from pertussis.
- We encourage Yukoners to ensure they are up to date on their vaccinations and to follow public health guidelines if they experience symptoms. Early treatment with antibiotics can help reduce the spread and severity of the illness.

Background:

- Prior to the pandemic, Yukon did have an outbreak of Pertussis in 2017 with 89 cases. Otherwise, case counts from 2014 –2019 were less than five annually.
- Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease spreads through respiratory droplets when people talk, cough, or sneeze, and it can lead to severe coughing fits, especially in young children.

Approved by:

Matt King

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

November 22, 2024

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Vaccinations**Health and Social
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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Immunizers deliver vaccines across the Yukon to help meet our public health needs.
- Through consistent investments in preventative treatments and vaccines, we are supporting the health and wellbeing of Yukoners.
- By including pharmacists as immunizers, we are supporting the integration of the profession into our health care system and increasing the number of providers able to provide vaccines.
- In 2023, Yukon health care providers administered an estimated 38,929 vaccines.
- Vaccines are available at various locations, including pharmacies and health centres across the territory.
- Recommendations and information about all publicly funded vaccines can be found online on Yukon Immunize.

Access to vaccines:**Key facts:**

- The Whitehorse vaccine clinic continues to serve Yukoners as part of the government's ongoing effort to integrate COVID-19 support into the broader health service operations.

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- The clinic offers walk-in vaccination for flu and COVID-19 and appointments for publicly funded vaccines for people aged five and older.
- Routine publicly funded vaccines will continue to be offered through Whitehorse Health Centre - 9010 Quartz Road, with a primary focus on clients under five years of age.
- If an individual visits the emergency department with an injury, they will be assessed for a tetanus vaccine, which can be provided through the emergency department, if required.
- Vaccine prioritization is determined by expert recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and National Advisory Committee on Immunization, the availability of healthcare staff, and the demand for vaccines. We adjust our vaccine distribution based on these factors to ensure an effective and responsive vaccination program.
- 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.

COVID-19 vaccines:

- The COVID-19 vaccine is formulated to combat the Omicron XBB variant and is approved for individuals as young as six months. For the 2024-2025 fall season, an updated booster product (KP.2 strain) is replacing the Omicron XBB variant product. The transition to the updated product required a brief gap in product availability during the month of September.

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- This year, there was a short gap in access to the COVID vaccine due to a national recommendation to transition to the new KP2 variant vaccine. Due to a regulatory process to change products, Health Canada requested that all provinces and territories temporarily pause the use of the existing COVID-19 vaccine while the new KP2 strain vaccine was approved and supplied in Canada.
- The new product arrived the last week of September in time for the Fall Vaccine Campaign.
- The Department of Health and social Services has rolled out Vaccination Campaign for Fall 2024 with more appointments becoming available October 15.

Background:

- The COVID-19 vaccines will be federally funded until the 2025-26 fiscal year at which time Provinces and Territories will be responsible for providing publicly funded COVID-19 vaccines to target populations.
- As of July 31, 2024, approximately 19 per cent of the Yukon population has had an XBB COVID-19 vaccination as their most recent dose. The highest XBB coverage is in the 70+ age group.
- Between January 1, 2021 and July 31, 2024 a total of 121,946 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the Yukon.

Flu vaccines:

- During the 2024-25 vaccination campaign, we are offering the Fluzone Quadrivalent vaccine and Flumist, as well as the Fluzone High Dose Quadrivalent vaccine for long-term care residents and individuals over the age of 65.
- Booking appointments,

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- Yukoners can book appointments in Whitehorse online at Yukon.ca. This includes a link to participating pharmacies.
- Residents in rural communities can make an appointment by calling their local health centre.
- Yukoners can also walk into the nearest health centre. Walk-ins are available but may result in higher wait times.
- Vaccines will be provided in-home by continuing care peer immunizers for long-term care residents in October.
- People who are eligible to receive both COVID-19 and influenza vaccines may receive them at the same visit.

Background:

- Between October 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024, a total of 11,454 flu vaccines were administered in the Yukon.
- As of July 31, 2024, the proportion of Yukoners who received a dose of influenza vaccine was 24 per cent in the 2023-2024 respiratory season. This is a drop from 36 per cent during the 2020–2021 respiratory season and 29 per cent during the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 seasons.

HPV vaccines:

- The HPV vaccine is publicly funded for all Yukoners between the ages of nine 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 six students during routine school-based clinics.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends the continued use of non-valent 9vHPV, as it provides protection against the greatest number of HPV types and associated diseases.

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Background:

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is very common in Canada. Without vaccination, it is estimated that 75 per cent of people in Canada will acquire an HPV infection in their lifetime. Globally and in Canada, HPV-associated diseases are a significant public health problem.
- HPV infection can cause cancer. Persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV can result in cervical, oropharyngeal, anal, vaginal, vulvar and penile cancers.
- The HPV vaccine is highly effective and has the potential to eliminate cervical cancer and significantly reduce the burden of other HPV-associated diseases.
- On July 24, 2024, the Public Health Agency of Canada released updated guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization regarding human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines.
 - The National Advisory Committee on Immunization continues to recommend HPV vaccination for all individuals aged nine to 26.
 - For individuals aged nine to 20, a single dose of the HPV vaccine is now recommended based on available data. For those aged 21 and older, a two-dose schedule is advised.
 - The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends a three-dose schedule for individuals aged nine and older with certain immunocompromising conditions such as HIV.

MPOX (Imvamune):

- On August 14, 2024, the World Health Organization declared Monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.
- Imvamune is available for pre-exposure prophylaxis for high-risk populations at the Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse Health Centres to Yukoners who meet the eligibility criteria.

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- Between July 23, 2022 and July 31, 2024, a total of 41 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.

Novavax COVID-19 vaccine

- Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) no longer recommends a preferential COVID-19 vaccine type, allowing for flexibility in vaccine choice based on public health needs. Both mRNA vaccines (Moderna Spikevax, Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty) and protein subunit vaccines like Novavax Nuvaxovid are considered effective and safe for immunocompromised individuals.
- The Novavax Nuvaxovid COVID-19 vaccine is currently authorized for use in individuals aged 12 and older but mRNA vaccines are available for broader age groups, including those 6 months and older. This wider availability of mRNA vaccines supports public health vaccination efforts across age demographics.
- While we recognize the preference for additional options, the current procurement approach prioritizes vaccines that best meet the territory's public health needs. With low demand for Novavax and the challenges of procurement, the government remains committed to offering effective, accessible vaccines and other treatment options to protect the health of all Yukoners.
- Demand for the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine has been notably low across Canada. In 2023, out of the 125,000 Novavax doses ordered, only 5,529 were administered by June 30, 2024. This represents less

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than 0.5 per cent of total doses delivered to the country, highlighting the limited uptake of this option.

- Canada's contract with Novavax only provides access to domestically manufactured vaccines, but Novavax has not confirmed its ability to supply vaccines for the 2024-25 season. Therefore, the federal government has not included the Novavax vaccine in the fall vaccination campaign.
- Provinces and territories have the option to procure Novavax vaccines independently from international suppliers, but this would require large minimum orders, far exceeding projected demand.
- Individuals who cannot receive an mRNA vaccine are encouraged to speak with their healthcare providers about alternative treatments, such as Paxlovid, which helps reduce the severity and duration of COVID-19 illness.

RSV vaccine for adults:

- As of July 12, 2024, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has provided guidance on the delivery of RSV vaccines.
- Based on that guidance, the Yukon Immunization Program is introducing an RSV vaccine for adults 75+ and those 60+ in long-term care this fall.
- We encourage early clinic visits for high-risk individuals, as the RSV season approaches.

RSV antibody treatment in children

- This year, the Yukon will transition to a broader RSV program for infants.

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- Under the previous program, only high-risk infants were eligible for RSV antibody treatment.
- With the new program, high-risk children under two years of age and all infants eight months and younger during the RSV season are eligible to receive publicly funded RSV immunization.
- The new product has the advantage of one-dose administration and offers similar protection against severe RSV disease.

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 and NACI guidance to include Yukoners aged 65 to 79.
 - Between December 2021 and December 31, 2022, a “catch-up” program was offered to all individuals over the age of 65, so that they had an opportunity to access Shingrix.
- Publicly funded Shingrix vaccines are available for eligible Yukoners through local pharmacies and Community Health Centres.
- Yukon is one of the few jurisdictions in Canada offering coverage for seniors alongside Ontario and Prince Edward Island and coverage for First Nation Elders in British Columbia.
- Shingrix is also available for private purchase through pharmacies for individuals that do not fall within the age of eligibility.
- From January 1, 2023 to July 31, 2024, Yukon health care providers administered an estimated 2,290 Shingrix vaccines.

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Travel vaccines:

- Travel vaccines are not publicly funded in the Yukon, though some vaccines used for travel are used to address other public health needs such as for immunosuppressed groups or used as routine immunizations and are publicly funded in specific scenarios.
- The Whitehorse Travel Clinic provides travel vaccines for children under the age of five.
- Travel vaccines can be administered by participating pharmacists. Individuals seeking travel vaccines are encouraged to reach out to their local pharmacy to determine if they are provided.
 - Pharmacists cannot administer vaccines to children under the age of five.

Youth and childhood vaccines:

- Community Nursing delivers routine publicly funded vaccines to children under the age of five and has maintained access to core infant series primary vaccinations.
- While some primary vaccinations may be delayed, these vaccines are being administered as close to the recommended period as possible.
- 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 times for these age groups, and include vaccinations such as polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Haemophiles influenza B, HB,

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

- School-based clinics are being offered once again during the 2024–25 school year.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Home Care Program**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to home care services throughout the territory.

Key messages:

- The Yukon Home Care Program plays a significant role in the Yukon's overall delivery of health care by supporting people to stay in their homes as safely as possible. We work closely with other departments, First Nation governments, health care providers and other community organizations.
- As the Yukon's population continues to increase and grow older, demand for Home Care services is expected to continue to expand over the coming years.
- The Yukon Home Care program supports the Aging in Place Action Plan and Putting People First recommendations.

Intake and service levels:

- The Yukon Home Care program provides a range of supports and services based on an individual's assessed needs, including care coordination, home support services, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and social work.
- The Yukon Home Care program has experienced the impacts of the local, national and global shortage of health care providers and unplanned seasonal illness.
- The program provides services for acute care, rehabilitation, chronic and palliative care needs. It also offers caregiver respite in the home.

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- Home Care nursing services are provided locally in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City. In all other communities, nursing is provided by the Health Centres.
- The Yukon Home Care Program is internally reviewing its mission, vision, and values as part of the broader project of health system transformation.
- To support this long-term planning, the Yukon Home Care Program contracted a consultant to review the Home Care program to understand how to best leverage the program's capacity and resources to meet the growing needs of Yukoners.
 - The report from the consultant was received in May 2024. The consultant's recommendations are being reviewed and considered to inform visioning and planning work.
- Home Care services are based on an individual's assessed need, determined through an initial intake assessment.
- Individuals with the most urgent and complex needs are prioritized for services.

Background:

- In 2024 –25, we budgeted **\$15.3M** (\$15,258,000) towards the ongoing operations of the Yukon Home Care Program.
- Referrals for Home Care services are triaged, aiming to provide access to services within:
 - one to two days for complex, high-risk clients;
 - one week for medium-risk clients; and
 - two weeks for low-risk clients.
- The number of home care clients by community as of July 31, 2024, is as follows:
 - Atlin: fewer than five clients

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- Beaver Creek: 13 clients
- Burwash Landing: eight clients
- Carcross: 15 clients
- Carmacks: 27 clients
- Dawson City: 28 clients
- Destruction Bay: fewer than five clients
- Faro: nine clients
- Haines Junction: 25 clients
- Keno: fewer than five clients
- Mayo: 26 clients
- Old Crow: 22 clients
- Pelly Crossing: 27 clients
- Ross River: 13 clients
- Teslin: 28 clients
- Watson Lake: 17 clients
- Whitehorse (and surrounding area): 366 clients
- As of July 26, 2024, the total staffing vacancies across the Home Care program amount to 9.7 FTEs.
 - 7.3 FTE vacancies are in Whitehorse.
 - 2.4 FTE are regional vacancies. The 1.4 FTE permanent Home Support Worker vacancies in the regional communities are currently backfilled by AOC support.
 - This is an improvement from January 22, 2024, when Home Care had a total of 14.2 FTEs vacancies.

National Care Standards and Accreditation:

- The Yukon Home Care Program is an accredited program through Accreditation Canada (October 2021–2025), having met 100% of national care standards.
- The Yukon Home Care Program is actively preparing for the next accreditation cycle scheduled for October 2024.

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- The Yukon Home Care Program integrates the Canadian Interdisciplinary Palliative Care Competency Framework into its palliative approach to care, a national standard for palliative care in Canada.
- The Yukon Home Care Program recently participated in the eiCompass SPRINT Collaborative with the Canadian Home Care Association to develop and further improve emotionally intuitive competency-based palliative care skills for home care nurses and home support workers.

Palliative Care at Home:

- As a territorial resource, the Palliative Care Resource Team works within the Home Care branch. Through education, consultation, and health-system navigation, this team supports:
 - Yukoners living with a life-limiting illness;
 - Yukoners who are approaching end-of-life;
 - health care providers;
 - family members; and
 - caregivers.
- The Palliative Care Resource Team helps navigate the health care system, provide palliative care education to support health care providers and support care providers with best practice information, assessment tools, and clinical advice.
- The Yukon Home Care Program offers the Rural-End-Of-Life Funding program to eligible Yukoners in rural communities who need end-of-life care that cannot be provided by the Yukon Home Care Program or other care providers. Under this program, people can manage their

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own care and hire providers who can meet their unique cultural and language needs.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Long-term Care**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners in living safe, comfortable and independent lives by providing quality care and services in the right place at the right time.

Key messages:

- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners of all ages to participate in determining the best ways to age with independence, dignity and respect.
- We are working collaboratively with our partners, including Yukon First Nations, federal and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, community groups and the private sector to ensure Yukoners receive the support they need.
- Our government is committed to culturally safe and responsive programming that recognizes cultural and traditional practices and supports spiritual wellbeing for Indigenous residents living in long-term care homes.
- We are committed to continuing to fulfill the recommendations in the Aging in Place Action Plan, which was developed to support the Yukon's aging population.

Key facts:

- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$76.0M** (\$75,957,000) towards the ongoing operations of long-term care homes in the Yukon.
- We have budgeted **\$76K** (\$76,000) during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 fiscal years to the Yukon Council on Aging for the Seniors' Information Centre to provide up-to-date information to Yukon Seniors

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and Elders on all relevant federal, territorial and municipal government programs and services.

- Long-term care homes offer various levels of care and assistance to residents as part of our territory's continuum of care.
- With the increasing aging population, we anticipate more Yukoners will seek access to long-term care services.
- Continuing Care has a robust Quality and Safety team that conducts ongoing assessments of all Continuing Care programs to ensure resident needs are being met.

Accreditation:

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

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- Surveyors for accreditation Canada are onsite at Continuing Care between October 7 and 11, 2024.

Copper Ridge Place leak:

- On Thursday, October 3rd, a contractor had a scheduled water shutdown to complete final connections for the new domestic water main. During re-charging of the water main, one of the connections failed and discharged water for approximately three minutes in the upstairs service corridor.
 - Water reached the program area below, filling light fixtures, soaking carpets/floors and stained ceiling tiles and walls.
- The Department of Highways and Public Works' (HPW) Property Management Division contracted Sifton Range Environmental Consulting to complete a mould/moisture assessment within the affected areas. The assessment determined that within the areas of concern, moisture levels exhibited elevated levels and require remediation.
 - Sifton Range completed an Exposure Control Plan for Remediation of Moisture Impacted Building Materials.
- A restoration contractor has been solicited to complete the remediation, and work will begin in the coming one to two weeks.
- Remediation timelines and costs are unknown and will be determined shortly after the remediation contractor's investigation has commenced.
- The Government of Yukon's Risk Management Office have been engaged and are working with the plumber's contractor's insurance company.

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- The Whitehorse Fire Department has confirmed that in the event of an emergency during remediation, safety requirements will be met if exits are cleared of snow, there is designated emergency vehicle parking located at the end of the cleared paths and a 'fire watch' for the duration of the remediation.
- Continuing Care has been collaborating with the department of Highways and Public Works to follow Canadian Standards Association standards for water damage and risk management in a health care facility.
 - This includes having industrial fans to optimize drying and ongoing measurement of the humidity level.
 - Access to some spaces will be limited as affected areas must be contained to comply with remediation standards. Alternative routes to minimize disruption and maintain emergency exits are in development.
- There are no immediate risks to residents and staff. Resident rooms and common areas have not been directly affected.
- Impacts so far:
 - The fire alarm system was down from late Thursday October 3 and back online Friday.
 - An additional fire watch was put in place to mitigate potential risks.
 - The nurse call system was partially affected until Friday afternoon and fully back online on Sunday.
 - Mitigated by having extra staff completing additional checks every 15 minutes with residents.

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- Staff were communicated with regarding equipment in hallways to mitigate trip and fall hazards.
- Letters were sent to resident's families on October 4 to inform them of the leak and October 11 to provide updates.

Local food procurement:

- Since 2021, the Government of Yukon grocery purchasers have supported local farmers and food producers by committing to purchase locally grown products.
- The Government of Yukon purchases locally produced foods for government-run facilities to support local farms and other Yukon food producers and keep money in the territory.
- The Department of Health and Social Services spent approximately \$1.8M on food each year for the past two years.
 - Over the past three years, long-term care has spent the following amounts on local food procurement:

■ 2021–22	\$35,150.79
■ 2022–23	\$31,047.92
■ 2023–24	\$12,968.10
- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working with the Highways and Public Works' Supply Services Branch to participate in their Market Place pilot.
 - Health and Social Services has shared their experience of purchasing food from local vendors with Supply Services to adequately address the needs of buyers in the development of the new procurement platform.
- Some specifications for long-term care include:

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Long-term Care**Health and Social
Services

- Volume: the program must provide meals for more than 240 residents daily at Copper Ridge Place and Whistle Bend Place, as well as for the Meals-on-Wheels Program.
 - Consistency and reliability: recipes and menus are pre-planned so if local vendors cannot supply specific items or substitutes then they cannot be used for commercial food production.
 - Food safety: strict food safety practices must be followed due to the vulnerable and high-risk population served by long-term care.
 - Cost: local foods tend to be more expensive.
- Long-term care has committed to supporting the Market Place pilot project over the three-month period to trial feasibility.
 - This includes purchasing from local companies, such as eggs from Little Red Hen and all-purpose flour from Hinterland Flour Mill.
- The evaluation of the pilot will be looking at outcomes in terms of:
 - texture;
 - food safety;
 - taste and/or resident satisfaction; and
 - nutritional value.
- In August 2024, the departments of Health and Social Services and Highways and Public Works began to plan to share data with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources' Agriculture Branch about the quantity of foods purchased annually that could potentially be produced and procured locally.
 - This would allow them to support local vendors with long-term planning and develop a strategy to scale up their production to

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offer foods at reasonable prices that could be procured by the department.

- Quantities of food used in long-term care homes:

Item	Annual quantity (lbs)
Potatoes	42,000
Carrots	4,800
Beets	480
Cabbage	3,600
Onion	1,200
Ground beef	5,400
Eggs	120,960
Honey	120
Flour	8,400
Microgreens	84

- The Department of Health and Social Services' First Nations Services and Relations team offers a Traditional Food Program at all Yukon long-term care homes.
 - Local, traditional foods are offered to all residents living in long-term care who have consented to eating wild game.
- Long-term care homes receive donations throughout the year from Yukon Stone Outfitters and Mervyn's Yukon Outfitting, including caribou, moose and bison. These wild game meats are used to make bone broths, soups, chilies, meatballs, shepherd's pies and pasta sauces and many other meals.
 - From 2022 to 2024, over 4,000 pounds of wild game was donated.

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- The First Nation Services and Relations team cater to resident requests to ensure residents are nourished in both body and spirit.
 - Long-term care staff take great pride in preserving and promoting the culinary heritage of our community.
- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to seek avenues to increase its purchases of locally produced foods for government-run facilities, with a priority on group homes and smaller programs.

Long-term Care administration:

- There are four long-term care homes in the Yukon:
 - Whitehorse: Copper Ridge Place, Thomson Centre and Whistle Bend Place
 - Dawson City: Alexander McDonald Lodge
- There are 259 permanent long-term care rooms, 23 respite rooms and six permanent hospice rooms and two hospice respite rooms.
- On average, there are a total of 5.4 permanent admissions to long-term care each month or 7.3 admissions per month when including hospice rooms.
- As of August 29, 2024, there are five clients on wait lists for long-term care, with an additional four clients who have deferred admissions but remain on the wait list. Communities with residents on the wait list include:
 - Whitehorse
 - Dawson City
 - Burwash Landing
 - Haines Junction
 - Watson Lake

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- Long-term care homes accept several methods of rent payment – cash, cheque, debit and credit card.
- Credit card and debit card pre-authorization forms, and post-dated cheques are options for residents and their families who prefer payments to be withdrawn automatically.

Long-term Care Room Optimization Plan:

- In late spring 2024, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation provided an update on a system-wide response to optimizing service delivery.
- The Whitehorse General Hospital has continued to experience increased demands for emergency and inpatient care. Whistle Bend Place's care home was able to accommodate additional permanent long-term care residents, allowing us to permanently reallocate some residents and staff from Thomson Centre.
- This decision was made with careful deliberation while keeping the health and wellbeing of all Yukoners as our highest priority.
- Through thoughtful and strategic planning, staff from long-term care, Wind River Hospice House and human resources organized a staged relocation process over the month of July 2024.
 - Care teams moved with the residents, ensuring continuity of care, so familiar staff continued providing care.
 - Continuing Care covered all costs associated with these relocations.
- Thomson Centre Unit 1 is now being used by the Whitehorse General Hospital for 10 additional acute beds.

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- Residents and their families were informed that there would be upcoming changes in May 2024, and that any new details would be communicated as available.
 - Clients and residents who were directly impacted by the relocations were provided with more details during individual discussions with staff.
 - These discussions helped create personalized relocation plans for each affected resident.

Background:

- At Whistle Bend Place, Wind River Hospice (House 3) residents and staff relocated to vacant House 1.
- Thomson Centre Unit 2's long-term care residents and staff relocated to the vacated House 3.
- The Respite and Reablement program relocated from Thomson Centre Unit 1 to Unit 2, so that clients remain close to specialized services at the Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The optimization project was enabled by an Order in Council passed in February 2024, authorizing the delivery of insured hospital services at Thomson Centre and Whistle Bend Place.

Long-term Care staffing:

- There are 515.4 FTEs working in long-term care homes in the Yukon.
- The Yukon's long-term care homes have among the highest hours of direct nursing care in the country, with on average 4.38 hours of care provided per day, per resident.
 - Residents are also supported by a team of recreation, rehabilitation and First Nations services workers.

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- The high standards of care are made possible through an enhanced staffing model, which allows long-term care homes to maintain capacity and operate at core staffing levels while delivering the full spectrum of services to residents, even in the face of vacancies.
- When unfilled nursing shifts bring the staffing levels below core levels, there are processes in place to share staff across houses and neighbourhoods within each long-term care home to maintain safe working conditions and essential care of residents.
- Across all houses in Whitehorse long-term care homes, unfilled scheduled nursing shifts resulted in essential staffing levels:
 - For a portion of 6 days from May 1 to July 31, 2024
 - For a portion of 2 days from Feb 1 to April 30, 2024
 - For a portion of 3 days from November 1 to January 31, 2024
 - For a portion of 29 days from August 1 to November 1, 2023
 - For a portion of 11 days from March 22 to July 25, 2023
 - For a portion of 4 days from January to March 21, 2023
- Recruitment and retention efforts are ongoing with signing bonuses available to long-term care nurses.

Morgue capacity

- Heritage North funeral home has been occasionally experiencing increased service levels that may impact the timing of transferring deceased residents to the funeral home.
- Continuing Care is prepared to provide support and dignity to families in cases where there are delays in transferring the deceased after passing.
 - Spaces available for respectful storage of the deceased include:
 - Heritage North Funeral Home;

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- Whitehorse General Hospital;
 - Watson Lake Community Hospital; and
 - Dawson Community Hospital.
- Limited storage may be available in the Coroner's facility if needed during times of increased demand.
- Continuing Care is working closely with Heritage North to monitor capacity and ensure families are fully supported.
- Social Supports works closely with funeral homes to ensure all Yukoners are able to receive dignified care and appropriate burial after death.

Outbreak and infectious disease management:

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Continuing Care branch and Yukon Communicable Disease Control work closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to respond to any 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 a respiratory illness or have symptoms are required to remain in their rooms.
 - Residents are monitored daily for symptoms of respiratory illness and tested as necessary.

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- Continuing Care reintroduces continuous masking and limits movement during respiratory outbreaks for all staff, visitors, volunteers and contractors.
- For the duration of an outbreak, residents are restricted to one visitor to help preserve social connections while minimizing the risk to residents, staff and visitors. In end-of-life scenarios, long-term care will support exemptions for additional visitors.
- These measures remain in place until an outbreak is declared over by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- We aim to strike a balance between maintaining a safe environment and minimizing unnecessary restrictions, protecting the health and wellbeing of staff and residents while respecting individual autonomy.

Propane leak at Whistle Bend Place:

- On January 19, 2024, a propane leak was detected by staff at Whistle Bend Place. Security alerted the Whitehorse Fire Department who shut down the propane system.
- Superior Propane repaired the leak and subsequent checks confirmed there were no further leaks once the system was reengaged.
- In compliance with safety regulations, the incident was reported to the Yukon Worker's Safety and Compensation Board.
- Along with the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission, we have been in ongoing communication with the Yukon Employee's Union to address the concerns they have raised.
- The Union was provided with the following documents and information:

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- the Associated Engineering report that presents the findings and recommendations from an in-depth assessment of the propane infrastructure at Whistle Bend Place;
 - the after-action review conducted by Continuing Care that identified and documented what occurred, the response to the event, what went well and opportunities for actions to improve future responses; and
 - they are regularly provided Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee meeting minutes. In the months following the propane leak, the follow-up actions and their completion were discussed at these meetings.
- Interventions have been created to increase safety, provide clarity and improve response times to incidents.
 - Interventions include visual checks of the propane tank by security when doing building rounds, training and clarity for the Nurse in Charge on response sequences and after-hours contacts, and review of code scenarios by direct care staff at safety tailgates.
- We also continue to collaborate with several other departments to develop the environmental emergency plan required for the volume of the propane tank that will further prevent recurrence.
- There has been ongoing support and communication with Whistle Bend Place staff and residents.
 - On January 19, staff were sent an email outlining what happened, what the response was, and what to do if experiencing symptoms of propane exposure such as eye

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irritation, headache, dizziness, light-headedness, weakness, nausea and/or vomiting.

- The letter advised staff to complete a worker's report of injury, seek medical attention, inform their direct supervisor to complete an employer's report of injury and complete an Incident Report.
- At the time, five staff submitted incident reports related to exposure to propane vapours, complaining of headaches, nausea, and sore eyes.
- On January 23, residents and families were sent a letter informing them of the propane leak. The letter included details of the incident, following investigation, and mitigating supports. They were also reassured that residents were continuing to be monitored for propane exposure, and at that time, there were no reports of adverse effects on residents. None have been reported since.
- On October 25, residents, families and staff were sent a follow-up letter communicating an update on the assessment, monitoring and response following the propane incident.

Background:

- An assessment was conducted by Associated Engineering Ltd. for HPW's Property Management Division to evaluate the propane system and identify risks and gaps for areas of improvement at Whistle Bend Place.
 - The assessment reviewed compliance with regulatory requirements, industry standards and best practices. The propane system was determined to meet code requirements.
 - Recommendations included integrating vaporizer and pump alarms into the Building Monitoring System, implementing automatic leak detection,

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assessing all Property Management Division-managed sites for environmental emergency (E2) plan thresholds, and installing remote alarms and emergency shutdown systems.

- To enhance safety measures, CCTV was moved to a location to allow Whistle Bend Place security and reception personnel to monitor the propane storage area remotely 24/7.
- To support understanding and practice of the emergency response plan, hazard-specific code scenarios have been developed and reviewed by direct care staff at safety tailgates.
 - Scenarios for all codes were posted in July 2024.
 - Additional scenarios were developed for teams to perform drills reenacting them.
 - Between September 2023 to August 2024, over 130 code reviews have been completed, 10 of which were Code Brown reviews.
- Whistle Bend Place has performed a tabletop code exercise with sessions May 7 and 8, 2024, involving 20 managers and supervisors. Health and Social Services emergency planners also attended these sessions.
- The Whistle Bend Place Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee meets monthly.
 - The Public Service Commission provides Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee meeting minutes to the Yukon Employees Union quarterly.
- The Nurse in Charge reference guide has been updated to include additional scenarios, such as a propane leak. The given instructions include:
 - Immediately call emergency services, Superior Propane and Property Management.
 - That nobody is to leave the building unless under the direction of emergency services.
 - The Nurse in Charge is to direct staff to prepare for a potential evacuation, to begin an internal evacuation based on incident command and emergency response policies. This should be considered if staff begin to have symptoms of propane poisoning/toxicity which may include but is not

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limited to headache, dizziness, cough, nausea, rapid heartbeat, shallow breathing, or shortness of breath. Staff should continue to shelter in place, monitor symptoms and treat accordingly by removing affected people to an area with better air quality.

- The Fire Department will assume command when they arrive, and if evacuation is necessary, they will direct the NIC to initiate a Code Green.

Watson Lake long-term care rooms:

- The Department of Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation are committed to supporting Yukoners who choose to age in place in Watson Lake.
- We appreciate residents of Watson Lake bringing forward feedback and concerns about the availability of supports and services in the community.
- In response to these concerns, an Aging in Community Watson Lake Steering Committee has been established to oversee collaborative work between Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation.
 - The steering committee provides support and guidance to the Aging in Community Watson Lake Working Group.
- The Aging in Community Working Group includes Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation staff working in partnership with representatives from Liard First Nation, Daylu Dena Council and the Signpost Seniors Association.
 - The working group's purpose is to identify challenges and opportunities that will inform an action plan. Once complete, the action plan will be submitted to the steering committee.

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- The working group met three times in October 2024 and will continue to meet on a regular basis.
- While the working group establishes a plan to meet the needs of people living in and around Watson Lake, the two rooms designated for long-term care at the Watson Lake Community Hospital continue to be used to keep people in the community.
- Two rooms at the Watson Lake Community Hospital have been designated for extended and respite stays since April 2024.
 - These are both types of long-term care.
 - Information gained from the rooms' use will provide valuable data on the community's needs.
 - The existing staffing complement meets the required needs to provide quality care to those staying in the rooms.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation supports patients who require an Alternative Level of Care such as long-term care, respite care, or palliative care. These patients may be cared for in the hospital environment for an extended period of time.
- The Yukon Home Care program provides services in Watson Lake with one permanent Registered Nurse/Home Support Supervisor providing care coordination, nursing, and home support work supervision, one permanent full time Home Support Worker, one AOC Home Support Worker, and one Whitehorse-based Home Care Occupational and Physical Therapist who visits the community two to three times per year.
- A transfer payment agreement with the Watson Lake Signpost Seniors organization was increased \$53,000 from the previous year,

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totalling \$114K (\$114,000) for 2024–2025. We also provided an increase in 2023–2024.

- This demonstrates the Department of Health and Social Services' commitment to supporting local efforts to assist Seniors and Elders.

Wind River Hospice House:

- Wind River Hospice House is located in Whistle Bend Place. The program provides end-of-life care to Yukoners in a home-like setting.
- The Wind River Hospice House community hospice program is designed and staffed to support up to six rooms for stays approximately three months or less and two rooms for short respite stays of two to four weeks.
- As part of the Long-term Care Room Optimization Plan described above, Wind River Hospice House was recently moved within Whistle Bend Place from a physical space of 18 rooms in House 3 to a smaller space in House 1. This created space for more acute care beds at the Whitehorse General Hospital and additional long-term care rooms at Whistle Bend Place.
 - Wind River Hospice House (House 3) clients and staff relocated to the vacant House 1 in Whistle Bend Place.
 - Thomson Centre Unit 2's long-term care residents and staff relocated to the vacated House 3.
- Thomson Centre and Wind River Hospice House clients, residents and their families were informed that there would be upcoming changes in May 2024, and that any new details would be communicated as available.

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- Clients and residents who were directly impacted by the relocations were provided with more details during individual discussions with staff.
 - These discussions helped create personalized relocation plans for each affected client and resident.
- Out of the utmost respect for clients and staff at Wind River Hospice House, careful consideration and planning went into the relocation to ensure all essential equipment such as oxygen and lifts would continue to be in place.
 - Access to oxygen remains available to clients through oxygen concentrators or tanks.
 - Currently through floor lifts. Two portable overhead track lifts have been purchased to be installed in two rooms.
- Following the move, some concerns were raised about House 1.
 - While the department is working to respond to and implement several of the proposed actions identified, client care and safety remains our top priority.
- Senior leadership met with staff at Wind River House to hear their concerns and continues to support them through the transition.
- Staff to client ratio is higher in the Wind River Hospice House than long-term care as specialty palliative care requires a level of attentiveness for clients' complex and changing health care needs
- Renovations and upgrades in progress:
 - Privacy curtains have been installed in the tub room.
 - Privacy curtains and the ceiling tracks to install them in the client rooms will be ordered once products are sourced.

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- Ordered one new portable ceiling track lift and will be transferring an additional portable ceiling track lift from the Thomson Centre to the Wind River Hospice House.
- Ordered healthcare setting-appropriate noise reduction tiles to further reduce noise from offices and common spaces.
- Transferring some of the art collection from House 3 to House 1.
- Shortening the courtyard fence to create a more home-like outdoor space.
- New vent covers for client rooms to diffuse air flowing from the building's air handling unit will be ordered once products are sourced.
 - In the interim, we have added air purifiers to the rooms.
- Increasing accessibility to courtyard by adding automatic door opener.
 - Planning is underway.
- The department anticipates that the majority of these upgrades can be completed through the use of funding associated with the capital provided for the optimizing and increasing bed initiative.
- Accreditation Canada recently visited Wind River Hospice House. The accreditor complimented the space, saying despite the recent move, it looks like the Hospice has been there the whole time. They also highlighted that the team culture is well-established to support clients and their goals.
- We recognize change can be difficult. During the move, the dedicated staff at Wind River Hospice House continued to provide caring and compassionate support to the clients in their end-of-life journey.
- Care at Wind River Hospice House is available 24/7.

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- Wind River Hospice House provides care for:
 - adults with clearly life-limited illness in its advance stages;
 - adults with prognosis of three months or less; and
 - adults with a prognosis of less than 12 months who require brief respite care stay.
- The Wind River Hospice program will continue to offer a dignified farewell for deceased clients.
- A procession to the main entrance using the dignity quilt or honouring blanket provides clients, clients and staff an opportunity to respectfully honour the deceased as they depart the care home for the last time.
- The cost is \$40 per day to stay at the Wind River Hospice House.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to the provision of services for Seniors and Elders in the territory to enhance long-term wellbeing and quality of life.

Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon supports the provision of services for Seniors and Elders. The Aging in Place Action Plan and its recommendations serves as a primary source of our commitment.
- The department is committed to ensuring that Yukoners can access the supports they need to live safe, independent, and comfortable lives in their own home or home community for as long as possible regardless of age, income or ability level.
 - This includes working with individuals and their loved ones to offer person-centered care and find appropriate solutions, so Yukoners are supported to remain in their homes and communities.
- As we continue to advance this important work, we are building upon the programs, services and supports offered by the Government of Yukon and our partners, as well as ensuring alignment with other recommendations such as those in the Putting People First report.
- We 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.

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Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee:

- The Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee was established for Yukon Seniors and Elders to collaborate with the government on matters relating to the implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan.
- The Committee's original term ended March 31, 2024. The Department of Health and Social Services is taking steps to continue the Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee's work with new members.
- The Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee will continue to include representatives from Yukon First Nation governments, Association of Yukon Communities, Government of Yukon, non-governmental organizations, Seniors and Elders, members with rural Yukon experience, members from the French-speaking community, and is chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Innovation, Quality and Performance from the Department of Health and Social Services.

Aging with Dignity funding agreement:

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

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- The agreement will support Home and Community Care with **\$2.7M** (\$2,680,000) over four years, from 2023–24 to 2026–27.
- The agreement will support Long-term Care with an estimated **\$9.3M** (\$9,300,000) over five years, from 2023–24 to 2027–28.
- Annual budget allocations may be adjusted depending on the increase in population or increases in care needed within the territory.
- The agreement acknowledges:
 - the need for reconciliation, recognizing Indigenous Peoples' right to fair and equal access to quality and culturally safe health services, free from racism and discrimination;
 - acknowledges the importance of supporting health data infrastructure, data collection and public reporting, and will continue to work together to improve the collection, sharing and use of de-identified health information, to improve transparency and help manage public health emergencies.

Community Day Program:

- The Community Day Program offers a safe and inviting place for Seniors and Elders to connect with each other while aiming to maintain or increase their level of independence.
 - Participating in the program can help prevent or delay the need to move into a long-term care home.

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- The Government of Yukon offers the program at Whistle Bend Place, available from Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm. Seniors and Elders can attend on a full-time or part-time basis for \$5 per day.
- Admissions and Assessment Coordinators manage referrals and work with the Community Day Program team to admit eligible clients.
- The program includes:
 - therapeutic group programming;
 - activities in maintaining independence;
 - daily group recreational activities;
 - socialization and peer support;
 - lunch, snacks and beverages;
 - support with activities of daily living such as bathing; and
 - support to caregivers of Seniors and Elders through respite.
- Handy Bus vouchers are provided at no cost to clients in need of transportation to attend the Community Day Program.

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 in the federal/provincial/territorial committee on dementia, who developed the National Dementia Strategy.
- We work with partners such as the Alzheimer Society of Canada to support for dementia awareness, stigma reduction and prevention.
- We partner with Alzheimer's Society of British Columbia to offer phone and online resources.

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- This includes the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline to support people and their caregivers on their journey with dementia.
 - First Link can be reached by calling 1-888-852-2579 Monday to Friday between the hours of 10am and 8pm.
- The Alzheimer's Society of British Columbia offered four in-person dementia education sessions in Whitehorse in August 2024.
- We received funding in 2023–2024 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.
- The bilingual online dementia resource hub was released in April 2024. This website was developed to be a local and trusted hub of dementia resources for Yukoners living with dementia and their families, caregivers and health care providers.
- Our work to support Yukoners living with dementia, caregivers and health care providers also includes:
 - the Behavioural Care Resource Team as a resource for staff who provide care to long-term care residents living with dementia and other mental health diagnoses;
 - providing dementia-focused care at Copper Ridge Place and Whistle Bend Place for mobile adults who have dementia and require a therapeutic and secure environment, including 24-hour nursing monitoring and support;
 - supporting residents with dementia and mild to moderate cognitive impairment in Intermediate and Extended Care levels in all long-term care homes in the Yukon; and

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- supporting all clients with dementia and their caregivers in Yukon communities through our Yukon Home Care program.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to providing leading dementia care. A project is underway to redesign the existing courtyard to make the outdoor space more accessible with handrails, accessible pathways and materials, raised garden beds and functional seating areas that will provide a higher level of care and quality of life for residents living with dementia.
 - Access to gardens and outdoor space is integral to individual health and can help support the overall emotional wellbeing of people living with dementia.

Demographic projections:

- Between 2023 and 2045, the Yukon's Senior and Elder population over the age of 65 is expected to increase by 110 per cent.
- By 2045, the population aged 65 and older is anticipated to represent 21.2 per cent of the Yukon's total population compared to 2023's 15 per cent.
- Based on demographic trends, it is anticipated that more Yukoners will seek access to long-term care services in the coming years.

Meals on Wheels:

- The Meals on Wheels program provides food to individuals to ensure their nutritional needs are met. The program provides regular connection with individuals who may be experiencing social isolation, cognitive changes, or physical and health limitations that affect their access to nutritious food.

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- Frozen meals are available to clients living in Whitehorse, or within a two-hour travel time from Whitehorse, as well as in Dawson City and those living within a two-hour travel time from Dawson City.
- Meals on Wheels provides clients with up to seven meals per week.
- A review of the Meals on Wheels program was completed in April 2024. The review provided information that the program is:
 - providing meals to clients at an efficient cost;
 - currently reaching a population that needs its services;
 - supporting its clients to live independently;
 - significantly contributing to clients' overall nutritional intake; and
 - not reaching all the Seniors and Elders that could benefit from their services.
- The review also showed that the demand for the Whitehorse's Meals on Wheels program has exceeded its production capacity given the current level of resources allocated to the program.
 - The Meals on Wheels program currently has no dedicated budget, with costs being absorbed by the Whistle Bend Place and McDonald Lodge food services budgets.

Background:

- Meals can be delivered to clients or picked up at either Whistle Bend Place in Whitehorse or McDonald Lodge in Dawson City.
- In Whitehorse and the surrounding area, clients pay \$3.00 per meal (actual meal costs over \$7.00 per meal). In Dawson City and the surrounding area, clients pay \$2.50 per meal.
- To receive Meals on Wheels, referrals may come from health care professionals including Physicians, Home Care staff, Community Nurse Practitioners, Social Workers, or the Assessment and Admission Coordinator.

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- 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.

Transfer Payment Agreements:

- The Government of Yukon provides funding for several Senior and Elders' groups and aging in place support programs.
- Hospice Yukon
 - Supports Yukoners through grief, palliative and end-of-life care.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$371K** (\$370,985) to fulfill project goals including the provision of a coordinated, community-based bereavement support program, increasing public awareness of Hospice services, and providing educational resources to the communities.
- Line of Life (Lifeline) Association of Yukon
 - Personal response service that provides immediate assistance 24/7.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$65.5K** (\$65,544) to operate an automated 24/7 response system to Seniors and Elders experiencing a medical or social emergency.
- St. Elias Seniors Society
 - Offers a drop-in centre for Yukoners over 55 years of age in Haines Junction.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$38.65K** (\$38,646) to provide handywork services, recreational and health activities and transportation such as monthly lunches/dinners with some partnered with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Elder

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Care, exercise classes, educational classes (e.g., computer basics), art classes, footcare, and monthly bus trip to Whitehorse to pick up prescriptions and other errands.

- Signpost Seniors Association
 - Offers a drop-in centre for Yukoners over 55 in Watson Lake.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$114.3K** (\$114,301) to offer social, recreational, and educational opportunities for members such as bingo, shuffleboard, arts and crafts, social gatherings, weekly lunch service, computer safety sessions, gardening workshops, cooking and baking classes, footcare, and exercise classes.
- The Association franco-yukonnaise (L'AFY)
 - Supports and promotes independence of Seniors by providing a place for mutual assistance, listening and sharing, and offers activities and services tailored to help people aged 50 and over remain in their natural living environment for as long as possible by promoting their well-being, quality of life and involvement in our community.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$72.5K** (\$72, 500) for the SERVIS network, a Mutual Assistance Network for Francophone Seniors in Yukon that will forge links within the Franco-Yukon community, promote French and support people in situations of vulnerability.
- Yukon Council on Aging:
 - For Seniors ages 55 and over.
 - Assists members to thrive as they age in place.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Services for Seniors**Health and Social
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- Funding for 2024–25 is **\$76.3K** (\$76,289) to operate the Seniors Information Centre, provide up-to-date information to Yukon Seniors and Elders on federal/territorial/municipal programs, provide information and referrals on other services available to Seniors and Elders, write and distribute a quarterly newsletter (Sourdough Chronicle), update and distribute the annual Information Please Guide and update/maintain website information.

Approved by:Matt KingNovember 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Health Professionals**Health and Social
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Government priority:

- The Department of Health and Social Services has a mandate to connect every Yukoner to a primary care provider by accelerating efforts to recruit and retain healthcare professionals.

Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the essential role health care professionals play in delivering high-quality healthcare across the territory.
- Through our Health Human Resource Strategy, we are working to ensure every Yukoner has access to a primary care provider by intensifying recruitment, retention and education efforts for healthcare professionals across the territory.
- Our priority is to continue improving healthcare across the territory in a way that acknowledges the unique needs and contributions of every healthcare professional.

Allied Health Professionals

- Allied health professionals are essential members of our healthcare system, encompassing a wide range of specialized roles such as physiotherapists, respiratory therapists, dietitians, occupational therapists, and more, each bringing unique expertise to improve patient care and outcomes.
- These professionals play a critical role in preventive care, rehabilitation and chronic disease management, supporting patients in ways that complement the work of Doctors and Nurses.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services is actioning a Health Human Resources Strategy to address the shortage of health care professionals across all disciplines.
- Some Allied Health Professionals receive a \$1,000 annual retention allowance under the current collective agreement. These Allied Health Professionals are:
 - Educational Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, School Community Consultant, Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support Consultant and Speech Language Pathologist.
- There is also a retention allowance available for Audiologists of \$3000 per year.

Agency nurse usage

- The main triggers to bring in an Agency Nurse are:
 - A shortage in an area that cannot be filled locally, especially at short notice
 - To allow staff to take vacations, especially during peak periods such as summer, Christmas, and spring break. The Yukon Hospital Corporation recognizes this action to prevent burn out as an important workforce retention strategy.
- A number of recruitment, retention and workforce development strategies connected to the Health Human Resources Strategy are underway and are anticipated to reduce the use of agency nurses.
 - Examples of these initiatives include new graduate programs, internal specialty mentorships, partnerships with academic institutions including Yukon University and introduction of internationally educated healthcare providers.

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- Community Nursing has used 560 agency nursing days between April 1 and September 30, 2024. This is a decrease from 632 agency nursing days in the same period in 2023.
- While the department has used fewer agency nursing days this year, the total cost for agency nursing is higher in 2024 than in 2023.
- Agency Nursing costs an average of \$1,243 per day in 2024 to date. The cost in the same period in 2023 was \$1,013/day.
- In addition to regular pay, agency nurses receive:
 - Standby pay,
 - Overtime hours are fully compensated,
 - Agency nurses are provided with a daily travel per diem and travel expenses are fully covered,
 - We also reimburse agency nurses for their Yukon Registered Nurses Association (YRNA) fees to support their ongoing professional credentials and development.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen a steady year over year increase in spending on agency nurses starting in 2019–2020 to present.
 - In 2023–24 the Yukon Hospital Corporation spent \$10.6M to acquire nursing staffing support agency.
 - In this 2024–25 fiscal year up to August, the corporation has allocated \$5.5M to agency nursing staffing.

Nursing Home Attendants Pay

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the important work done by all healthcare providers, including but not limited to, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Nursing Home Attendants.

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- Each group plays a vital role in delivering high-quality care to Yukoners.
- The wages for Nursing Home Attendants in the Yukon are already among the highest in the country.
- This higher pay reflects the critical role Nursing Home Attendants play in our healthcare system.
- We strongly refute the claim that Nursing Home Attendants are disregarded or disrespected. The Government of Yukon deeply values the critical role Nursing Home Attendants play in providing high-quality, person-centred care.
- Nursing Home Attendants contribute significantly to infection prevention, resident safety, and overall well-being. Their work is fundamental to the success of Yukon's Continuing Care programs and we are committed to supporting them.
- As of October 2024, there are 206 Nursing Home Attendants employed in Yukon's care homes with a low vacancy rate of 2.7 per cent.
 - This stability is a testament to both the competitive wages and the positive work environment in which Nursing Home Attendants operate.
- Continuing Care has fostered a strong culture of employee recognition, including monthly prize draws and regular sharing of positive feedback from peers, supervisors, and residents.
- These initiatives acknowledge the vital role Nursing Home Attendants play and boost workplace morale by fostering a culture of appreciation and respect.

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- The competitive wages and recognition programs for Nursing Home Attendants underscore the government's commitment to recognizing their vital contributions.
- The Government of Yukon remains committed to supporting all health care workers, including Nursing Home Attendants, and we look forward to ongoing dialogue to ensure that all voices in our healthcare system are heard and respected.

Nurse Practitioners

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the essential role of Nurse Practitioners in delivering high-quality healthcare across the territory.
- The Yukon government has introduced more Nurse Practitioner roles within the Department of Health and Social Services within the past year, demonstrating our commitment to expanding primary care options. Our government has been actively creating new opportunities for Nurse Practitioners to support Yukoners.
- There are 16 Nurse Practitioners supported by Health and Social Services as of October 30, 2024. This includes staff at the Walk-in Clinic and centre de santé Constellation Health Clinic, the Referred Care Clinic, Sexual Health Clinic and Midlife Clinic and in Community Nursing.
 - The Whitehorse Walk-In Clinic has two full Nurse Practitioner and one AOC.
 - The centre de santé Constellation Health Clinic is fully staffed with five Nurse Practitioners.

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- The Referred Care Clinic is fully staffed with four Nurse Practitioners, including one Nurse Practitioner for Withdrawal Management Services.
- We have one Nurse Practitioner who works at both the Old Crow and Pelly Health Centres.
- Within private clinics, the Sexual Health Clinic and the Midlife Clinic are staffed with a total of three Nurse Practitioners contracted through Insured Health Services. In addition to providing general services for the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and Midlife Clinic, one of them provides primary care and another provides most of the Yukon's gender affirming care.
- In addition to recruiting Nurse Practitioners, the department actively supports student Nurse Practitioners during their preceptorship. Nurse Practitioners working within the department are also helping to mentor local Nurse Practitioner students.
- Nurse Practitioners in the Yukon are not exclusively employed by the Department of Health and Social Services. Other organizations and private practices in the territory may also employ Nurse Practitioners, which may contribute to variability in the number of Nurse Practitioners we have in the territory.
 - We acknowledge that the number of registered Nurse Practitioners with the Yukon Registered Nurse Association may be more than the number of Nurse Practitioners hired by the Yukon government.

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- The Yukon government acknowledges that the compensation for Nurse Practitioners is a critical factor in recruitment and retention. This is why we are actively working to attract and retain Nurse Practitioners by offering competitive salary packages, benefits, and incentives.
- Nurse Practitioners are paid according to the Nurses Group
 - Range: Level 12 Minimum: \$89,680 to Level 19 Maximum: \$148,293.
- The retention bonuses for Nurse Practitioners' agreement ended on March 31, 2024. The Government of Yukon, ahead of the expiration date for this agreement increased the Nurse Practitioner pay by nine per cent in January 2024 in addition to the three per cent general wage increase across government.
- This was to ensure that Nurse Practitioners wage in the Yukon remains competitive to their counterparts in other jurisdictions.
 - The current wage for Nurse Practitioners in the Yukon ranges from \$65.23 to 75.79 per hour.
- In addition to the salaries, the Government of Yukon offers:
 - \$7,500 signing bonus for newly hired Nurse Practitioners,
 - exam fee reimbursement for new graduates within 24 months of graduation.
 - Pays annual registration fees.
- Government of Yukon also remunerates Nurse Practitioners who work in private clinics via a contract model.
- The Yukon government is aware of the competitive challenges posed by other jurisdictions, and we are open to exploring options that support and attract Nurse Practitioners to the Yukon while we

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continue to work on ways to improve recruitment and retention strategies.

Nurse Recruitment and Retention Incentives

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the essential role health care professionals play in delivering high-quality healthcare across the territory.
- The Government of Yukon offers competitive wages and benefits to attract and retain health care professionals to the Yukon.
- To address high vacancy rates and turnover, and reduce reliance on agency nurses, the Government of Yukon introduced new pay grids and retention allowance for nurses and nurse practitioners.
- The retention bonuses for nurse practitioners' agreement ended on March 31, 2024. The Government of Yukon, ahead of the expiration date for this agreement, increased Nurse Practitioner pay by 9 per cent in January 2024 in addition to the 3 per cent general wage increase across government.
- This was to ensure that nurse practitioners wage in the Yukon remains competitive to their counterparts in other jurisdictions.
 - The current hourly wage for nurse practitioners in the Yukon ranges from \$65.23 to \$75.79
- Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner bonuses:
 - \$7,500 signing bonus for newly hired Registered Nurses. This expires on March 31, 2025.
 - An annual retention allowance of \$3,000.
 - An annual retention payment of \$15,000 (expired March 31, 2024).

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- An additional immediate retention allowance of \$15,000 (expired March 31, 2024).
- Nurse Practitioners also receive an annual market adjustment of up to \$12,000.
- Licensed Practical Nurses
 - \$4,500 signing bonus for newly hired LPNs under Letter of Agreement “O-1” until March 31, 2025.
 - An \$8,000 immediate retention bonus (expired March 31, 2024).
 - An \$8,000 annual retention bonus (expired March 31, 2024).
- Registered Nurses in rural health centres:
 - A \$7,500 signing bonus until March 31, 2025
 - An immediate \$15,000 retention bonus (expired March 31, 2024).
 - An additional \$15,000 annual retention bonus (expired March 31, 2024).
 - Two \$3,000 annual retention bonuses (\$6,000 total)
 - A Community Nursing Allowance of between \$4,000 and \$8,000 depending on length of service.
- Primary Health Care Nurses in Charge received an additional \$10,000 annual bonus (expired March 31, 2024).
- These bonuses were introduced to address recruitment and retention challenges, improve competitiveness, and reduce reliance on agency staff in Yukon.
- The government of Yukon provides exam fee reimbursement fee for all the nursing groups.
- The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation pay annual professional fees for nurses.

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- The Letter of Agreement for the signing bonuses and exams fee reimbursement for Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and License Practical Nurses will expire on March 31, 2025.
- Nurse retention and recruitment incentives were provided to union and manager positions requiring a nursing designation from Dec 1, 2022, to March 31, 2024.

Rural Nursing Staff

- The Department of Health and Social Services has a total of 70 FTE health care professionals in rural communities.
- Nurses work in Communities through two groups of programs – Community Nursing and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Community Hubs.
- Our Community Nursing program has:
 - 20 Primary Health Care Nurses working across 11 community health centres.
 - Four Community Health Nurses FTE positions. These positions are shared among various communities excluding Watson Lake and Dawson City.
 - Two Community Health Nurses dedicated to Watson Lake and
 - Two to Dawson City,
 - Three Nurse Practitioners FTE whose positions are shared across communities, also excluding Watson Lake and Dawson City.
- There are currently 35 staff with the MWSU hubs.
 - Four Mental Health Nurses are dedicated to the community hubs, providing direct support to Yukoners.

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- Nine Mental Health Support workers, who assist individuals in accessing and navigating wellness services.
- 22 Counsellors are available across communities, offering essential mental health and wellness support.
- We are actively recruiting people to fill vacant positions.

Social Workers

- Social workers are vital to Yukon's health and social services. They provide specialized support that addresses overall well-being, mental health and access to resources. They play a key role in helping individuals and families manage complex challenges, from disability support and income assistance to family care and protection services.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has a total 66 social workers currently working in various branches. We are actively recruiting to fill all vacant positions.
- A social worker is employed as an Outreach Worker at the Whitehorse Library. The Jim Smith Building Warming Centre has a Social Worker on site to help clients.
- Social Workers are spread across various program areas to best meet the needs of diverse populations:
 - Disability Services has 10 Social Worker positions, with eight currently filled.
 - Community Outreach and Adult Protection services is fully staffed, with seven Social Workers supporting clients.
 - Income Support has 10 out of the 12 positions filled.
 - Mental Wellness and Substance Use services is fully staffed with 10 Social Workers.

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- Home Care employs six social workers and has one vacancy
Continuing Care is staffed with seven Social Workers and has two vacancies.
- Family and Children Services across Whitehorse and regional is supported by 21 social Workers.
- Two Social Workers work at clinics, supporting the poly-clinic model of care. Both positions are filled.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has advertised available Social Worker positions on the Government of Yukon’s website, we encourage qualified individuals to explore these opportunities and apply directly through the site.

Approved by:

 Matt King

 November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**Health and Social
Services

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 staff and Community Responders are dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the territory.
- Since raising the honoraria, Emergency Medical Services has seen an increase in new volunteer community responders.
- Yukon EMS has one of the highest scopes of practice in the country including Community Responders, Primary Care Paramedics, Expanded Scope Paramedics, Paramedic Specialists and Critical Care Paramedics and Nurses.
- EMS provides support to community health centres to help ensure continuity of care for rural Yukoners.
- Yukon EMS is a data driven organization that is constantly seeking avenues for improved service delivery beyond what is already provided.
- In the 2024-25, first supplementary estimate we have requested an additional **\$420K** (\$420,000) to support the increase to community responder honoraria rate of pay.

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Air Ambulance Contract:**Key facts:**

- Yukon EMS has a contract with Alkan Air that provides access to aircraft including helicopters for responding to medical emergencies operating out of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse Airport.
- A Request for Proposal will be publicly tendered in fall 2024, and a new contract will be in place by April 1, 2026, after the current contract expires.
- The Department has completed a functional program from the allotted land reserve and confirmed the ability of the space to meet operational requirements for air ambulance services.
- A functional program was developed by a third party to ensure the space could be used for air ambulance services in accordance with legislation and regulations given that there is no additional space at the Erik Nielsen Airport. The functional program confirmed the space can be used for EMS purposes.

Ambulances:**Key facts:**

- In 2024-25, EMS is budgeting **\$350K** for ambulance replacements.
- These new ambulances will be introduced into the fleet and deployed based on clinical and operational requirements.
- All EMS ambulances are currently fully operational.
- EMS maintains a fleet of 30 ground ambulances and maintains one mobile training unit. The fleet is in a state of readiness at all times.

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- Ambulances are deployed throughout Emergency Medical Services stations territory wide. They are moved routinely throughout the territory, based on capacity and need.

Backcountry Emergency Response:**Key facts:**

- Yukon EMS partners with RCMP and Yukon Search and Rescue to respond to requests for backcountry rescues throughout the territory.
- Should off-road vehicles be required in a backcountry rescue, EMS works with RCMP to coordinate the deployment of such tools.
- To access emergency services in the backcountry Yukoners and visitors are encouraged to call 911 or 867-667-5555 by satellite phone.

Coverage and Staffing**Key facts:**

- There are 80.8 FTEs and 116 Community Responders providing Emergency Medical Services across the territory.
- Currently, operations including Air Ambulance Operations and Land Ambulance Operations are fully staffed in Whitehorse.
- Emergency Medical Services provides both ground and air transport for patients in communities who require care in a hospital.
- Emergency Medical Services continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all Communities.
- Community Responders are provided non-operational pay of \$19.08/hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area. This includes an offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books, and accommodation.

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- Emergency Medical Services provides operational pay ranging from \$35.02 to \$55.14 depending on scope of service.
- Community Responders receive honoraria for the commitment to the delivery of emergency medical services providing on-call services, training, and all operational deployment.
- We have increased the on-call honorarium to \$7.70 per hour from the previous \$3.71 per hour.
- In addition to this funding, Community Responders receive a retention bonus of \$1,000 upon completion of 250 hours of on-call duties.
- Coverage in Yukon communities fluctuates based on volunteer participation and availability and is achieved when there are two personnel available to respond. Between January 1 and June 29, 2024, coverage was on average 70 per cent across the communities with the exception of Marsh Lake.
 - Marsh Lake is supported by two EMS Stations: in-community and Whitehorse operations.
 - Tagish is supported by Carcross and Whitehorse operations

Community	June	August	October
Beaver Creek	88.2%	91.26%	97.31%
Carcross	18.8%	29.70%	50.87%
Carmacks	91.5%	99.73%	78.43%
Destruction Bay	100%	100.0%	100.00%
Faro	100%	100.0%	100.00%

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Haines Junction	97.7%	92.04%	92.31%
Mayo	83.1%	69.32%	92.74%
Pelly Crossing	89.3%	99.06%	97.58%
Ross River	97.4%	99.87%	96.51%
Tagish	0.00%	38.31%	0.0%
Teslin	94.0%	96.24%	98.92%
Dawson City	93.5%	99.87%	98.19%
Watson lake	100%	99.98%	99.97%

- As of November 20, 2024, EMS coverage is supported by the following number of responders in each community:
 - Beaver Creek – six community responders,
 - Carcross – 10 community responders,
 - Carmacks – 17 community responders,
 - Dawson City – 9 community responders, two full-time and four AOC employees,
 - Destruction Bay – 11 community responders,
 - Faro – six community responders,
 - Haines Junction – 16 community responders,
 - Marsh Lake – 11 community responders, 1 on-boarding (Supported by Whitehorse).
 - Mayo – seven community responders,
 - Pelly Crossing – 8 community responders, 1 on-boarding

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- Ross River – seven community responders
- Tagish – four community responders (Supported by Carcross, Whitehorse and Marsh Lake),
- Teslin – 12 community responders
- Watson Lake – five community responders, three full-time and three AOC employees, one on-boarding
- Whitehorse – 22 full-time, three part-time, 14 AOC, and six casual employees.
- There are 4.5 FTE Paramedics, one mobile Paramedic specialist and one vacant position at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter at 405 Alexander.
- As of August 2024, there are 30 staff supporting air ambulance services including 14 FTEs, five term positions, four FTE floats and seven AOC personnel.

Dawson City:**Key facts:**

- EMS has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Dawson that sets expectations and clarifies roles for emergency services within the community to better align on service delivery for the community.
- In fall 2023, some community members established the Dawson City Ambulance Association.
- A representative from EMS has met with the group in fall 2023 to better understand their proposal to encourage their members to support the local Emergency Medical Services team.

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- No further updates on this group have been shared with us and we continue to encourage Yukoners to consider supporting their local EMS teams.

Background:

- As of June 2024, EMS coverage has been at 93.54 per cent since the beginning of the year.
- In 2023 coverage in Dawson varied from around 72 per cent in the summer to 99 per cent in December.
- In Dawson City, EMS responded to 256 calls in 2023 and 295 calls in 2022.
- The Dawson City Ambulance Association released a report entitled “Deployable Dawson City Based Ground Ambulance Coverage 01 January 2022 – 31 October 2023” in January 2024.
 - The report asserts a lower level of coverage in Dawson than is reported by EMS. This is due to a change in how EMS achieves full coverage.

EMS in Old Crow:**Key facts:**

- EMS does not have full-time operations in the community. Residents are encouraged to seek medical support from the Health Centre as needed. In case of emergency call 911.
- EMS responds to Old Crow via Air Ambulance request.
 - Response time is approximately 2 hours.
- During emergency circumstances, EMS can station a Paramedic if requested.
- As of November 19, EMS has responded to 41 calls from the community in the 2024 calendar year.

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Quality Improvement and Innovation:

Key facts:

- The Paramedic Response Unit works in collaboration with Paramedic Specialists at 405 Alexander Street. In 2023, the Unit attended 267 requests for service. The service prevented emergency department visits and the utilization of an ambulance 58 per cent of the time.
- On average, in Whitehorse, from the time of the initial call EMS is prepared to respond within two minutes and 25 seconds.
- Year over year, response times for the highest priority air ambulance requests from Whitehorse General Hospital have decreased while call volumes have increased.
 - We have introduced new technology and processes within the Emergency Response Communication Center to successfully enable resources to be utilized more effectively.
 - When comparing data from 2022 to 2023, Air Ambulance response to Whitehorse General Hospital decreased from one hour and five minutes across the territory to 58 minutes for patients coded as red, or the highest level of ambulance triage.
- Dispatchers are supported by the Medical Transfer Protocol Suite platform, which allows for a systems-based approach and standardized, consistent and trackable response providing avenues for data-driven service delivery.
 - From January 1-May 31, 2024 the Paramedic Response Unit has attended 145 requests for service and mitigated 94 instances of possible transport to the emergency department accounting for 66 per cent of requests.

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Rapid Access Bike Team:**Key facts:**

- The Rapid Access Bike Team is a program that provides response in Whitehorse's downtown core, Riverdale and elsewhere for special events and to increase presence and easier access to locations like the Millenium trail or the skateboard park.
- The team is staffed with both Primary Care Paramedics and Advanced Care Paramedics and operates Thursday through Sunday June to September.
- The Rapid Access Bike team provides:
 - Training and provision of take-home fentanyl kits and Narcan kits.
 - Support for the community outreach van.
 - Education on helmet safety.

Training:**Key Facts:**

- Emergency Medical Services offers a variety of training methods and programs to increase recruitment and retention of community responders and to ensure support for community responders.
 - This includes a training centre, mobile training unit, high fidelity training mannequins, online learning platform, local training nights and certificate courses; in addition to peer support programs and mental wellness and supports with a focus on the psychological health and safety of our first responders.
- Emergency Medical Services also provides accredited programs and certification for Community Responders.

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- Emergency Medical Services provides compensation for 4 hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage Community Responder attendance and support biweekly training nights.

Watson Lake:**Key facts:**

- Due to increased call volumes in Watson Lake, EMS has moved to a new staffing model at the ambulance station, using a hybrid of employees and Community Responders.
- The new staffing model provides funding equivalent to 3.2 full-time positions of additional employee-based coverage, and funding to cover standby costs when community responders are unavailable.
 - These positions provide coverage in Watson Lake for more than 10 hours per day, seven days per week.

Background:

- As of June 2024, EMS coverage in Watson Lake has been at 99.9 per cent since the beginning of the year.
- In 2023, Watson Lake EMS responded to 291 calls.

West Dawson Emergency Medical Services:**Key facts:**

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services is equipped to support West Dawson in the case of a medical emergency. Residents are encouraged to call 911 if needed.
- An air ambulance helicopter with capacity to carry a stretcher can provide services to West Dawson and will be dispatched if safe to do so. EMS has access to additional modes of transportation through partner organizations that may also be deployed.

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Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

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- Ensuring access to emergency medical services is a priority for this government, and Yukon EMS is well practiced at responding to calls requiring fly-in response.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Midwifery**Health and Social
Services

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 resumed full services and began intake of new clients on February 12, 2024, ensuring comprehensive care for expecting families across the territory.
- We are proud that the midwifery program is once again providing vital services, assisting in safe deliveries and offering essential prenatal and postnatal care in Whitehorse and virtually to rural communities.
- The Yukon's approach to midwifery care is aligned with national standards and best practices, including for client safety. Care is provided in collaboration with Solstice Maternity.
- Interprofessional collaboration and consultation with Whitehorse General Hospital, nursing, Solstice Maternity and obstetricians and gynecologists is a priority for the program.
- As of September 2024, there are 48 clients in full scope midwifery care (pre-natal birth and postpartum) with due dates ranging from October 1st, 2024, to May 21, 2025. There are 11 people who are receiving post-partum care only.
- For most months the program has a waitlist, with around five people per month waitlisted. As of September 26th, 2024, approximately 30 people are on the waitlist with due dates from October 2024 to May 16, 2025.

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- The program also offers Infant Feeding Mondays, with excellent uptake and positive feedback from clients and other health care providers. The program provides feeding and lactation support for up to 10 clients daily between booked appointments and drop-ins. This service is available to all Yukoners, regardless of midwifery care.

Baby Baskets:

- The Yukon Baby Basket Project is an initiative that provides parents of newborn infants with baby supplies to welcome their arrival and help support families through the early days of parenthood.
- The program launched on September 13, 2024.
- The initiative aims to provide parents with approximately 20 essential new baby and parent items and educational resources, to support the transition from hospital to home and promote safe sleep practices.
- This initiative is developed in partnership between the Department of Health and Social Services and Solstice Maternity.
- The program is available by referral to any expectant and new parents by any staff at health care locations including Solstice Maternity, Whitehorse Health Centre, the Yukon Midwifery Program and Whitehorse General Hospital. Yukon health care or social services providers can provide a referral to the program.
- As of September 26, we have already received 80+ referrals and have distributed 40 baskets.

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Background:

- The baskets are designed with art and include safety warnings inside the lid.
- A survey was sent to partners and stakeholders requesting their input on the initiative and the included items with a positive response from First Nations organizations.
- Currently there are 200 baby baskets ready for distribution to Yukon families.
- The contents of the baskets contain:
 - Fitted sheet
 - Diapers
 - Wipes
 - Diaper rash cream
 - Vitamin D drops
 - Sleep sack
 - Onesie
 - Sleeper
 - Wash cloth
 - Infant toothbrush
 - Burp cloth
 - Teething toy
 - Digital thermometer
 - Nail clippers
 - Book
 - Nipple cream
 - Reusable nursing pad
 - Postpartum sanitary pads
 - Educational resources on breastfeeding, safe sleep
 - Optional: Formula sample and formula bottle nipples and ring.

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Program development:

- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program policies, practice protocols and quality improvement processes were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of local and national experts including registered midwives, nurses, physicians and Yukon First Nations. This is accomplished through the following groups:
 - Expert Midwifery Consultants who provide advice and feedback on system improvements to the program as needed.
 - The Whitehorse General Hospital Midwifery Working Group supported the systems and operational integration of Registered Midwives into Whitehorse General Hospital.
 - MOREOB – Client safety and performance improvement program for interprofessional obstetrical teams funded by the Government of Yukon for Whitehorse General Hospital.
- We also participate on committees and 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.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program recently facilitated a professional development opportunity by hosting the Advances in Labour and Risk Management interprofessional training on May 24 and 25, 2024.
- This workshop, led by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, aimed to enhance the clinical skills and knowledge of Registered

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Midwifery**Health and Social
Services

Nurses, Obstetricians, Family Physicians in Whitehorse, Registered Midwives and three Rural Yukon Physicians.

- By providing updated research and best practice guidelines, the training ensured that Yukon's maternity care team is aligned with national standards, reinforcing the delivery of high-quality care for expectant mothers. This initiative represents a significant advancement in fostering a collaborative, interprofessional approach to maternity care in the Yukon, with Registered Midwives fully integrated into the broader healthcare team.

Staffing:

- Ensuring the health and safety of our clients relies on a team of Registered Midwives who provide the full scope of midwifery care.
- To provide 24/7 coverage while complying with the Yukon Standards of Practice for Registered Midwives at non-hospital births, there always needs to be two staff from the Midwifery team on-call.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program has made significant strides in staffing and service provision, ensuring that Yukoners have access to high-quality midwifery care.
 - As of September 2024, our team is fully staffed with three Registered Midwives, one Clinical Manager and six AOC 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.

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Midwifery

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- As the program grows, we remain focused on maintaining accessibility and ensuring that Yukoners enrolled in the program are met with the highest level of care. While we encourage Yukoners to explore this valuable service, we also recognize the importance of managing expectations to avoid any sense of frustration as demand for our services continues to increase.

Background:

- The Yukon Midwifery clinic in Whitehorse officially opened its doors on July 7, 2022.
- On January 26, 2023, the Yukon Midwifery Program temporarily shut down and transferred clients to Solstice Maternity.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program resumed full services and began the intake of new clients on February 12, 2024.
- The Midwifery Program has supported 11 births since re-launching services, including a planned home birth. Total midwifery births are 25 since the program launched.
- During the period when the Yukon Midwifery Program was temporarily shut down and unable to provide clinical care and services, Registered Midwives were offering prenatal care visits and full spectrum postnatal care.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Pharmacists**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Our government is working with pharmacists to better 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.
- Pharmacists can provide some essential services such as certain vaccines and treatment for minor health problems, including bladder infection, shingles, and the need for emergency contraception.

Key facts:

- As of August 2024, there are 65 licensed pharmacists in the Yukon.
- In 2023, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,689 vaccines.
- In 2022, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,265 vaccines.
- A total of 36 pharmacists have an injection endorsement; five pharmacists have a travel vaccine endorsement; and 34 pharmacists have the minor prescribing endorsement.
- Free Naloxone kits are available through participating pharmacies.

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Expanded Scope of Practice:**Key facts:**

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

Background:

- 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 take advantage of their clinical expertise and training and to align with the services provided in other jurisdictions.

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Initial Prescribing Program and Vaccines:**Key Facts:**

- In December 2022, a new initial prescribing program came into effect, allowing pharmacists to assess and prescribe medications for some minor ailments, smoking-cessation, and some vaccinations.
- The Yukon's professional fees for these services are amongst the most competitive in Canada.
- Pharmacists can choose to offer services such as publicly funded vaccines, and some travel vaccines.
 - Pharmacists cannot administer vaccines to children under the age of five.
- Children under the age of five may access travel vaccines through their primary care provider.
- Yukoners of any age can receive travel vaccines through a private clinic in Whitehorse.

Background:

- Participating pharmacists must complete mandatory training before offering services under their expanded scope of practice.
- Individual pharmacies may determine which services they choose to offer.
- 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.

Rural Access to Prescriptions:

- For Yukoners living in communities without a local pharmacy, prescriptions can be accessed through mail-order services.

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- Patients can have their prescriptions filled at a pharmacy in Whitehorse, and the medication is then shipped directly to their community via mail.
- This service ensures that all Yukoners, regardless of their location, have access to necessary medications they need.
- The cost of mailing prescriptions typically includes standard postal rates, and in some cases, these costs may be covered or subsidized by the Yukon Government's health programs.
- Non-Insured Health Benefits covers the cost of mailing to eligible clients. All other clients pay shipping costs out of pocket to the pharmacy.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Physicians**Health and Social
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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing patients' 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 Physicians 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 care services and foster a strong Physician community through a series of innovative initiatives that are in effect until March 31, 2025.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association will be preparing for the next round of negotiations on a new Memorandum of Understanding in advance of the current Memorandum of Understanding's expiry date.
 - We will be seeking to have a Memorandum of Understanding that supports the quintuple aims of improving patient experience, improving health outcomes, better managing costs and system effectiveness, health equity and better experiences for care providers.
- We know that the ways Family Physicians in the Yukon practice are different than in other jurisdictions.
 - Many Family Physicians here also provide specialized care such as General Practitioner Oncology, General Practitioner

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Anesthesia and General Practitioner Obstetrical Services. These are services that are critical to supporting Yukoners to access primary, acute and palliative care closer to home.

- The increase in specialized care does mean that there are fewer Physicians practicing only primary care; this is the same across the country.
- The demand for a variety of health services and the ways in which that care is provided results in challenges in connecting all Yukoners to a Primary Care Physician but allows Yukoners to access care closer to home.
- We have heard concerns about administrative burdens or ‘red tape’ presenting obstacles for Physicians. We are working to ensure our contracts and payment systems are up to date and in line with modern standards.
- We have provided funding to the Yukon Medical Association to explore the development of a family medicine residency program.
- Addressing the gap in access to primary care providers is a priority for our government and the physician community.
- The Joint Management Committee consisting of Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the department are working towards the development of the first joint workplan.
- In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$6.5M** (\$6,488,000) to support Physician benefit programs, the majority of which are administered by the Yukon Medical Association.
- In 2023, the Yukon was supported by 212 visiting Physicians, 132 General Practitioners and 80 Specialists.

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- In 2023, there were 33,830 unique patients seen and 477,733 unique patient encounters at care settings in the Yukon.
- According to the most recent Canadian Institute of Health Information survey, 78 per cent of Yukoners reported having access to a regular health provider in 2023. The Canadian average is 83 per cent.

Claims and billing:**Key facts:**

- Ensuring that Physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and Physician community.
- Physician claims are now being paid in under 60 days for fee-for-service and 30 days for invoices with the Yukon Medical Association stating this is no longer a matter of concern for its members.
- We have formed a Physician Payment Advisory Committee with the Yukon Medical Association to improve the claims and payment system.
- Our Physician community has also identified concerns with current administrative burdens including but not limited to billing and payment process, as well as with electronic medical records.
- In Fall 2023, we modified 20 fee codes to allow for auto-payments. The number of claims going to manual assessment has decreased from 30 to 20 per cent. This is an average of 600 claims per week no longer being manually assessed by default.
- Work is also underway to update how the system addresses patient names. 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.

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- We are working with the Physician Payment Advisory Committee to identify and determine additional opportunities to decrease processing times.
- We have engaged Meyers Norris Penny to assist with system improvements, including developing an audit and recovery process. Physicians will have an opportunity to share their input during this work.

Contracts:**Key facts:**

- While many Physicians are compensated using a fee-for-service model, the Department of Health and Social Services also uses alternative payment models, a mix of alternative payment and fee-for-service with several Physicians and Specialists.
- Alternative payment models are being used with some resident specialists, community health and wellness centres, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, and the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
- As recommended by Physicians, we have also implemented an alternative payment model for the inpatient Hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Our government is committed to providing Physician compensation that is fairly and equitably set within the local and national market, and that ensures health system resources are managed effectively to enable budget alignment.

Background:

- Alternative payment models refer to contract models.

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- Work is being done to focus on less granular increments of payment within fee-for-service structures.

Fee-for-Service:**Key facts:**

- 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.

Find a Primary Care Provider Program:**Key facts:**

- In spring 2023, we expanded the Find a Primary Care Provider Program to include Nurse Practitioners.
- As of September 18, 2024, a total of 2,069 individuals have been matched to a primary care provider through the program. There are 3,916 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 12 percent of the Whitehorse population.
 - There are currently two providers, a Nurse Practitioner and a Physician enrolled with the Find a Primary Care Provider Program.
 - The program does not allow duplicate applications. 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.
- According to the most recent Canadian Institute of Health Information survey, 78 per cent of Yukoners reported having access to a regular health provider in 2023. The Canadian average is 83 per cent.
- 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.
- As of November 1, 2024 the Yukon has not experienced any emergency room closures and has not seen reports of Emergency Medical Services offload delays.

Medical Director:**Key facts:**

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

Memorandum of Understanding:**Key facts:**

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- The current three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association covers the period from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2025.
- The Memorandum of Understanding includes:
 - an Attachment and Attraction program that is intended to facilitate access to primary and specialty care while supporting Physicians' operating costs;
 - 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 behavior change; and
 - a commitment to work with Yukon First Nations, health system partners and other service providers to support collaborative maternity and early years care.
- The Attachment and Attraction program offers funding for overhead costs to Physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard for patients and appointments. Physicians who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half-day they see patients.
- The Attachment and Attraction program launched in late 2022 and currently has 45 participating Physicians.
 - An evaluation of the program was conducted in early 2024 and we worked with the Yukon Medical Association to address feedback provided including reducing the administrative burden in the program.
- Future discussions with the Yukon Medical Association include,
 - providing funding to develop a Yukon-based residency program for Physicians.

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- supporting the Hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital,
- supporting some primary care practices to make space available to host allied health professionals where possible.

Physician holiday incentive for Hospitalists:**Key facts:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services will be offering a holiday incentive to both local and outside Physicians to assist in filling gaps in the schedule as we prepare for the holiday season.
- Physicians who sign up to cover the inpatient care schedule will receive an additional \$1,000 per day over and above the standard daily rate for every day worked over the holiday period.
- For out of territory Physicians, in addition to covering the cost of travel and accommodations, there will be an additional \$500 per travel day incentive, to a maximum of \$1000, to cover the cost of their time to come to the Yukon to support the program.
- This holiday incentive package will apply to all current and new additions to the schedule, as we recognize and appreciate those who have already signed up to cover shifts.
- Participating Physicians can expect to see this incentive added directly to the contracts.
- The department is taking these steps due to scheduling pressures in an effort to ensure that all Yukoners will have access to hospital services if needed.
- We also acknowledge that the Physician community in the Yukon has been working exceptionally hard over the last year and that being able

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to take time off during the holiday season with their friends and family, without worrying about their patients who may be in hospital is important.

- Thank you to the Physician community and all those at the Hospital Corporation that provide health care services all year round and during periods of slowdown. The impact of your commitment cannot be overstated.

Rural Family Medicine Residency Program:**Key facts:**

- We are aware that the Yukon Medical Association passed a significant resolution during their Annual General Meeting on November 1, 2024, calling on the Government of Yukon to dedicate substantial additional funding to develop a Yukon Rural Family Medicine Residency Program in the upcoming fiscal budget
- We appreciate the Yukon Medical Association's resolution and recognize that a residential medicine program would be an asset to the Territory.
- To date, the Government of Yukon has provided the Yukon Medical Association with \$25,000 over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years to explore the viability of establishing a family medicine residency program in the Yukon.
- We are working with the Yukon Medical Association to explore program options, identify educational partners and determine the program costs.
- These collaborative efforts support the achievement of Action 5.5 of the Health Human Resource Strategy, which explicitly calls for the

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development and implementation of a Rural Family Medicine Program in the Yukon.

- We look forward to continuing this work in partnership with the Yukon Medical Association.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Psychiatry**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We work collaboratively with key stakeholders to support access to psychiatric services in the Yukon and help clients get appropriate and timely care.
- Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's General Practitioner or Nurse Practitioner, the Walk-in clinic or by a Physician through the Emergency Department.

Accessing Psychiatry Services**Key facts:**

- As part of our efforts to improve psychiatric care in the Yukon, we are working to assess current and projected levels of need. We continue to find ways to enhance psychiatric services to ensure people see the right provider in the right place at the right time.
- We aim to improve patient access and flow between General Practitioners, emergency departments, psychiatric and outpatient care.
- 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

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Program or for significant mental health and/or substance use challenges at the Referred Care Clinic.

- High acuity clients referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services who require wraparound supports are prioritized. Every effort is made to see clients with acute psychiatric concerns within a two-week period.
 - During the two-week wait time, intensive outreach and mental health clinician supports are provided.
- Private Psychiatrists set their own schedules and determine how many clients to take on at a time.
- The new Mental Wellness Unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital is expected to open in winter 2024. This work is the result of a partnership between the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and community partners.

Coverage levels:**Key facts:**

- The Canadian Psychiatric Association supports a Psychiatrist to population ratio of approximately 1 : 8,400. Psychiatric coverage in the Yukon is about 1 : 7,500; however, some patients and care providers have expressed concern with timely access to care.
- As of August 2024, the Yukon is supported by six resident Psychiatrists, including a Child and Youth Psychiatrist and locums as needed.
 - At the Referred Care Clinic, one Psychiatrist provides addictions medicine psychiatry on a contract basis one day per week.

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- Four of the resident Psychiatrists work at Summit Health Associates, which the Government of Yukon has contracted to provide outpatient and inpatient psychiatric services
- There is also a resident Psychiatrist contracted by the Government of Yukon who provides services through Soulshine Health in Whitehorse.
- There is approximately a one- to three-week wait time depending on urgency for a client to see a Psychiatrist through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- The average wait time at Summit Health Associates is approximately 13 months. More urgent consults are triaged to be seen earlier.

Background:

- As of August 22, 2024, there are approximately 206 individuals awaiting assessments with an additional 13 individuals awaiting referrals to triage and an approximate wait time of 13 months at Summit Health Associates.
- There are approximately 167 patients accessing psychiatric care through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- Some trends in the last three fiscal years, as of September 2024, include:
 - The number of Yukoners accessing psychiatric care in 2024-25 to date is 824.
 - The total number of encounters patients have had with a Psychiatrist in 2024-25 to date is 2,638.
 - Approximately 18.4 per cent of all patient encounters are from Yukoners who live outside Whitehorse.
 - On average, both rural and urban patients have had three encounters with a Psychiatrist.

Summit Health Clinic MWSU integration:**Key facts:**

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Services

- Summit Health Associates was managed and operated privately until October 31, 2024.
- Each former Summit Psychiatrist holds an individual contract with the Department of Health and Social Services to provide services.
 - These Psychiatrists provide full-time, on-call psychiatric services at Whitehorse General Hospital at all times.
- Over the past two years, the Department of Health and Social Services has explored how to improve and further integrate Yukoners' options for mental health and substance use care and psychiatric services.
- Summit Health Associates was a private clinic made up of four resident Psychiatrists.
- Health and Social Services and Summit Health Associates have agreed to integrate their services within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services programs effective November 1, 2024.
- Psychiatrists care for Yukoners with complex and persistent mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders.
- This transition is good news and is expected to provide improved access, continuity of care, reduced wait times and greater coordination between psychiatric care and related services like counselling and outreach programs.
 - The makeup of the psychiatry group will remain the same, as will all programs and services.
 - This includes coverage for Whitehorse General Hospital, the Psychiatric Outreach Program and Outpatient Psychiatry Services.

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- Referring primary care providers can expect no disruptions to patient flow and the same phone numbers and referral processes remain in place.
- Summit Psychiatrists have communicated with their patients about this transition and are available to assist those who might have questions.
- All requirements under the Yukon’s Health Information Privacy and Management Act governing the collection, use and disclosure of medical information continue to be followed. No one is permitted access to an individual’s personal health care records aside from an individual’s care providers in their circle of care.

Background:

- Summit conveyed that they had been struggling to keep pace with demand, reimbursements for inpatient weekend and holiday coverage and meeting overhead costs.
- Summit Health conveyed their intention to partner their services with MWSU to work closely and more collaboratively with counsellors and support staff starting on October 31, 2024.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Community Hubs (MWSU)**Health and Social
Services

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.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Community Hubs are available in Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction/Carcross and Watson Lake.
- There is a network of mental health support workers, counsellors and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners in every community.
- We work with communities and Yukon First Nations 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.

Aftercare:

- There is a network of Mental Health Support Workers, Counsellors and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners in every community.
- Services delivered to communities include Rapid Access Counselling, ongoing one-on-one counselling, group counselling and workshops tailored to communities' specific needs, as well as support work, outreach and harm-reduction services.

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- This network of supports can 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 works with each community to partner with local and First Nations health departments to support aftercare for Yukoners returning home.
- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy outlines opportunities for our government to work with Yukon First Nations to explore additional initiatives to address areas such as aftercare.
- These initiatives will support individuals on a healing journey as well as equip communities with resources to build a support base centered around wellness and hope.

Carmacks hub:

- The Carmacks hub provides services to Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro and Ross River.
- The Carmacks hub has:
 - one community counsellor position;
 - one child and youth counsellor position;
 - one mental health support worker position; and
 - one mental health nurse position that travels from Whitehorse.
- As of September 23, 2024, we are actively recruiting one community counsellor and one Mental Health Nurse.
- The Counsellors visit Faro and Ross River every three weeks and the support worker travels to Pelly biweekly.
- The mental health nurse position for the Carmacks hub is based out of Whitehorse. The nurse can provide support with specialist

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Services

appointments in Whitehorse and connect with clients virtually as well as through regular travel to Carmacks, Pelly, Ross River and Faro.

- We have one support worker who lives in Faro and regularly travels to Ross River

Dawson City hub:

- The Dawson City hub provides services to Dawson City, Mayo and Old Crow.
- The Dawson City hub has:
 - four community counsellor positions;
 - two clinical counsellor positions;
 - one child, youth and family clinical counsellor position;
 - two mental health support worker positions; and
 - one mental health nurse position.
- As of September 23, 2024, we are actively recruiting two community counsellors and one child and youth counsellor.
- An additional clinical counsellor position is dedicated to Mayo. The counsellor in this position lives and works in the community of Mayo full-time.
- The child, youth and family counsellor and mental health nurse travel to Mayo from Dawson on a monthly basis.
 - Child and youth clients in Mayo are also supported by a full-time school counsellor and the local clinical counsellor is able to support complex clients.
- A mental health support worker and a clinical child and youth counsellor travel to Old Crow on a monthly basis

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Services

- A clinical counsellor is dedicated to Old Crow and travels there bi-weekly.

Haines Junction/Carcross hub:

- The Haines Junction hub provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Carcross.
- In Haines Junction, there is:
 - one community counsellor position;
 - one clinical counsellor position;
 - one mental health support worker position; and
 - one child, youth and family counsellor position.
- As of September 23, 2024, all positions are 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:
 - one community counsellor position;
 - one child, youth and family counsellor position; and
 - one support worker.
- As of September 23, 2024, all positions are filled.
 - Three of the staff live in Carcross/Tagish and one support worker travels from Whitehorse.
- A mental health nurse position is also allocated to the Haines Junction Hub and provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Carcross.

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- 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:
 - two community counsellor positions;
 - one child, youth and family counsellor position;
 - two mental health support worker positions; and
 - one mental health nurse position.
- As of September 23, 2024, we are actively recruiting one child and youth counsellor and one mental health nurse for the Watson Lake hub.
 - The mental health nurse position is based out of Whitehorse.
- The mental health nurse provides support with specialist appointments in Whitehorse and connects with clients virtually as well as through regular travel to Watson Lake and Teslin to provide services in-person.
- Services in the interim for the mental health nurse are provided by the Whitehorse Psychiatric Outreach Program.
- An additional community counsellor is dedicated to Teslin. This Counsellor lives and works in the community of Teslin.
- A child and youth clinical counsellor provides bi-weekly services to Teslin. The department works closely with Teslin Tlingit Council to integrate this position into the school and community.

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- Previously, the Watson Lake child and youth clinical counsellor traveled to Teslin on a bi-weekly basis. This additional position allows the Watson Lake child and youth clinical counsellor to focus on the child and youth caseload in Watson Lake.

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.
- There is a two-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 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 no 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Land-Based Healing**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Land-based healing is an important part of mental wellness in the Yukon.
- The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy outlines opportunities for our government to work with Yukon First Nations to expand support for land-based healing initiatives and to address areas such as aftercare and the role of a land-based healing treatment centre.
- We are working with the Council of Yukon First Nations to increase support for Yukon First Nations and to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment initiatives.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff in communities routinely support land-based programming in coordination with local First Nation governments upon invitation.
- The department also routinely incorporates land-based healing components into its youth programming and Intensive Treatment programs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- In December 2023, a Letter of Intent was signed between the Government of Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations and federal government for a Yukon First Nations-led treatment centre.
- 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

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Two-Spirit+ People's released Priority Action Items for Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy.

Land-Based Healing Funding Initiative:**Key facts:**

- In November 2023, the Council of Yukon First Nations and Government of Yukon launched the Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund initiative.
- The initiative is being administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon, funded by the Government of Yukon.
- The initiative aims at enhancing healing and wellness by connecting individuals to traditional teachings on the land through practices like hunting, fishing, trapping and outdoor survival. Land-based healing approaches empower individuals to heal and grow, and support emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- The first intake for 2024 has been conducted by the Council of Yukon First Nations.
 - During the first round of applications, 44 proposals were submitted. CYFN approved 39 of these proposals (89 per cent approval rate) and has allocated \$3,740,000 to support these projects.
- The funding has allowed applicants to organize and deliver land-based programs and camps for youth, adults, and families, all grounded in Yukon First Nations culture
 - These camps were offered at no cost to Yukon First Nation participants.

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- Completed and ongoing projects incorporated activities such as gatherings, hide tanning, building, beading, harvesting, hiking, canoeing, cooking and storytelling.
- Funds were allocated for staffing for direct support of programs, professional services such as counselors and camp cooks, and helpers, as well as materials, equipment, administrative costs and safety enhancements.
- These initiatives have positively impacted individuals and families within Yukon First Nations communities by improving the continuum of care, emphasizing prevention, and fostering recovery. Recorded outcomes have shown improvements in participants' well-being and strengthened cultural connections.
- CYFN has worked closely with all applicants, offering ongoing support to ensure successful planning and delivery of land-based programs. Funding distribution has been tailored to applicant needs. Non-Profit Organizations and businesses receive funds through Contribution Agreements in two installments, while individual applicants without registered businesses are supported through purchase orders and invoices, easing administrative burdens and absorbing this at CYFN.
- This funding opportunity fulfils one of the 14 initial actions of the 43 overall recommended actions in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and aims to address trauma, grief, and loss experienced by Yukon First Nations.
- The Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund initiative aligns with other key Government of Yukon strategies including Putting People First and the Yukon's Strategy on Missing and Murdered

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Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People+ and is part of a culturally responsive approach to support diverse land-based activities, including cultural camps and traditional environmental knowledge programs.

Background:

- To qualify for funding, land-based healing initiatives should be within the following guiding principles:
 - Foster connections within communities and promote traditional values for land-based programming.
 - Focus on culturally safe programming.
 - Incorporate community-based programming that fosters collaborations.
 - Improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.
 - Build from the strengths and resources of the community to create local expertise.
 - Focus on improvement within various determinants of health such as self-determination, cultural values, life skills, connection with land and fostering healthy relationships.
 - Contribute to a quality health continuum of care, including prevention, treatment and recovery.
- Eligible recipients include individuals, organizations, Yukon First Nations-led businesses and Yukon First Nation governments, groups, associations and non-profit organizations.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations is staffing two positions to support Yukon First Nations in successfully accessing funding and implementing projects.
- Overall, the Land-Based Healing Fund has followed a structured payment schedule, with most business and organization applicants receiving their funds in two installments. Individuals have had their funding requests processed through direct payments to vendors through purchase orders and invoices, streamlining the process.

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- As of September 2024, 39 land-based healing projects have been approved, with a total fund allocation of \$3.7M and \$1.8M has been disbursed to programs.
 - 11 Yukon First Nation Governments who applied for the Land-Based Healing Fund have received their first installment of funding (\$1.1M)
 - Three Yukon First Nation businesses or organizations have received the entirety of their funds (\$185K)
 - 13 Yukon First Nation businesses or organizations have received the first installment of their funds (\$438K)
 - One Yukon First Nation individual has received the entirety of their funds (\$25K)
 - Three Yukon First Nation individuals have begun receiving funds (\$62K)
- CYFN is closely working with six businesses or organizations and two individuals to support land-based healing fund initiative planning, with the intention to distribute funds to them this fiscal year.
- In the 2024-25 Main Estimates, we budgeted \$400K (\$400,000) for the Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation.
- In the 2024-25 Main Estimates, a further \$4.35M (\$4,347,000) is budgeted for the Land-Based Healing Program.
 - **\$4.35M** (\$4,347,000) is recoverable through the Working Together federal funding.

Ongoing Programs:

- Our government supports funding for land-based healing in which Yukon First Nations governments and First Nations-led organizations design, lead and implement their own unique programming.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations hosted a two-day land-based summit at the end of November in 2023 to collaborate with partners and develop strategic initiatives.

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- Our government has a long history of funding the Jackson Lake land-based healing program run by Kwanlin Dün First Nation.
 - When requested, we provide clinical supports to the Jackson Lake land-based healing program, including counsellors and nursing staff from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- In partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation's Jackson Lake Healing Camp, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and the Yukon Liquor Corporation supported the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon to hold a weeklong on-the-land camp for families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- 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 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.
- In August 2023 and 2024, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team hosted a family camp called Strengthening Family Connection.

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- The camp was hosted on the traditional territory of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.
- This was an opportunity for families of all backgrounds already connected to the Child, Youth, and Family Treatment Team to experience a camp that they may otherwise not have had an opportunity to participate in.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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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 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.

Adult Counselling Services:

- Individual and group counselling services are offered through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services at the Sarah Steele building.
- A variety of drop-in group counselling sessions are offered at the Sarah Steele building:
 - Foundations: provides education, awareness and strategies on topics such as change, emotions, self-care, understanding trauma, substance use and more.
 - Older Adults Peer Support & Wellness Group.
 - Recovery Group: a peer support and education drop-in group for individuals at any stage of change with their substance use.

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- Alumni Group: a co-lead group by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff and a participant of the program to support individuals who have recently completed a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' treatment program to continue to maintain their goals.
- Clinicians offer group programs to meet a variety of mental health and community needs:
 - Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, "Thriving with Anxiety" and "Changeways", are two separate skills groups to facilitate building skills for people affected by anxiety and depression.
 - Trauma Information Group (TIG), for those affected by trauma.
 - A new group is under development and will be piloted later this fall or early winter for those who identify as neurodivergent and could benefit from learning skills to support executive functioning.
- Trauma Sensitive Yoga as a group is available once a week.
- Rapid Access Counselling services are available within 72 hours and are accessible in person, online or by phone.

Car 867 (Mobile Crisis Unit):

- Car 867 pairs trained RMCP officers with nurses to provide real-time assessment of individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems. Car 867 follows up on calls occurring outside their operational hours if the client provides a phone number or can be located.

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- Staffed with two RCMP officers and two mental health nurses from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, the Unit responds to calls for service related to mental health issues and suicide risks.
- They provide a specialized joint response including on-site mental health assessments and referrals to other appropriate care providers, as well as safety planning and working with clients on issues in real-time.
- 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.
- The unit is available seven days a week, with 10-hour shifts to provide greater coverage during peak need hours.
- Currently, this program is being implemented in Whitehorse and assists communities on an ad-hoc basis.
 - From October 31, 2023 to February 20, 2024, the unit responded to 102 calls.
 - Between October 31, 2022 and October 31, 2023, the unit responded to 273 calls.

Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team:

- Whitehorse currently has 11 clinical counsellor positions and two clinical supervisors who carry caseloads.
- Clinical counsellors provide individual, group and family therapy options.

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- Group programming is offered to support children, youth and families. The programs include topics such as: understanding ADHD, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for adolescents, parenting support, emotional and behavioural regulation, substance use and anxiety and depression.
- Rapid Access Counselling sessions are available within 72 hours and are designed to provide in the moment support for youth over age of 13, or for caregivers looking for support, or for families in crisis.
- Clinical Outreach Counselling: counsellors are regularly scheduled in high schools and other agencies throughout Whitehorse.
- The Youth Outreach Clinic provides easy to access health and wellness services for youth ages 12 and up. The clinic provides youth-friendly, non-urgent primary care services by a registered nurse. This can include mental health and substance use care, sexual and reproductive health, emergency contraception, blood collection and immunizations. The outreach clinic offers drop-in hours and scheduled appointments as well as clinics in schools and community organizations.
- Child and Youth Outreach Groups, facilitated by four child and youth support workers provide children and youth ages 5 to 16 years, with opportunities to have fun while developing socio-emotional skills in a small group setting. Outreach groups are facilitated both by the Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team and within select schools.
- Individual therapy, parenting skills and family therapy are provided for children and youth affected by eating disorders in collaboration with Pediatrics, Whitehorse General Hospital dietician and Child Psychiatry.

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- A family camp, on the land, that integrates the two-eyed seeing approach has run annually for the past two years.
- Further integration of both Family Systems Pathways and on-the-land programming is under development.

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.
- From January 1 to August 27, 2024, Intensive Treatment Services had 127 admissions.
 - From January 1 to December 31, 2023, there were 128 admissions.
 - From January 1 to December 31, 2022, there were 130 admissions.
- Intensive Treatment Services is in the process of hiring four full-time treatment support workers.
- There are three treatment programs located at the Sarah Steele building:
 - The Spruce Program: a continuous intake group-based treatment program focusing on harm reduction, substance use support and healthy living skills. Clients are admitted to the program through the Withdrawal Management Program.
 - The Spruce 2 Program: a live-in treatment program with group-based treatment. This program is an extension of the Spruce program for individuals who require an adapted model of care, which can include significant medical, behavioral or

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psychological care needs. Spruce 2 offers timely access intake to a two- to eight-week program, based on the client's needs.

- The Pine Program: a day program that runs five days a week for five weeks. This program was developed to provide flexibility for parents and other individuals who are unable to attend live-in programming.
 - Due to demand, this program is currently being run at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.
- We have responded to the need for aftercare programming by extending our Alumni programming to include two weekly drop-in groups, with one group being held in the evening. The focus has been shifted to develop aftercare treatment programming that runs Monday through Friday to continue client's recovery and wellness journeys.
- Day treatment programming is offered and at times delivered in communities.
- Intensive Treatment Services have increased community engagement by volunteering at community events such as Yukon Quest, Humane Society Yukon and the Whitehorse Food Bank.
- Intensive Treatment Services has facilitated four community BBQs and serviced over 700 people. This has been mainly led by Alumni members.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services currently partners with the Council of Yukon First Nations' Moccasin Mobile to provide meals and supplies for people who need them.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is developing and implementing a lived-experience program to ensure that all client voices are heard.

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

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Prescribing Authorities:

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

Psychiatric Outreach Program:

- The Psychiatric Outreach Program is a community-based, voluntary program.
- The program provides mental health care through nursing, social work, psychiatry and community support services to people with severe and persistent mental illness.

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- Services include support navigating the health and social service system; social and wellness groups; medication support, education about mental illness and treatment options; working with clients' families and social supports; working with other agencies and health care providers; and outreach and life skills support.
- Early Psychosis Intervention Program is for people under the age of 30 who have received a new diagnosis of bipolar, schizophrenia or psychosis.
- Both programs accept self-referrals or referrals from professional supports, friends and family.

Referred Care Clinic:

- The Referred Care Clinic is a primary care clinic accessible by referral for vulnerable adults with unstable mental health and/or a substance use issue that do not have a primary care provider and rely upon outreach services to successfully receive care.
- Yukoners may access the Referred Care Clinic with a referral from a psychiatrist, pediatrician, Whitehorse General Hospital Inpatient physician, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services nurse, or general practitioner from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Opal Clinic, SART program and Solstice Maternity.
- 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.

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- Safer supply may also be prescribed through Opioid Treatment Services.
- Referred Care Clinic with Opioid Treatment Services is staffed by up to three general practitioner physicians per day and a psychiatrist one day per week.
- There are also 15 funded positions, including 1 registered nurse team lead, 4 outreach licensed practical nurses, 3 nurse practitioners, 3 community mental health registered nurses, 2 social workers, 2 outreach support workers, and 2 medical office assistants.
- Actual staffing levels vary, and several recruitments are ongoing for clinic staff.

Safer Supply and prescribing:

- 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.
- Mental Wellness Substance Use and Social Services has worked to expand medically indicated Opioid Treatment Services' delivery and access through outreach workers, social workers and nurses at the Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse, with outreach clinics at 405 Alexander and Housing First on 5th Ave.
- To further expand the scope of Safer Supply, we are working with an addictions medicine specialist in British Columbia to develop and provide clinical training and prescribing guidelines for physicians in the Yukon.

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- Expanding access to opioid agonist therapy and Safer Supply, including in communities, is an element of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
 - The strategy includes providing safer supply medications as a harm reduction intervention.
- Currently, Opioid Treatment Services are not available through health centres in rural communities.
 - Community Nursing is working on developing a policy framework to make this possible.
- Between January 1 and August 31, 2024, there were 225 clients registered with Opioid Treatment Services with an average of 274 appointments per month.
- In 2023, there were 698 clients supported through the Referred Care Clinic with an average of 848 appointments per month.
- We are improving access to Safer Supply as more personnel are hired to provide wraparound services to help ensure that clients accessing safer supply through Opioid Treatment Services have the supports required.
- The Safer Supply program currently offers Hydromorphone tablets and Fentanyl Patch programs as a safer supply of opioids.
- Expansion of safer supply is not limited to the safe supply of opioids.
 - The department is also exploring options to provide safer supply for other illicit substances such as stimulants.

Supervised Consumption Site:

- Clients at the Supervised Consumption Site can access a range of harm reduction and social services including drug testing, counselling,

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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.

- The Supervised Consumption Site is seeing an increase in site visits in 2024 compared to previous years.
 - Between January 1 and August 31, 2024, there have been 21,373 visits to the site.
 - There were 6,492 visits to the site in calendar year 2023.
- As of August 31, 2024, staff at the Supervised Consumption Staff have reversed 87 overdoses onsite and have had no fatalities.
- The Supervised Consumption Site's inhalation room was recently unavailable for a few days while it was being repaired.
- Blood Ties Four Directions released an alert on the presence of Xylazine in drugs. This alert will be posted at 405 Alexander.
 - Xylazine (aka Tranq) is a non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer and pain reliever that does not respond to Naloxone.

Background:

- In February 2024, the Supervised Consumption Site expanded their hours to be open seven days a week from 10:30am to 9:30pm, including statutory holidays.
 - On September 30, 2021, we opened the Supervised Consumption Site and in May 2022 we completed renovations to support inhalation as a consumption method.
- 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.

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- 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.

Withdrawal Management Services:

- Withdrawal Management Services is a 24/7 medically supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use.
- There are 14 beds available for adults and four beds available for youth.
- 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.
- 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.
- We have implemented phlebotomy and IV therapy in our Withdrawal Management Services, which has reduced hospital transfers and improved patient care.
- We have increased our aftercare programming options to include Alumni Group twice weekly as well as a weekly drop-in Art Therapy program.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has partnered with a local Indigenous led recovery program, Thay K'I Ainint'I (Thigh-KEY-

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anna-tay), to offer programming up to three times weekly for clients wishing to maintain sobriety.

- Withdrawal Management and Treatment Services have added a traditional foods program as part of our efforts to develop a more culturally accessible program.

Background:

- Bed availability is variable as they are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - The number of bed requests does not represent unique individuals.
 - Clients wanting access to Withdrawal Management Services may be admitted immediately, or typically within 24 – 48 hours if all beds are occupied at the time.
 - Individuals wishing to access Withdrawal Management Services but live outside of Whitehorse can call to reserve a bed before travelling from their home community.
 - Youth bed requests are never delayed.
- Our government has increased funding for Withdrawal Management to hire additional licensed practical nurses.
- With these additional providers, the program has been able to increase admissions and provide more comprehensive withdrawal care to continue to keep clients from unnecessarily attending Whitehorse General Hospital.
- We increased our bed capacity in 2023 by approximately 7.5 per cent. There were 953 admissions in 2022 and 1,017 admissions in 2023.
- As of September 2024, the program is averaging approximately 97 admissions per month compared to 76 admissions per month in 2022. As a result of these additional positions, Withdrawal Management Services has increased admissions by approximately 28 percent since 2022.
 - In 2023, Withdrawal Management Services averaged 84 admissions per month.

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- As of September 2024, Withdrawal Management employs 13.5 FTE Nurses, 4.5 FTE Support Workers, a community engagement worker, one Nurse Practitioner, two Social Workers, an administrative worker and a coordinator.

Yukon Review Board:

- Yukon Review Board clients are individuals found Not Criminally Responsible for their offenses due to mental disorders.
 - The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Forensic Complex Care Team offers comprehensive case management services for clients under a Yukon Review Board disposition order.
- The Yukon Review Board functions as a specialized tribunal appointed by the territorial court to oversee these orders.
- Case Management Services:
 - These services often include securing appropriate hospital placements, arranging community-supported housing, providing therapeutic program support, assisting with employment or educational opportunities and fostering cultural connections.
 - The Forensic Complex Care Team has a designated Social Worker who acts as the Yukon Review Board Coordinator and delivers these services to clients.
- The Forensic Complex Care Team provides individual and group outpatient clinical counselling tailored to the needs of Yukon Review Board clients.
- Tracking process and collaboration with out-of-territory clients:

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- Clients outside the territory receive care from designated forensic hospitals.
- Monthly video case conferences are held between the client, the Forensic Complex Care Team and the forensic hospital.
- Additional communication, such as phone calls and check-ins, is facilitated as necessary, especially leading up to Board hearings or during transitions from hospital to community settings.
- Annual Yukon Review Board hearings:
 - Forensic hospitals must submit updated progress reviews two months before the hearings.
 - Risk assessments are conducted according to the disposition order requirements.
- On-site check-ins are arranged for cases where clients must attend hearings in the Yukon.
 - This structured approach ensures consistent support, monitoring, and coordination for clients under Yukon Review Board jurisdiction.

Background:

- 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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Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key Messages:

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

Carcross Health Centre suspected propane leak:**Key facts:**

- We are aware that a gas leak was suspected at Carcross Health Centre on the afternoon of Friday, October 25.
- Staff evacuated the building, contacted the local fire department and the Community Nursing Manager on Call who reached out to Property Management.

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- Once Property Management was notified, the gas to the building was turned off and windows were opened.
- Upon arrival, the Fire Department was unable to detect any gas in the building
- The incident is suspected to have been sewage related.
- Post assessment, the propane was turned back on, and further monitoring occurred to ensure no leak was present.
- While the Health Centre was closed, Emergency Medical Services was notified and all emergency calls to the Centre were supported through 911 dispatch.
- Regular operations resumed on Saturday morning and no further smell was detected.

Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre:

- The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre first opened its doors on November 7, 2022. The clinic is located at 9010 Quartz Road.
- In addition to delivering high quality health and wellness services in both French and English, the clinic provides an additional access point for primary health care services.
- Registered patients can access primary health care services by booking an appointment in advance, or by accessing same-day appointments that will be set aside for urgent or emerging primary health care needs.
- An application process was set up for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre to ensure that all Yukoners wanting the opportunity to obtain primary health care services have the chance to provide relevant information and give their informed consent.

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- Applications are reviewed and prioritized by a team of healthcare professionals at the clinic. Acceptance or waitlist status are determined by the capacity of the clinic's primary care providers and 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, among others.
- As of August 26, 2024, there have been a total of 2,837 eligible applications for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
- 1,832 patients received their first appointment and have been connected with a primary care provider.
- 92 others have been offered access to the clinic but have not yet completed their intake form and/or signed their service agreement.
- If someone is not initially accepted, they will be added to the waitlist and notified when the opportunity for an intake is available.
- Work continues with physician partners to identify primary care providers to deliver contracted services at the Clinic.

Background

- At present, the clinic is prepared to take on 5,000 patients but is taking a triaged approach to ensure that those requiring immediate access receive it.
- In 2024 –25, we budgeted **\$2.66M** (\$2,655,935) for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
- Once fully staffed, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre staff complement will include one Clinic Manager, five Nurse Practitioners, one Registered Nurse, one Licensed Practical Nurse, two Medical Office Assistants, one Social Worker and one full-time equivalent contract Physician.
- The clinic is supported by three part-time contract Physicians including one French speaking physician who provides consultation services and patient care.

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- There are currently five bilingual staff members with recruitment underway for additional bilingual full-time and AOC staff.
- The current and target staff complements are:

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

Collaborative care:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to exploring opportunities for collaborative care and co-location of allied health professionals in primary health care settings. The aim is to create teams that work together to support community health and wellness.
- We are working with the Yukon Medical Association and other stakeholders to identify effective ways to implement team-based care across the territory.
- We are exploring opportunities to integrate allied health professionals, such as mental health professionals, social workers and chronic disease nurses, into primary health care practices to enhance the quality of care.
- The development of team-based care models involves careful consideration of various complex factors, including patient needs, allied health human resources and clinic capacity.

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- This work aligns with the broader goals of the Putting People First report and supports our objective to provide Yukoners with high-quality, timely care from the most appropriate provider.

Community Health Centre closures:

- We acknowledge the challenges faced by our community health centres, particularly those related to staffing shortages that sometimes result in temporary service reductions or closures.
- Ensuring continuous access to health care is our top priority, and we are actively working on solutions, including recruitment and retention strategies, to minimize disruptions in service.
- This summer, we have seen an improvement in staffing levels across our health care facilities, leading to minimal service reductions across the territory.
- Our health human resource recruitment and retention strategies have been successful in attracting health care professionals, contributing to the stability of services across the territory.
- The Department of Health and Social Services welcomed nurses from the Department of National Defense. These nurses have been working at the Watson Lake and Dawson City Community Hospitals since May 2024.
- We remain committed to strengthening our health care system by investing in long-term staffing strategies that will help keep our community health centers open and accessible to all Yukoners.

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- We will continue to build on these successes to ensure that all Yukoners have access to reliable and consistent health care services throughout the year.

Hearing Services:

- Hearing Services is experiencing prolonged wait times for hearing assessments due to staffing challenges.
- Effective mid-November 2024, there is limited capacity to conduct hearing-aid consultations and fittings
- All clients referred for hearing assessments are triaged and prioritized based on clinical need. The current wait times for hearing assessments are:
 - urgent care- up to one week;
 - pediatrics- up to three weeks;
 - high priority- up to three weeks;
 - medium priority- 18 to 24 months; and
 - low priority- two plus years.
- Clients can obtain hearing assessments privately at their own expense or using private insurance coverage.
- At this time, Hearing Services is focusing available hearing-aid consultation appointments on priority groups, including;
 - children needing hearing aids,
 - adults with sudden hearing loss and
 - individuals experiencing debilitating tinnitus due to exceptional auditory complications.
- There is a waitlist in place for clients needing hearing-aid consultations who do not fall into the priority groups.

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- Hearing Services can provide the results of the hearing assessment to the client to bring to a private clinic if clients choose to purchase their hearing-aids privately.
- We are actively recruiting to fill vacant positions, and we encourage interested applicants who meet the requirements to apply.
- Currently, we are utilizing private contractors to see the highest priority clients while we explore other options that best meet the needs of Yukoners.

Mayo Community Health Centre physician staffing:

- A new physician was contracted to service Mayo starting in May 2024.
 - Residents of Mayo currently benefit from monthly in-person visits as well as virtual care services.
- Recruitment for additional primary care support is ongoing to ensure there are sufficient ongoing services available in the community.

Old Crow Health and Wellness Centre

- Old Crow Health Centre is staffed with two Primary Health Care Nurses and two Nurse in Charge on rotation who work in opposite rotation.
- The new Health and Wellness Centre happily opened and has been serving the community since July 2024.
- The new Health and Wellness Centre in Old Crow was completed in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, which helps ensure that health and social services meet community needs via an integrated poly clinic approach that is culturally safe and inviting.

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Parhelion Clinic:

- There have been contract delays around the operation of the Parhelion health care clinic and dispensary in Watson Lake.
- The details of ongoing negotiations should not be discussed in public.
- An interim contract extension offer has been provided to the Clinic to ensure that Parhelion is compensated for the services they provide as we finalize negotiations.
- We value the hard work of physicians, staff and clinic operators at Parhelion Clinic.
- Once an agreement is reached, the government will take the time to appropriately plan the next steps towards the broader objective of increasing integrated care in Watson Lake and examine if operating models currently used in Dawson City and the Constellation Health Centre may be appropriate in the longer term.
- We will also take time to understand the needs of the community and how services in Watson Lake can align with the goals of a future health authority in the Yukon.

Whitehorse Vaccination Clinic:

- As of September 27, 2023, the vaccine clinic has relocated to its new location on the corner of 4th and Ogilvie in the NVD Place Mall.
- This move supports efforts to integrate COVID-19 vaccinations into our ongoing health service operations while supporting our immunization team to offer vaccines at a location that meets our programming needs.
- The clinic is a satellite location for the Whitehorse Health Centre and is operating as the Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place.

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- The Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place offers COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccinations, as well as appointments for publicly funded vaccines for people over the age of five.
- Routine publicly funded vaccines and programming continue to be offered at the Whitehorse Health Centre (9010 Quartz Road), with a focus on patients under five years of age.
- Yukoners are also encouraged to contact pharmacies, which have COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccination appointments available.
- The Whitehorse vaccination clinic was temporarily closed in September due to reduced staff availability during the summer. This closure also allowed time to prepare for the rollout of the new COVID-19 vaccine, which became available in Canada in the first week of October, in time for the flu and COVID-19 vaccination appointments starting that month.
- While the clinic was closed, work did occur in the location. Staff were doing reminder recalls, following up with children/youth who were not up to date for immunizations and booking them into appointments.
- The Whitehorse Health Centre offered services to clients during the temporary closure in September.

Background:

- The Whitehorse Vaccine Clinic space plays a critical role in ensuring vaccine security and informing how we design our vaccination programming. The controlled environment of the clinic guarantees the safe handling and storage of vaccines, which is essential for the integrity of the mass immunization programs offered there.
- During peak immunization periods,

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- the Whitehorse Health Centre operates primarily on an appointment-based model to manage demand effectively.
 - Walk-in services may be available during less busy times, offering flexibility for those who prefer not to schedule in advance.
- Vaccines are available at various locations, including pharmacies and health centres across the territory. The decision not to offer other publicly funded vaccines, such as Shingrix or HPV, at the vaccine clinic is based on programming models and logistical requirements specific to the space. However, these vaccines are still accessible through pharmacies and other public health clinic sites.
- There has been a total of 8,196 vaccines administered since the satellite clinic opened on September 27, 2023. The flu vaccine remains available, and we are actively coordinating with pharmacies to keep them informed about the status of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- As of July 31, 2024, approximately 19 per cent of the Yukon population has had an XBB COVID-19 vaccination as their most recent dose. The highest XBB coverage is in the 70+ age group.
- Between January 1, 2021 and July 31, 2024 a total of 121,946 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the Yukon.

Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic:

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

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- On April 29 the Walk-in Clinic opened at its permanent location at Mat 108 Jarvis St. in the Mah's Point building.
- The walk-in clinic continues to provide care for people without a primary care provider during the operating hours.
- The clinic is serviced by an interdisciplinary team including two permanent Nurse Practitioners and two physicians contracted to provide regular clinic hours for the next six months.
- We continue to work with our partners at Yukon Medical Association to recruit various part time contract physicians to provide primary care at the Walk-in Clinic.
- The clinic is open Mondays to Wednesday 9 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 5:30pm and Thursday to Friday 9 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 4 pm.
- Yukoners seeking an appointment can visit the clinic but are encouraged to call 867-471-0035 to check wait times and book a same day appointment.
- As of July 31, 2024, the clinic has provided care to over 3,362 patients.
- The Walk-in Clinic is fully staffed by one clinic manager, two nurse practitioners, two licensed practical nurses, three medical office assistants, and one social worker.
- We budgeted **\$1.43M** for 2024-25 to support the operations of the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

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 continue to explore ways to optimize the overall health care system by improving the patient experience and outcomes, the health of the population, the efficiency of the system, health equity and the provider experience
- The Putting People First report recommendations highlight opportunities for improvement in insured health coverage and adjacent services. We are making progress.
- We are exploring opportunities for the best value for the health care dollar to ensure the sustainability of our healthcare system for Yukoners for generations to come.
- Transitioning patients, eligible under the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and Pharmacare Program on biological medications to safe, effective and low-cost biosimilars is one step we are taking to achieve longevity in our health care insurance program.
- The department is working to reduce the costs associated with reimbursements for drugs on the public formulary. This work is expected to be complete in the fall of 2024.
- Our government is working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues on Canada's National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases.

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- This work includes determining how the 3-year funding commitment totaling \$1.4 billion can be used by provinces and territories to support the implementation of the National Strategy.
- In the first supplementary estimate for 2024-25, we are requesting an increase of **\$34M** to meet the costs of insured health services in response to our aging and growing population.

Biosimilars:**Key facts:**

- 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 from the time of listing of the biosimilar to work with a health care provider to switch to a biosimilar included in the initiative to maintain coverage. Exemptions can be made if there is a valid medical reason.
- The biosimilar initiative will expand the use of biosimilars, and these savings can be invested into other health care services for Yukoners.

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Children's Drug and Optical Program:

Key facts:

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

Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program:

Key facts:

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program supports eligible Yukoners under the age of 65 to help cover some costs associated with managing their chronic disease or disabilities.
- The program supported 1,257 clients in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- A chronic disease is defined as a health condition that is marked by long duration or frequent recurrence and is specified in the *Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Regulation*.
- The program provides coverage for approximately 80 chronic conditions, which are determined by regulation.

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- 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.

Background:

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program is a legislated payor of last resort.
 - If a person receives payment under any other Act or insurance, no amount can be paid through the program, except to the extent that the benefit does not cover the entire cost of service.
- Removal of the deductible would require regulatory amendment.
 - Depending on income level, a client may not have to pay a deductible amount.
 - The deductible is waived for palliative clients and those who are on social assistance.
 - The Regulation provides authorization for the director to reduce the prescribed deductible amount.

Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits:

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Key facts:

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program provides:
 - Drug coverage;
 - Medical surgical supplies such as, syringes, diabetic supplies, prosthetic garments and more;
 - Medical equipment including manually operated hospital beds and electric wheelchairs;
 - Prostheses and orthotics.
- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit program is accessed by application submitted by the prescriber and client. If eligible, the request is covered under the *Chronic Disease and Disability Regulations*.
- Appeals on decisions can be submitted to the Director of Insured Health Services via letter or email for review on a case-by-case basis.
- Work is underway to determine pathways to develop a more formalized appeals or complaint policy subject to legal review and recommendation.
- As of 2024, the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Advisory Committee is not active
- Insured Health Services is exploring ways to engage partners and patients on their care journey and recognize that the advisory group may be one option.
- The Director of Insured Health Services, as per the Regulations, may use their discretion in the application of the Regulations to limit or expand coverage based on expertise, experience and resources.

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- Insured Health Services uses experts and resources including Pharmacists, Nurses and organizations such as Canada's Drug Agency to update and evaluate coverage.

Federal Pharmacare:**Key facts:**

- The federal government announced new pharmacare measures on February 25, 2024. The draft legislation, Bill C-64, received royal assent on October 10, 2024 and passed into law.
- The *Act Respecting Pharmacare* sets out a framework for a national pharmacare program. In the short term, the federal government will provide coverage for contraception and diabetes treatment.
- Department officials are working with federal counterparts to understand what the program means for the Yukon and how these new measures can strengthen our existing Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits programs.
- We are working on gathering more information on the proposed pharmacare plan to make an informed decision on how best to proceed and to prevent duplication among existing programs within Insured Health Services.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program and for social assistance recipients.
- All supplies required to manage diabetes such as insulin, insulin syringes, insulin pumps, lancets, test strips and glucometers are currently covered through Insured Health Services.

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- More work is anticipated to understand what coverage will look like for those under the Non-Insured Health Benefit program with our primary concern being equity of access under the federal program.

Background:

- Putting People First recommends working with the federal government to support a model of care for a national pharmacare program.

Insured Health Spending in 2023-24:**Key facts:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to access the services they need, including medically necessary travel both in and out of territory.
- Medical travel subsidies are legislated under the Travel for Medical Treatment Act and Regulations, and as such, the Department of Health and Social Services is obligated to deliver the insured health care that Yukoners expect and rely on.
- The department is seeing increased pressures on Insured Health, including medical travel, due to Consumer Price Index increases in recent years, our growing and aging population and the complexity of care needs as a result.
- In the pursuit of ensuring Yukoners have access to high quality care, the Department of Health and Social Services has enhanced coverage under the Medical Travel Program in recent years this includes:
 - Increasing the medical travel subsidy is tied to inflation based on the Consumer Price Index. This fiscal year the subsidy is \$174

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per day for overnight outpatient services, and \$88 for same day travel and approved escorts.

- The addition of fertility treatment and surrogacy services under the Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations this fall 2024;
 - In December 2022, the Yukon became a national leader in providing access to gender-affirming care services and completed regulatory amendments to allow Yukoners to receive health care insurance and medical travel coverage for gender-affirming care and;
 - In 2022 in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency Insured Health Services extended coverage to include out of territory residential treatment to ensure Yukoners are able to receive medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care.
- The Department of Health and Social Services processed a total of 11,048 subsidy form applications in 2023-2024 which is a substantial increase over 2021-2022's fiscal year wherein 8,163 subsidy forms were processed.
 - Likewise, Out of Territory Medical travel cases have increased from 2,671 in 2021-2022 to 3,838 in 2023-24. This has resulted in an increase of scheduled flights booked by the program, from 7,523 in 2021-2022 to 13,744 in 2023-24.
 - In 2021-2022 both in and out of territory Medical Travel subsidy costs totaled \$3.2M (\$3,183,488) in 2023-2024 these costs amounted to \$4.5M (\$4,515,601).

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- In the 2024-25 Supplementary budget Medical Travel subsidy has been allocated \$6.4M (\$6,420,000) for operations and maintenance costs and is reflective of year over year growth in demand alongside the addition of new and expanded coverage programs.
- We support necessary medical travel for individuals that need care not otherwise available in a home community.
- The department stayed within vote in 2023/24, despite additional pressures related to medical travel.

New health care cards:**Key facts:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services is developing new health cards and distribution is anticipated to begin in early 2025.
- Yukoners can expect to receive their new card instead of a new sticker about a month in advance of their current card's expiration date through the mail. No one will be required to attend the Insured Health office to receive their updated card at this stage.
 - The initial issuance of new cards will be completed with staggered expiration dates.
 - Post the initial issuance, cards will be reissued every five years.
- The new health care cards will look to enhance the security, integrity, and quality of the cards. However, instances of known fraud using the current health care cards are limited.

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- Photos will not be included in the initial rollout of the cards; however, the department is working to add photos as soon as the capacity is available.
 - Photos were excluded from the initial roll out so as to support and simplify this process.
- Cards may begin to host photos within 12 to 18 months of the initial roll out.
 - At this time attendance in-person will be required, more information will be provided as we get closer to achieving this stage.
 - Photo exemptions will be provided for Yukoners who may not be able to attend in person.
- To support the initial roll out, the Department has allocated \$850K (\$850,000) and an additional \$50K (\$50,000) for capital system upgrades.
- 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.

Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program:

Key facts:

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- 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*.
 - The program is a regulated payor of last resort.

Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan:

Key facts:

- The Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan provides legislated coverage for Physician and hospital services, travel for medical treatment, and a suite of extended benefits.
- 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.
- Enrollment in the Children's Drug and Optical Plan:
 - 55 people were enrolled in the 2022-23 fiscal year.
 - A total of 46 people were enrolled during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Enrollment in the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program:
 - 1,204 people were receiving benefits in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

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- A total of 1,257 people received benefits in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Enrollment in the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program:
 - 6,616 people were receiving benefits in the 2022-23 fiscal year.
 - A total of 6773 people received benefits in the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Extended benefits are provided to status First Nations, Metis, and Inuit through the federal government's Non-Insured Health Benefits program.
 - This includes coverage for pharmaceuticals, vision care, dental care, medical supplies and equipment and medical travel.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Medical Travel**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting eligible Yukoners to access the services they need, including medically necessary travel both in and out of territory.

Key messages:

- Our government continues to expand in-territory programs to ensure that more Yukoners can access care closer to home.
- We understand that some people still need to travel outside their home communities to receive medical services and we are committed to supporting this necessary travel.
- Our program provides support for insured health services that are not available in an individual's home community.
- The current medical travel subsidy is \$174 per day for overnight outpatient services, and \$88 for same day travel and approved escorts.
 - This amount is adjusted to inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and is calculated as of April 1 of each year.
 - In 2023-24, the medical travel subsidy rate was \$166 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$84 for same day travel and escorts.
 - In 2022-23, the medical travel subsidy rate was \$155 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$78 for same day travel and escorts.

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- Based on fiscal year, Insured Health Medical Travel has supported:

Service	2024-25 (As of Sept 16, 2024)	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
In-territory medical travel cases	2,152	4,706	4,278	4,081
Out-of-territory medical travel cases	2,066	3,838	3,179	2,671
In-territory medevacs	314	594	438	373
Out-of-territory medevacs	405	706	421	451
Scheduled air flights booked	7,149	13,744	11,693	7,523
Subsidy forms processed	5,687	11,048	10,156	8,163
Mileage allowances processed	3,150	6,554	7,401	3,864

Application:

Key facts:

- To begin an application for medical travel, a Doctor, Nurse or other health care professional must provide an application on behalf of their patient to the Medical Travel Program outlining the necessity for an identified medical service provided by a licensed medical practitioner that cannot be offered in one's home community.

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- At this time, the medical practitioner can also recommend a travel escort with all relevant contextual information outlining medical need.
- Applications take on average seven to ten days to be reviewed.
- If approved a member of the medical travel team will contact the patient or guardian to book their flights and share information on subsidies. Please note, the subsidy is linked to preapproved medical travel.
- The application is then reviewed by the Medical Officer of Health to determine if medical travel can be provided for the requested services.
 - Requests for escorts are also reviewed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, their authorized deputy or the Director of Insured Health Services.
- Once approved for medical travel, the individual is eligible to submit a subsidy to assist with the cost incurred for their accommodation, meals and transportation while out on approved travel.
 - Individuals must bring their subsidy form that is to be signed by the medical practitioner(s) at each appointment to confirm the delivery of services and can submit the completed form upon completion of their travel for processing.

Out-of-territory residential treatment:**Key facts:**

- 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 out of territory residential treatment.

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- In May 2024, Insured Health Services updated the 2022 Out of Territory Residential Treatment Directive to include Westminster House Society.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff work with clients to support referrals to out-of-territory residential treatment programs and help support return-to-territory treatment plans.

Background:

- Insured Health Services provides pre-approved coverage for eligible plan beneficiaries to attend out-of-territory residential treatment facilities based on established criteria.
 - Mental Health and Wellness Services offer a live-in Withdrawal Management Service and a concurrent disorder treatment program for people living with substance use issues.
 - Detox and sobering services are not Insured Health Services and are not covered through Insured Health Services for out-of-territory medical travel.
- Yukoners who wish to seek treatment out-of-territory should work with a primary care provider who will submit an application to Insured Health Services.
- Coverage for treatment costs, and medical travel, is considered for Homewood Health Centre in Ontario, in BC at Last Door Recovery Centre, Edgewood Treatment Centre, Homewood Ravensview, Westminster House Society and Cedars Recovery and in Alberta through Last Door Addictions Recovery Centre.
- All facilities covered under the Out-of-Territory Residential Treatment Directive have been reviewed by clinical advisors.

Residences:**Key facts:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working to explore avenues to respond to Recommendation 2.6 in the Putting

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People First Report, suggesting the creation of medical residences in Vancouver and Whitehorse.

- We are conducting data analysis to better understand the need and assess associated costs.
- We are considering interim solutions including working with hotels to set aside blocks of rooms for reservation or leasing existing spaces and exploring additional subsidy for low-income earners.
- We are aware that First Nation governments, non-government organizations and private sector are interested in possible solutions in this area and will explore partnerships to support this goal.
- Further analysis and communication with our partners are necessary at this time to best understand options and ensure cost effective, efficient and equitable solutions.
- While we conduct longer term work related to establishing medical travel residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver, we are also exploring alternative short-term solutions.

Background:

- Recommendation 2.6 of Putting People First is to ‘create residences as an accommodation option for medical travelers who are low income, those who require an extended stay, seniors, and others who may not feel comfortable travelling outside of their home communities.’

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Disability Services**Health and Social
Services

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 Yukoners living with disabilities across the lifespan, depending on need.
- We appreciate the important work advanced by our partners, including all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and community members to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- We are committed to expanding supports available to those impacted by a disability in alignment with the recommendations in the Putting People First report and best practices.
- As of September 10, 2024, the Disability Services Unit had 286 children and 137 adults receiving services, with an additional 16 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, Opportunities Yukon (formerly Challenge Disabilities), Options for Independence, and Teegatha'Oh Zheh.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Disability Services**Health and Social
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- The Yukon Supplementary Allowance is paid to every Yukoner who is eligible for assistance and excluded from the labour force. This includes people who are 19 years old or older with a severe or prolonged disability that is reasonably expected to prevent them from working for the next year, as well as people who are old enough to receive Old Age Security.
 - From April 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, an average of 55.4 per cent of social assistance cases (505 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
 - In 2023, an average of 55 per cent of social assistance cases (521 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
- The Yukon Home Care Program delivers home-based health-related support for Yukoners based on assessed need, including Yukoners with disabilities who meet program eligibility criteria. Services include acute, chronic, palliative, respite care, and rehabilitation.
- Yukoners with disabilities who cannot be supported to live at home or within Disability Services residential continuum may be eligible for long-term care. Eligibility is assessed on an application basis.

Canada Disability Benefit:

- The Government of Canada passed the *Canada Disability Benefit Act* in June 2023. The Act is intended to reduce poverty and support the financial and social security of working-age persons with disabilities.
- The Government of Yukon participates in federal/provincial/territorial and provincial/territorial meetings, which include the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee.

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- While our government strongly supports the Benefit being exempt as or deducted from income, we are working to understand how the proposed eligibility thresholds and benefit amounts will impact Yukoners.
- We are recommending that the Government of Canada apply an equitable approach to rolling out the CDB instead of a uniform approach to better address the increased cost of living and challenges unique to Northern living
- We are actively participating in ongoing discussions with other provinces and territories and with Canada, to ensure that income thresholds are adjusted fairly for all Canadians living with disabilities. This ensures that no matter where they live, individuals with disabilities will receive equitable benefits that reflect their unique circumstances across the country.
- Public consultation on the proposed regulations closed on September 23, 2024. The Act requires that regulations must be made no later than June 2025.
 - The regulations will establish parameters on eligibility criteria, the amount, and how the amount will be calculated.
- The federal government committed to providing payments in July 2025, following completion of the regulatory process and consultations with persons with disabilities.
- To help with financial barriers, the 2024 federal budget provides funding to cover the fees charged by medical practitioners to complete the medical forms required to support the required Disability Tax Credit application.

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- The form can be completed by Medical Doctors and other medical practitioners, such as Nurse Practitioners, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists., etc.

Proposed Regulations:

- The maximum amount of the benefit for the July 2025 to June 2026 payment period would be \$2,400, or \$200 per month.
- Income thresholds:
 - The benefit would be reduced by 20 cents for every dollar of income that is above:
 - \$23,000 if the beneficiary is single.
 - \$32,500 if the beneficiary is married or has a common-law partner.
 - If both members of a couple are beneficiaries, the benefit would be reduced by 10 cents for each person for every dollar of the couple's income that is above \$32,500.
- Working income exemption
 - A certain amount of work income would be exempt from the calculation of a person's income.
 - If the beneficiary is single, the exempt amount would be \$10,000.
 - If the beneficiary is married or has a common-law partner, the exempt amount for the couple's combined employment income would be \$14,000.
- The maximum benefit amount and the income thresholds and working income exemption amounts would be adjusted each payment period to account for inflation, as determined by changes in the Consumer Price Index.

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Disability Services redesign:

- We are collaborating within the Department of Health and Social Services to determine how best to implement the vision of Putting People First and meet the needs of Yukoners living with disabilities.
- The following Putting People First recommendations relate specifically to the design and delivery of Disability Services but will be addressed as part of cross-departmental collaboration on better meeting the needs of Yukoners living with disabilities:
 - 5.12 – Combine Adult Disability Services and Child Disability Services into one needs-based program and develop a new eligibility and assessment framework for services.
 - 5.13 – Expand the mandate of adult programming to cover a broader range of disabilities and create new services, as appropriate, to meet the needs of this expanded adult service population.
- We are also working on other Putting People First recommendations to better meet the needs of those with disabilities.
 - 5.11 – ‘Increase the disability top-up amount to \$325, to reflect inflation since 2005, and index disability income to inflation going forward’ is being pursued as part of the rate review of Social Assistance and modernization of Income Support Services.
 - 5.10 – ‘Create a separate, stand-alone disability benefit for those with permanent disabilities,’.
 - 5.14 – ‘Provide self-or family-managed care funding to enable adult Yukoners to live at home for longer’ is a quality improvement initiative with Continuing Care.

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD):

- The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Interagency Advisory Committee released its Yukon Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan in September 2019.
 - The committee includes people living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, their families, non-governmental organizations, Yukon First Nations governments, the Government of Yukon and other representatives from across the territory.
- This plan is part of our commitment to support healthy pregnancies, expand maternal and pre-natal community-delivered supports, and to work across departments and collaboratively with community partners to harmonize supports for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- Since 2019, we have committed **\$500K** per year to support the implementation of the action plan. Projects funded since 2019 include:
 - low-barrier counselling services to people living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder;
 - recreational activities for people with lived experience with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, providing opportunities for inclusion and respite for caregivers;
 - a partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations to provide a First Nations Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan Coordinator; and
 - a variety of activities to promote Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day annually on September 9 to raise awareness and prevention strategies.

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- We recognize that aging parents require additional support when supporting adult children living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. As we implement the Putting People First report, we are looking broadly at ways to expand support to these families.

Individualized supervisory care (caregiver benefit):

- In November 2022, we updated the In-Home Child Care financial support and renamed it Individualized Supervisory Care supports.
- Individualized Supervisory Care offers financial support for parents of children with disabilities, including financial support to families to hire in-home childcare when the child's disability prevents them from attending daycare.
- For school aged children, this funding option is only approved for use outside of regular school hours as the *Education Act* mandates provision of Education to school-age children.
- Individualized Supervisory Care includes an option for a parent to provide individualized supervisory care to their own child.
- For this to apply, funding recipients must demonstrate that the care provided is beyond what is expected of a typical parent-child relationship.

St. Elias Adult Group Home transfer:

- The St. Elias Adult Group Home closed in spring 2024 to transition the space into a residential Managed Alcohol Program.
- This transition is being managed with a strong commitment to the wellbeing of both residents and staff.

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- All residents of St. Elias have been moved to two new community-based group homes that are better designed, smaller and more home-like environments,
 - Residents have moved to Tay Street Group Home and Casa Ketza Group Home, which are both operated by Opportunities Yukon.
- Residents are being best supported by a move to homes that meet modern best practices, moving away from a medical model to a social model that emphasizes removing societal barriers and enabling full participation.
- Moving the residents has the additional benefit of making St. Elias available for a Managed Alcohol Program, but the decision to move residents was made to improve the overall well-being, autonomy, and quality of life of the residents.
- All impacted St. Elias employees at the group home were offered a transfer to an alternative position within their current branch of Family and Children’s Services, to ensure that no employee lost their job as a result of this change.
 - These positions meet the transfer requirements under the Public Service Act section 119.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is dedicated to improving the lives and health of children, youth and families.

Key messages:

- We appreciate the work of the dedicated Family and Children's Services staff to support children and families in the Yukon.
- Our government recognizes that child welfare reform is a leading priority for all governments throughout the territory.
- We are working to ensure that children are protected from harm and receive the care that is essential for their wellbeing.
- We work closely with all levels of government, Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations and non-government organizations to improve child welfare services for families and children in the territory.

Adoption Services:

- Adoption Services has a Placement Resource Team that is dedicated to supporting caregivers and adoptive parents.
 - The team currently includes an Adoptions Coordinator and an Adoptions Social Worker.
 - As of November 2024, we are recruiting four Placement Resource Social Worker positions that will provide both caregiver services and adoptions services.
- We provide adoption services to children and families, including:
 - inter-country adoptions;
 - direct and stepparent adoptive placements; and

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- protection adoptions that have the full consent of First Nations governments.
- We also assist adult adoptees and birth parents seeking:
 - disclosure;
 - reunion information; and
 - counselling.

Coroner's inquest on Kaiya Stone-Kirk:

- We recognize the death of Kaiya Stone-Kirk as a tragic event.
- On April 8, 2024, the Director of Family and Children's Services gave the Chief Coroner of the Yukon an update on the Jury Recommendations directed to Family and Children's Services from the inquest.
- As of April 8, 2024, four of the eight recommendations have been implemented (recommendation #5, 6, 7, 13) and work is underway to implement the remaining recommendations (recommendation # 8, 9, 10, 11)
 - Recommendation #5: create a safe sleep policy.
 - On April 4, 2022, we implemented the safe sleep policy to provide formal guidance to social workers on how to support safe sleep spaces for children two years of age or younger.
 - Recommendation #6: develop and incorporate policies related to the stock of safe sleep equipment maintained in Family and Children's Services offices.
 - We have implemented processes for internal communication among staff and management regarding

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- the stock of safe sleep equipment in each office and allocated the necessary funding to maintain this stock.
- Recommendation #7: provide mandatory in-person training on the safe sleep policy.
 - In December 2023, we delivered a series of safe sleep spaces policy trainings to child protection social workers, caregiver resource workers and other support staff that deliver frontline services. Additional training sessions have been offered to Transitional Support Services staff and any other staff who did not have the opportunity to participate in earlier offerings. This training will be offered annually.
 - Recommendation #8: create policies on Extended Family Care Agreements that speak to safety plans in place for short-term urgent situations.
 - Family and Children's Services managers meet with policy staff on a regular basis to make necessary revisions to the identified policy issues.
 - In the interim, all child protection social workers overseeing Extended Family Care Agreements must work with the family's support network and Yukon First Nations (where applicable) to develop safety plans for emergency/urgent situations and seek approval from their supervisors. Supervisors must consult with their respective managers and Director, depending on the complexity of the situation. Workers are also expected to alert the Family and Children's Services on-call/after-hours

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team of expected emergency/urgent situations so that support can be implemented immediately in the evenings or on weekends upon request.

- Recommendation #9: develop a course in collaboration with First Nations that must be completed by caregivers who work for Family and Children's Services.
 - We have commissioned the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop a training module on Yukon First Nations culture for caregivers.
- Recommendation #10: support Yukon First Nations in developing a roster of people in each community to provide temporary care to a child during an emergency/urgent situation.
 - We hosted a caregiver recruitment event with Liard First Nation on November 8, 2023. Similar recruitment efforts were co-hosted with the Council of Yukon First Nations in Whitehorse on October 21, November 15 and 23, 2023. We have extended the offer to host similar events in all Yukon communities to Yukon First Nations.
 - We remain in regular communication with Yukon First Nations to identify potential caregivers in their community and support them through the application and approval process. Policies are in place to allow individuals to temporarily care for a child during emergency/urgent situations.
- Recommendation #11: support Yukon First Nations in establishing resources in their communities for temporary care of children in emergency situations.

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- We have reached out to all 14 Yukon First Nations to discuss establishing resources within their communities for temporary care of children in emergency situations. To date, two Yukon First Nations have demonstrated interest, and we are following their lead in established these resources.
- Recommendation #13: consider Yukon First Nations community safety officers when RCMP services are required.
 - When possible, we work with Yukon First Nations staff to reduce the trauma to the child and the family that RCMP presence may have. When RCMP services are absolutely necessary, we continue to notify the Yukon First Nations so they can be present to support the family.
 - In 2023, we updated the Memorandum of Understanding on the Concurrent Investigation of Child Abuse and Other Related Matters between RCMP and the Family and Children's Services and developed the necessary process to include notifying Yukon First Nations as a legal requirement.
- 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.

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- Our Family Resource Unit has safe sleep conversations with expectant parents and delivers training to parents and caregivers on safe sleep practices.

Federal compensation and welfare reform:

- On July 11, 2024, the Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Canada reached a \$47.8B Agreement on the Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. The Agreement is a ten-year commitment of \$47.8 billion to support First Nation children, youth, and families on reserve. The Agreement is informed by evidence and built on the foundations of incremental investments in prevention, post majority support services, capital and other elements put in place in recent years. The Agreement is subject to engagement with First Nations, final approvals by the Agreement parties, and approval by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.
 - The long-term child welfare reform settlement agreement has not been finalized. The Government of Yukon is continuing to work with the Government of Canada to understand the implementation of long-term reform measures in the territory.
 - The parties continue to negotiate and work towards child welfare reform across the country.
- Deloitte is responsible for establishing the claims process for the final settlement agreement on compensation, which was reached in April 2023 and approved by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the Federal Court of Canada. While compensation nor applications for compensation are available at this time, we are working to ensure it does not impact any territorial benefits.

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Background:

- The Federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children Youth and Families, came into force on January 1, 2020.
 - This Act affirms the rights and jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples in relation to child and family services.
 - The Act binds provinces, territories and any Indigenous group that enacts its own legislation in the area of child and family services.
- 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 overcompensation for First Nations children on reserve and in the Yukon.
 - The compensation agreement is \$23.4B 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.

Out-of-home care placements:

- The number of children placed in 24/7 resourced homes has increased.
- As of August 31, 2024, there were 190 children in out-of-home care, with 96 children in the care of the Director and 94 children in extended family care.
 - The number of children in out-of-home care (190) far exceed the number of caregivers (101) available to care for the needs of these children.

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- On August 31, 2024, Government of Yukon's Transitional Support Services' group homes were at 147 per cent capacity; 30 bedrooms were available for 44 children.
- Family and Children Services is actively recruiting community caregivers and extended families to increase placement options for children in out-of-home care.
- Family and Children Services continues to explore options with families, Yukon First Nations, to reconnect children with their communities and cultures.
- If placement resources have been exhausted and there are unexpected placement pressures, such as requiring emergency placements due to lack of extended family caregiver or community caregiver availability, young children may be placed in specific group homes that are tailored to their needs.
- The Transitional Support Services staffing model requires at least two workers in each group home 24/7, a Caseworker and Supervisor from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and an on-call Supervisor available during afterhours.
 - Additional staff may be assigned to an individual home or program within a home based on the number and needs of the children and youth residing in the home.
- Transitional Support Services program staff hiring practices include selecting candidates who have education and training in early childhood education, and child and youth care.
- Transitional Support Services program staff receive extensive training, including trauma-informed care training, to provide intensive support

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and supervision to children and youth, some of whom have complex needs.

- All staff are required to have Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training, Risking Connections training on trauma-informed care, Standard First Aid Certificate, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) First Aid level B training, a valid Yukon Class 5 Driver's License, a vulnerable sector security check, and a medical examination.
 - All staff receive training on caring for children of all ages, and many have additional training through the "Handle with Care" program at the Child Development Centre. This program helps parents and caregivers promote the mental health of young children from birth to 6 years.
- We have increased caregivers' basic monthly payments by 16.5 per cent in 2023–24 fiscal year. The current rates are:
 - Whitehorse: \$46.86 per day
 - Rural communities: \$50.16 per day
 - Old Crow: \$86.40 per day
- On April 1, 2024, we increased key rates related to children in out-of-home care to give additional funding to caregivers to support the children in their care.
- We are supporting the Council of Yukon First Nations in launching their Family Reunification Home pilot, where children in care are reunified with their parents in a supportive, 24/7 staffed environment.
- We commissioned the Council of Yukon First Nations in summer 2024 to develop a caregiver training module on Yukon First Nation culture to

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be included in the overall caregiver training so that children have culturally safe homes.

- A new group home for child placement opened in September 2024 to help alleviate pressures and crowding in the existing at-capacity Transitional Support Services' group homes.

Background:

- As of August 31, 2024, there were 96 children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
 - 95 per cent of these children identified as Indigenous.
 - 66 per cent of these children identified as Yukon First Nations.
- As of August 31, 2024, there were 94 children residing with extended family members, as opposed to being in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
 - 96 per cent of these children identified as Indigenous.
 - 84 per cent of these children identified as Yukon First Nations.
- Compared to statistics from the same period last year, the number of children in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services has increased and the number of children in extended family care has decreased.
 - There were 80 children in care and 111 children in extended family care on August 31, 2024.

Staffing:

- As of August 2024, approximately 39 per cent of social worker positions filled and recruitment efforts are ongoing.
- 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.
- Yukon First Nations and the Council of First Nations have expressed concerns in the First Nations Health and Social Development

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Commission meetings that not all children, youth and families are receiving the services they are legally entitled to.

- Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations provide culturally relevant primary and secondary prevention programs but do not provide protection services at this time.

Background:

- 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.
- We have staffed six of the 10 new Child Protection Social Worker Assistant positions created to support Social Workers with administrative duties.
- Staff retention is difficult due to vacancy numbers and inability to support long periods of leave and temporary assignment requests.
- Since child protection staff are also responsible for after-hours support provided by Family and Children's Services, the remaining staff are now required to take on more after-hours shifts.

Youth Justice:

- The Department of Health and Social Services provides programs and supervision for youth who are at-risk or involved in the criminal justice system to address public safety and support positive youth outcomes. The youth justice program partners with First Nation Governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, various local non-profit organizations and other governmental departments and courts to

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provide a variety of different options to programming and wrap-around support.

- Statistics Canada reported an increase in the youth violent crime severity index in the Yukon between 2022 and 2023, the most recent year for which statistics are available.
 - The Yukon's small population means that isolated severe incidents have a disproportionate effect on the Yukon Youth Violent Crime Severity Index. The increase in the most recent reporting is due to a single violent incident.
- The Youth Achievement Centre is a vital resource in the Yukon that addresses youth crime by providing targeted programs that support at-risk youth and those involved with the criminal justice system.
 - The Centre is committed to enhancing the potential of Yukon youth by providing a safe, structured, and supportive environment that fosters trust, respect and responsibility.
 - Comprehensive services are offered for youth aged 12-18, including those in high-risk situations or in need of extra support, to ensure they receive the guidance and resources needed to make positive life choices.
 - Prevention and early intervention are emphasized through structured programs that aim to reduce risk factors associated with youth crime, helping youth avoid deeper involvement in the justice system.
 - The Centre uses the Yukon's 40 developmental assets model to promote positive youth development.

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- Long-term supports are provided for justice-involved youth through vocational training, education and recreational programs. These supports are essential in helping youth reintegrate into the community and reduce recidivism.
- Other programs for justice-involved or at-risk youth include:
 - **Youth Probation/Extrajudicial Sanctions:**
 - Youth workers/intensive supervision probation officers supervise all youth justice court orders and Extrajudicial Sanctions case plans.
 - A case management approach is utilized with young persons, parents, First Nations governments, other government departments, and community resources to address public safety, recidivism rates and rehabilitation.
 - The long-term use of youth justice panels through the program offers the opportunity for youth, family, First Nation governments and other community supports to consider a holistic approach to support the young offender.
 - Youth Probation officers service all Yukon communities through mobile probation officer/EJS positions. With these positions we provide in-community support, programming and supervision as well as community specific panels.
 - **The Young Offenders Facility:**
 - The Young Offenders Facility offers rehabilitative, cultural and life skills programming to all youth who enter the facility.

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The facility operates with 14 beds that offer both open and closed custody options for youth who were ages 12-17 at the time of their offence. The Youth Justice Court may order a young person on pre-trial detention or impose a youth sentence of open or secure custody and community supervision to young persons to the Young Offenders Facility.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives such as the Creating Home: Strategic Plan 2023–24 to 2027–28, Housing Action Plan for Yukon, Safe at Home: A Community-Based Action Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, and the federal Yukon Reaching Home program.

Key messages:

- We are working in partnership with Yukon First Nations, other governments and NGOs to address homelessness in the territory.
- Our government is an active participant in multiple initiatives aimed at ending and preventing homelessness, including the Housing and Homelessness Taskforce, Rapid Response to Homelessness, and the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board.
- We are working to increase access to housing and support services for Yukoners.
- All of the 28 individuals who participated in the Temporary Housing Project at the former Coast High Country Inn are now in housing.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment and efforts to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.

By Name List:

- Safe at Home reports that on July 31, 2024, there were 216 people on the By Name List actively experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse. Forty-four children are associated with individuals on the by-name list.

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- The majority of those experiencing homelessness are using temporary shelter such as couch surfing, shelters, hotels/motels, public institutions like corrections and treatment centers or are in transitional housing.
- 80 per cent of those on the By Name List identify themselves as experiencing chronic homelessness. This means approximately 124 individuals have been homeless for at least six months or have been homeless 18 out of the previous 36 months.
- Safe at Home counted 197 individuals experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse through the fourth Point-in-Time Count during a 24-hour period on April 18, 2023.
 - The Safe at Home's Point in Time Count 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.
- Between January and June 2024, Community Outreach Services provided intensive case management focused on meeting basic needs, including housing, to an average of 49 unique households per month.

Emergency shelters:

- The 2024–25 Main Estimates include an increase of **\$650K** (\$650,000) to support women's transition homes in the Yukon.
 - This includes **\$250K** (\$250,000) for the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society in Whitehorse, **\$250K** (\$250,000) for the Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake and **\$150K** (\$150,000) for the Dawson Shelter Society in Dawson City.

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- This is recoverable through the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.
- We provide operation and maintenance funding to support shelters in Whitehorse, including 405 Alexander, Kaushee's Place and Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Youth Emergency Shelter in Whitehorse.
- We provide funding to support shelters in Yukon communities, including Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Jëje Zho in Dawson City and the Dawson Women's Shelter.
- Our government continues to support the development of an Indigenous women's shelter in the Yukon led by the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- There are 107 emergency shelter beds available in the territory.

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

- From April to September 2023, there was an average of 67 stays per night in all shelters across the Yukon.
- From April 1 to June 30, 2024, there was an average of 68.6 stays per night in all shelters across the Yukon.

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Housing First:

- Housing First is a modern approach to addressing poverty and has proven to be cost-effective. Its focus is to provide unhoused people access to permanent homes without pre-conditions such as sobriety.
- A fulsome evaluation of Housing First is underway with community partners, including the 16-unit housing first building on 5th Ave and Wood St, and the 20 units at 405 Alexander.
- The Government of Yukon is undertaking a 10 Unit Supportive Housing complex in Watson Lake. This housing initiative is being led by Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services in collaboration with Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake Mayor in Council.
 - The 10-unit Supportive Housing residence addresses a supportive housing gap identified in a 2020 Housing Needs Assessment of Watson Lake and meets a recommendation made in the Auditor General of Canada's performance audit on the state of housing for vulnerable Yukoners.
 - The project will provide housing for 10 to 12 individuals experiencing homelessness who face barriers in finding stable housing.
 - The number of individuals will depend on if couples or single individuals will be living in the one-bedroom units.
 - 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 early 2025.

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- An Expression of Interest for an operator for the Supportive Housing complex went live in summer 2024 and will close in fall 2024.

Housing with Services Stock:

- The housing with services stock includes beds and units funded by the Department of Health and Social Services. It does not include Yukon Housing Corporation, Grey Mountain affordable housing stocks or long-term care beds.
- There are 19 units for second stage housing for women and their children fleeing violence in the territory.
- In 2023 and 2024, we partnered with Safe at Home to provide supportive winter housing to 28 Yukoners experiencing homelessness.
 - The initiative provided housing and comprehensive support, including case planning, home management and life-skills development.
 - The temporary housing project ended in spring 2024 and was replaced with itinerant supports for the clients to ensure they were able to find more stable housing.
 - All 28 clients of the temporary housing initiative are now in long-term housing, with the majority being housed by Yukon Housing Corporation.
- Supportive housing units are subsidized non-market housing options that provide residents with various supports and services, depending on the needs of the individual and structure of the program. There are

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57 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.

- A further 17 units will be available in Winter 2024 through the Safe at Home program under development at 408 Alexander St.

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

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

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

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- The residents at St. Elias have moved into two new group homes in order to prepare the space for the Managed Alcohol Program.
 - Residents were moved to Tay Street Group Home and Casa Ketza Group Home, which are both operated by Opportunities Yukon.

Office of the Auditor General Report:

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

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- # 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 information systems to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to support decision making and to report on the planning, delivery, and results related to housing in Yukon.
- #91. The Department of Health and Social Services should establish appropriate performance indicators as well as conduct regular program and housing provider evaluations to assess and report on the achievement of desired results.
- As of December 2023, progress on implementation includes:
 - amending the prioritization system for the rent-geared-to-income housing program ensures that all eligible Yukoners have equal access;

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- developing a social support branch quarterly housing report to inform programs and services improvements;
- updating third-party agreements for targeted, efficient service delivery and improved monitoring, ensuring better accountability and responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable Yukoners;
- publishing the Housing Action Plan three-year progress report for 2019 to 2022; and
- collaborating with the Safe at Home Society to develop emergency housing options in downtown Whitehorse.
- In alignment with commitments made to respond to the OAG report, we are working with Yukon Housing Corporation to develop models and standards around needs assessments for a consistent approach to housing vulnerable people.

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

- The Government of Yukon is supporting Safe at Home's 67-unit supportive housing project to transform the former Coast High Country Inn into safe and affordable housing, called The Hearth. The units will be allocated to individuals on the By Name List, a real-time list of those currently experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.
 - The supportive housing model for the project is driven by a Housing First and harm reduction approach that promotes self-determination and dignity.
 - The Hearth is anticipated to be open in 2026.

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- To support the Safe at Home Society's project to help end and prevent homelessness in Whitehorse, the Yukon Housing Corporation has committed \$12.9 million (\$5 million of this from Canada):
 - \$5 million through the Rapid Housing Initiative from the 2021–22 budgets;
 - \$1 million from the Housing Initiative fund dispersed from the 2023–24 and 2024–25 budgets;
 - \$6 million from the 2024–25 budget; and
 - \$900,000 slated for the 2025–26 budget.
- 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.
- Demolition on The Hearth project is near completion and structural and exterior envelope upgrades are underway. This will allow interior construction to proceed through the winter months. The project remains on schedule, with a goal to open in 2026.
- The Government of Yukon's partnership with the Safe at Home Society and corresponding support for The Hearth project shows how working together creates supportive, sustainable housing that will strengthen the community.
- Yukon Housing Corporation's five-year strategic plan, Creating Home, includes commitments to support actions that will see a reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness.
- Offering housing to those who need it most and spreading out services is a key part of the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan.

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- The Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan aims to improve safety and wellbeing to create a more vibrant, safe and inclusive downtown.

Seniors and Elders supportive housing:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Seniors and Elders having a full continuum of housing options that are safe, accessible and affordable.
- Supportive housing helps Seniors and Elders live independently for longer, and age with dignity and comfort in their chosen home and community, while also reducing the increasing need for long-term care.
- Between 2023 and 2045, the Yukon's Senior and Elder population over the age of 65 is expected to increase by 110 per cent.
- By 2045 the population aged 65 and older is anticipated to represent 21.2 per cent of the Yukon's total population compared to 2023's 15 per cent.

Normandy Living:

- Normandy Living is a privately-owned, five-story building that offers a range of inclusive Seniors' and Elders supportive housing rental options. Options include renting a studio, one bedroom or two-bedroom home.
- Normandy Living offers support services such as meals, weekly housekeeping, laundry services, activities and programming and 24/7 security.

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- We provide funding for 4.0 FTE in Home Care to support the Seniors and Elders supportive housing residents to access services and supports.
- The Government of Yukon is leasing 26 affordable Seniors and Elders supportive housing units at Normandy Living in Whitehorse.
 - These units are available to Yukoners through the Yukon Housing Corporation's Rent-Geared-to-Income program, which in this case includes a services-geared-to-income component.
 - Eligibility is based on income testing and results of a Clinical Frailty Scale assessment.
 - Each lease agreement is for a period of 20 years from the initial lease date of the unit's tenant.
- Yukon Housing Corporation residents pay 25 per cent of their income towards rent and 40 per cent towards services including meals, housekeeping and laundry.
 - These payments help Yukon Housing Corporation partially recover their cost of rental and services for the affordable units.
 - On average, residents pay \$1,420 a month for services and rent combined.
- The costs associated with Normandy Living are roughly 20 per cent of the cost of housing individuals in long-term care homes.
- 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 meets the Commission's standards by providing high-quality care, programs and services. This

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dedication ensures that every offering upholds the Commission's benchmarks for excellence.

Old Crow Elders Complex:

- The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government operates the Elders Complex in Old Crow.
- The complex includes eight units for assisted living, a unit for a caregiver, and a shared kitchen and laundry room.
- Elders living in the residences can access programs and services similar to those in an independent residence.
- The complex allows Elders to stay within their community and receive necessary personal care services without needing to relocate to Whitehorse.

Vimy Heritage Housing Society:

- Our government is supporting the Vimy Heritage Housing Society Seniors and Elders' 73-unit supportive housing project through a commitment of land in Whistle Bend and approximately \$700,000 in capital funding (to date).
 - The society has additional funding options through Yukon Housing Corporation's application-based funds.
- The Vimy Heritage Housing Society continues to work with partners to complete the capital plan and project design and secure the capital funding required.
- 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 and Elders.

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Temporary housing:

- The Department of Health and Social Services and community partners continue to work closely with people that are looking for permanent or temporary housing.
- We support people in their choices, which may include tenting, couch surfing, or staying at a shelter.
- Some Yukoners choose to live or stay in hotels.
 - Between April 1 2023 and March 31, 2024, there was an average of 3.3 per cent of social assistance cases with a hotel stay each month.
 - From April 1 2022 and March 31, 2023, there was an average of 3.7 per cent of social assistance cases with a hotel stay each month.
 - 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 the Housing and Homelessness Task Force to provide opportunities for community dialogue regarding housing and homelessness, including the role that hotels and motels play in our housing continuum.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services is a participant in these discussions.

Background:

- A small number of individuals moved into tents after leaving the High Country Inn when it closed for renovations in April 2024.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services funded itinerant supports with the Safe at Home Society to assist clients as they transitioned to their

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chosen housing and to ensure they remain connected for continued support.

- o Funding is for **\$265K** (\$265,000) and ends October 31, 2024.

Wood St. Housing First resident death:

- A resident of the Housing First residence on Wood St. was found deceased in their home on October 25, 2024.
- A cause of death cannot be confirmed as of November 1.
- A program review for Housing First is underway. The Department of Health and Social Services is working with Connective to improve safety monitoring measures across all supportive housing programs.
- Emergency Medical Services was immediately contacted and RCMP and the Coroner are investigating.
- Connective is providing supports for residents and staff in the wake of the passing.

Approved by:

 Matt King

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

 November 22, 2024

[Date approved]

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(Social Assistance)**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We recognize that some Yukoners face financial challenges in meeting core needs such as food and shelter.
- Our government, along with community partners, have programs and services available to help alleviate poverty.
- We continue to explore ways to support Yukoners most affected by rising inflation.
- Our government started engagement on the Yukon's social assistance rates in late summer 2023 with clients on Social Assistance. Surveys were completed in August 2024 and a report is currently being developed.
- Reviewing Yukon social assistance rates is part of our work to address recommendations in the Putting People First report related to closing the gaps for lower-income Yukoners.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment to helping to alleviate poverty for Yukoners.

Key facts:

- In November 2024, per the Consumer Price Index in Whitehorse, an increase of 2.4 per cent will be applied to basic assistance rates.
 - In November 2023, there was an increase of 6.4 per cent to basic assistance rates.

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- From April 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, there was an average of 943 social assistance cases (households), comprising an average of 1,344 recipients (individuals).
 - From April 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, an average of 55.4 per cent of social assistance cases (505 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
 - In 2023–24, there was an average of 910 social assistance cases (households), comprising an average of 1,274 recipients (individuals).
 - In 2023–24, an average of 54.8 per cent of social assistance cases (521 households) received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance.
 - From April 1, 2024 to August 29, 2024, there was an average of 942 social assistance cases, including 799 in Whitehorse and 143 in communities.
 - From August 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 there was a monthly average of 1,242 Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients.
 - In 2022–23, there were 1,352 unique Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients.
 - In 2023–2024, there were 2,319 unique Pioneer Utility Grant recipients.
 - In 2022–23, there were 2,264 unique Pioneer Utility Grant recipients.

Guaranteed Annual Income:

- Putting People First recommendation 5.7 states that the government design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot in

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collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and potential other partners such as the federal government and researchers.

- A contract is in place with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to develop a policy options paper. Once received and reviewed, we will consider next steps.
- Department of Health and Social Services senior officials and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition attended a Basic Income Guarantee Forum in Ottawa in May 2024.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has conducted preliminary research regarding a guaranteed annual income program.
 - As part of this work, we reviewed British Columbia's Final Report on Basic Income, which suggested that emphasis should be placed on improving existing social programs.

Inflation:

- Every November, social assistance rates for shelter, food, fuel and utilities and clothing are indexed to inflation using the Consumer Price Index for Whitehorse.
- The increase takes effect in November each year.
 - Social assistance rates for November 2024 payments will increase by 2.4 per cent.
 - In 2023, the Consumer Price Index was 6.4 per cent.
 - Increases to the Yukon's social assistance rate over recent years include a 6.4 per cent increase in 2023, 5.7 per cent increase in November 2022 and a 1.9 per cent increase in November 2021.
- Financial assistance through Yukon's Social Assistance program varies by family size and residence location.

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- As of November 1, 2024, the amount of assistance provided to a single person living in Whitehorse, for food, clothing, and incidentals is \$496 per month.
 - The November 1, 2023 amount was \$484.
- The maximum rate for shelter varies by family size.
 - For a single person, the maximum monthly amount, based on the 2024 shelter rates, is \$692.
 - The rate in 2023 was \$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 (November through March) is \$618.
- The provision of discretionary aid as defined in the Yukon's *Social Assistance Regulation* may be an available option for those currently receiving social assistance in situations of transient need.
- People who are ineligible for assistance through the *Social Assistance Regulation* may be eligible for Emergency Aid to alleviate an immediate health or safety risk.
- As part of inflation relief measures, we included a \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients until more comprehensive rate enhancements are in place.

Pioneer Utility Grant (PUG):

- The Pioneer Utility Grant assists Yukon seniors with the cost of heating their home – whether owned or rented.
- Yukon seniors aged 65 or older in the year of the grant can apply.
 - Applications are accepted between July 1 and December 31.

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- Eligible applicants receive one payment, typically within a month of application.
- Eligibility for the grant is based on income, marital status and residential address.
- If you receive another housing subsidy or subsidized housing, you are ineligible for the Pioneer Utility Grant.
- The difference paid to couples and a single person is because couples may have more utility expenses than a single person.
- The Pioneer Utility Grant increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index and calculated prior to the July application intake.
- The maximum amount available for the Pioneer Utility Grant in 2024 is \$ 1,314.40 in Whitehorse and \$ 1,398.32 outside Whitehorse.
- The grant amounts are based on income, which cannot exceed \$148,900 for a single person and \$210,000 for married or common law couples.

Rising rental costs:

- We are committed to implementing coordinated access to housing for Yukoners who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed.
- The shelter allowance for clients receiving social assistance varies by household size and location and is indexed to inflation.
- Recipients may also qualify for additional assistance for fuel and utilities.
- According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' April 2024 Yukon Rent Survey, the Yukon median rent was \$1,440 for all building types.

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- The October 2023 Yukon Rent Survey's median rent was calculated at \$1,350 for all building types.
- We are aware that there are Yukoners, including those in receipt of social assistance, who may be living in hotels for extended periods due to lack of alternatives.
- Living in a hotel is considered 'provisionally accommodated' as it is temporary and lacks security of tenure.
- From April 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024, an average of 2.7 per cent social assistance cases had a hotel stay each month.

Month of service (2024)	Cases with hotel stays	Total Caseload	Percentage
August	10	922	1.1%
July	13	905	1.4%
June	22	908	2.4%
May	31	901	3.4%
April	49	916	5.3%
Average	25	910	2.7%

- From April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, an average of 3.4 per cent social assistance cases had a hotel stay each month.
 - From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2024, an average of 3.7 per cent of social assistance cases had a hotel stay each month.
 - From April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, an average of 7.1 per cent of social assistance cases had a hotel stay each month.

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(Social Assistance)**Health and Social
Services**Social assistance rate review:**

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

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- As of August 2024, surveys have been completed and a report is being developed.

Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement (YSIS):

- The Yukon Seniors Income Supplement is available to low-income seniors.
 - Approximately 1,200 Yukoners receive Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement payments.
- All Canadians aged 65 years and older are eligible to receive Old Age Security.
- In addition to Old Age Security, eligible seniors will receive Guaranteed Income Support.
 - This income support provides a monthly non-taxable top-up to the Old Age Security. Guaranteed Income Support is income-tested and intended for people in the lowest income bracket.
 - The Government of Canada calculates the individuals' monthly Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement based on their Guaranteed Income Supplement amount and notifies the Government of Yukon of eligibility.
- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in October each year.
- The 2024 Consumer Price Index adjustment is 2.4 per cent and the maximum monthly payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients will be \$314.46.
 - The 2023 adjustment was 6.4 per cent and the maximum monthly payment was \$307.08.

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

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- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement includes an escalator that automatically increases the rates annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in October each year.
- Accordingly, in both 2022 and 2023, base Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement payments have been adjusted upwards by the Consumer Price Index, in 2022 it was 5.7 per cent and in 2023 it was 6.4 per cent. Following the 2023 Consumer Price Index adjustment of 6.4 per cent the maximum monthly payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients is now \$307.08, whereas in 2021 it was \$267.96.
 - The next adjustment will occur in October 2024.
- The Yukon slowly reduced its inflationary measures as the automatic escalator built into Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement had time to adjust base rates upwards. We will not be renewing the temporary inflation relief payments we introduced first in 2022.
 - The last inflationary payment for Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement was issued March 13, 2024.

YSIS payment shortfalls

- We have determined there was a transcription error in the input of the Old Age Security benefits amounts in October 2024.
- This error carried over to the Yukon Senior Income Supplement calculations, resulting in lower payments for Yukon Seniors.
- We are working quickly to determine top-up amounts for every Senior affected by this error.
- We will be sending out the additional payments as soon as possible.

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- We are working to ensure the error is corrected prior the November payments.
 - A letter will be sent to all recipients informing them of the error and additional payments.
 - Federal Old Age Security payments increased in October 2024 due to program rate changes.
 - Most Old Age Security recipients received an increase of \$118 between September and October.
 - The Yukon Seniors Income Supplement does not impact other benefits.
 - Payments under Old Age Security and Yukon Seniors Income Supplement are automated through the Canada Revenue Agency's payment system.
 - We have had Seniors reach out with further concerns now that they have received their Old Age Security payments. If there are underpayments, we will ensure those payments are corrected as soon as possible.
 - We are working closely with our finance team and the Government of Canada to review the formula(s) and our procedures.
 - We are implementing measures to alert recipients when these changes happen in the future. Prior to receiving the payment, we will notify recipients as soon as we are made aware of federal rate changes that impact the Yukon Seniors Income Supplement.
 - All recipients will be receiving a letter explaining the October decrease.

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- Yukon Seniors Income Supplement payments are generally sent out on the 15th of every month, depending on when information is received from the federal government.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Chronic Conditions**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We continue to work with our partners to develop a Type 1 Diabetes Action Plan for the Yukon.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, through the Chronic Condition Support Program, is actively collaborating with the Department of Education to provide essential support for students with chronic conditions. This includes tailored education sessions for teachers and Educational Assistants during welcome week and as needed throughout the school year.
- We are working closely with the Department of Education to revamp student care plans, ensuring that these plans are comprehensive and effectively guide staff in supporting students with various health needs.
 - This ongoing initiative is designed to enhance the quality of care and support provided to students living with chronic conditions.
- Our ongoing work with Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes, their families, advocacy groups and service providers align with recommendations in Putting People First.

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Chronic Conditions Support Program:

- The Chronic Conditions Support Program is a patient-centered, collaborative care team that offers individual and group support with nurse educators, exercise specialists, dietitians and pharmacists. Some of these are certified diabetes educators or certified respiratory educators.
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program works closely with clients to ensure care needs are met and that they have access to accurate information about programming options.
- Anyone who has or is at-risk for a chronic health condition can access services by self-referral or through their primary care provider
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers a variety of supervised exercise programs that are in high demand including cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation.

Background:

- During the 2024–25 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$895K** (\$894,957) for the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
- As of August 2024, the Chronic Condition Support program has 954 patients on their active list and receives about 45 to 70 referrals a month.
- There are eight permanent FTEs that support the Chronic Conditions Support Program including two FTE Chronic Conditions Nurse Educators, two FTE clinical exercise specialists, one FTE supervisor, one FTE Clinical Dietitian and two FTE program administrator. They are also supported by one term Chronic Conditions Nurse Educator, one permanent exercise assistant, as well as by contract dietitians and pharmacists.
- The services provided by the Chronic Conditions Support Program support all people with or at risk of developing, a chronic condition. Condition-specific

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

- As of 2020, data submitted to the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System estimates there are approximately 3,182 Yukoners living with diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2, excluding gestational diabetes).

Chronic Conditions support in schools:

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services has received requests to work with schools, students and family members on specific high-needs students. Targeted supports developed with Education staff include:
 - Written procedures for the administration of medications to students with chronic conditions by staff and
 - Preliminary training for school staff on medical equipment and supplies.
- Special Patient Guidelines stem from a model of care delivered by the Mobile Paramedic Specialist team for individuals with persistent needs that go beyond the Medical Control Guidelines and is recommended by a Physician.
- This approach allows Emergency Medical Services, the Medical Director and the Patient Care Team to develop guidelines unique to the individual while working within their scope of practice.
- Special Patient Guidelines reflect the specific needs of certain individuals, including children and can help EMS provide rapid appropriate treatment regardless of where a patient is located when emergency services are called.

Type 1 Diabetes Strategy:

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- The Departments of Health and Social Services and Education are working with the T1D Support Network to develop and implement a territory-wide Type 1 Diabetes Strategy.
- The Action Plan addresses areas such as
 - accessing health technologies,
 - person centred, responsive and timely care,
 - education and awareness, and
 - data collection and system improvement.
- We recognize that the Type 1 Diabetes Strategy has been in development for some time; we are not waiting to implement supports.
- Building on the success of a pilot project with the T1D Support Network, our government became the first in Canada to provide Continuous Glucose Monitors for all individuals with Type 1 Diabetes and to offer funding to those with Type 1 Diabetes over the age of 18 to cover their choice of glucose monitoring device.
- We are involved in a working group that includes the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the T1D Support Network that will review several areas of concern, including discharge planning and potential for outreach and support for Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes.
- We are also working with the department of Education to ensure we are providing the necessary support for Type 1 Diabetes in Yukon Schools, including the adoption and implementation of Type 1 Diabetes policies.
- We are reviewing a position within the Chronic Conditions Support Program focused on supporting Type 1 Diabetes at various points in the lifespan.

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- We are in the final stages of developing a resource package for care providers to ensure access to updated information for all individuals with type 1 diabetes when visiting a care provider.
- The Drug and Extended Benefits Policy is currently undergoing an update to better reflect needs as it pertains to increasing access to insulin pumps
- Insured Health Services has reached out to the T1D Support Network identify individuals interested in participating in a journey mapping exercise to better understand a person's experience moving through the health system with Type 1 diabetes.
- Insured Health Services is completing work on reviewing the Yukon Drug Formulary to ensure people with Type 1 Diabetes have access to the appropriate insulin and associated technologies in a timely way through the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program and Pharmacare Extended Program.
- The Communication team at Health and Social Services has also begun developing materials and messaging for a Type 1 Diabetes education and awareness campaign to share signs and symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes and how it differs from Type 2 Diabetes.

Background:

- There are five people with the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and 13 people with the Pharmacare Program enrolled for a continuous glucose monitoring device.
 - 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 six to 12 months depending on client needs.

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Type 2 Diabetes:

- A number of supports are available to individuals living with Type 2 diabetes through the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
 - The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers a Diabetes Wellness Series and various other diabetes group education sessions.
 - Chronic Conditions Nurse Educator Supports are available through this program to offer one-on-one education, case management and access to point of care services that align with guideline care and system navigation.
 - Exercise Specialist-led exercise programming is also available to clients to build healthy habits and better manage blood sugars.
 - Clinical Dietitian support is offered in one-on-one and group formats.

Background:

- 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.
- All supplies required to manage diabetes such as insulin, syringes, insulin pumps, lancets, test strips and glucometers are covered through Insured Health Services.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 23, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Dental**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key Messages:

- On January 4, 2023, we launched the Yukon Dental Program to provide dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- The program is intended to complement our current programs and provide eligible Yukoners with access to essential dental care.
- We are pleased to continue to work with dental care providers in the territory to support Yukoners' oral health.

Federal Dental Program:

- The Federal Dental Program is a new nation-wide dental program.
 - It is anticipated that all eligible Canadians will have access in 2025.
- Yukon Government officials are working with Health Canada colleagues on the implementation of their new program and impacts to the Yukon public dental programming.

Background:

- The Federal Dental Program began its phased launch in December 2023 for the new Canada Dental Care Plan, opening with applications for seniors aged 87 and above.
- The federal program then expanded eligibility to seniors aged 70 and above in March 2024, to those aged 65 to 69 in May 2024, and for children under 18 and people with disabilities in June 2024.

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- The Canadian Dental Care Plan provides coverage or co-payments based on adjusted family net income. If the net income is lower than \$70,000, 100 percent coverage can be accessed in accordance with the plan fees. Between \$70,000 and \$79,999 there is 60 percent coverage and between \$80,000 and \$89,999 there is 40 percent coverage.

Service in Communities:

- At present there is no government-funded provision of private dental services for adults.
 - Health and Social Services does not have a formal mandate to provide dental services for adults.
- The Itinerant Dentist program was established on a trial basis to help offset the costs of independent private dental practices offering services in communities.
 - There has not been an itinerant dentist since March 31, 2023, when the contract to serve Yukon communities ended.
- Rural Yukoners can still access dental services in Whitehorse while other options are being explored.
 - The Medical Travel subsidy can be accessed for Yukoners seeking dental care that falls under the Yukon's Insured Health Care Plan, most often this extends to services provided at the hospital.
- If a provider is interested in offering dental services in Government or Yukon Hospital Corporation spaces in communities, they can reach out directly to the Department of Health and Social Services. The department will work with interested providers to explore potential opportunities. The Yukon Children's Dental Program continues to

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Services

provide service to newborns to children in grade 12 or under the age of 18 living in rural communities without a resident dentist.

- Dental hygienists are a valued resource; however, Health and Social Services is not pursuing the provision of dental hygienist services in the absence of an itinerant dentist given the requirements of the *Dental Professions Act*.

Background:

- The Yukon Children's Dental Program coordinates itinerant dental visits to communities which can support access to dental services. 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 was put up.
- This expression of interest has been advertised broadly through the Yukon Dental Association, as well as through national channels. It has not resulted in any uptake to provide this service. New options are being considered.
- The Itinerant Dental Services contract currently sits under the Yukon Children's Dental Program. The Itinerant Contract is a funding initiative while the Yukon Children's Dental Program is a service delivery program.
- The itinerant contract has been difficult to fill, as its purpose is to offset the cost related to travel. Most dentists in Whitehorse are not willing to leave their busy clinics to go to communities where there has often been poor uptake resulting in a reduction of income.

Yukon Children's Dental Program:

- The Yukon Children's Dental Program is one of the most generous pediatric dental programs in the country.
- Children have access to publicly funded dental care through the Preschool Dental Program and the Yukon Children's Dental Program.

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- Due to a shortage of dental hygienists and dental therapists and a recent increase in school rotation with the addition of Whistle Bend School, the Yukon Children's Dental Program will temporarily adjust service delivery for students in Grades five, six and seven in Whitehorse.
- This age group typically has lower restorative treatment needs, allowing for a focused allocation of our resources to the students with the highest needs.
- For the 2024 -2025 school year, the Yukon Children's Dental program is deferring dental services in schools for grades five, six and seven for schools in Whitehorse. This approach ensures that the program can continue to provide essential dental services across all Whitehorse schools while prioritizing younger students, who generally require more immediate dental interventions.
- Families of students in Grades five, six and seven will receive referrals to seek service through a private dental clinic. Yukon Children's Dental Program will cover costs associated with these referrals, to ensure that students have continued access to needed dental care.
- We have attached a letter to the referral that is to the parent/guardian which explains the change in service delivery and details of the referral process and financial coverage. Program contact information is included to offer support or answer questions for parents.
- The government is actively working to address recruitment challenges for dental providers and expand the program's staffing resources to meet demand.

Background:

- The Yukon Children's Dental Program provides services to:

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- students from kindergarten to Grade seven at elementary schools in Whitehorse and rural communities with a resident dentist;
 - students from kindergarten to Grade 12 or under the age of 18 at elementary schools in rural communities without a resident dentist; and
 - all children from ages zero to five through the Preschool Dental Program.
- During the 2023-24 school year, the Yukon Children's Dental Program provided services to 3,294 children who enrolled in school dental programs in Whitehorse and Yukon communities.
- Health and Social Services is working with the Department of Education and the Department of Highways and Public Works to ensure that all schools have drinking water sources that meet the Canadian guidelines for water quality to allow the Children's Dental Program to continue to operate in schools.
- These efforts ensure that drinking water is available for use in the dental programs provided in schools.
- The Yukon Children's Dental Program will be operational at the new Whistle Bend Elementary School, ensuring students receive essential dental care services on-site.
- The Preschool Dental Program serves approximately 300 to 600 children per year.

Yukon Dental Program:

- The Yukon Dental Program, officially launched on January 4, 2023, is a publicly funded dental plan for Yukoners who do not have dental insurance.
- On July 1, 2024, a new coverage period began; eligible individuals enrolled are covered through to June 30, 2025.
- The program covers dental treatments to help address pain and infection, prevent disease and restore chewing and social function. It covers cleaning, dental exams, fillings, x-rays, getting teeth pulled and in some cases dentures.

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- The Yukon Dental Program is an individualized program and uses line 15000 of the Notice of Assessment to truly reflect the individual income of the applicant. In contrast, the Pioneer Utility Grant addresses the needs of the household.
- Applications for the Yukon Dental Program are being processed within four to five days, with urgent care applications processed on the same day.
- As we consider the future evolution of the program, we are committed to conducting further analysis on areas for improvement.
 - We completed a preliminary evaluation informed by feedback from Yukoners in June 2024 and are exploring recommendations by which to improve the program.
- This work will be done in concert with evaluating the impact of the Canada Dental Care Program on the Yukon Dental Program.
 - The department continues to work with the federal government on how the programs will interact, there is no intention to end the Yukon Dental Program.

Background:

- As of June 30, 2024, a total of 1,981 people have been enrolled in the Yukon Dental Program since it launched in January 2023. Of those enrolled, a total of 1,237 Yukoners have received dental care.
- Eligible Yukon seniors who are registered through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program can receive annual dental checkups, cleanings, and fillings.
 - Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits clients can receive \$600 annually through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.

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- Children are eligible for the program if their caregivers meet the income threshold, and they are not eligible for the Yukon Children's Dental Program.
- 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 two children (family of three).
 - 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.
- Individuals approved for the program only pay for services that are above the annual limit of \$1,300 or above Yukon Dental Program general practitioner rates.
- The Yukon Dental Program uses line 15000 of the Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency. This is an assessment of each individual's total income.
 - Line 23600 is net income and reflects income split between partners.
- The Yukon Dental Program does not provide medical travel coverage.
 - Medical travel is defined in regulation and only supports access to insured health services when services are unavailable locally.
- The eligibility model used for this program considered factors such as administrative capacity, cost and timelines, to ensure the program could begin providing dental benefits to Yukoners as soon as possible.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-23

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

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Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We are working to support Yukoners to access sexual and reproductive care and services.
- We remain committed to implementing action items from the 2021 LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan and from Putting People First.
- We 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.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic and the Yukon Women's Midlife Clinic are supported by three contracted Nurse Practitioners.

Birth Control:**Key facts:**

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

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- The federal government announced a commitment to funding contraception under a new federal pharmacare framework. We support this announcement and look forward to working with federal partners to understand the implications for the Yukon.

Background:

- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program, which is available to lower-income families with children 18 years of age and younger.
- Birth control is covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic provides a variety of conception control products to clients of the clinic.

Comprehensive sexual health education:**Key facts:**

- The Health Promotion Unit partners with the Department of Education to deliver a Yukon-wide comprehensive sexual health education program called Better to Know. The program is implemented by two Certified Sexual Health Educators from the Health Promotion Unit and a Curriculum Consultant at the Department of Education.
- This summer, the Department of Health and Social Services upgraded the Better to Know webpage to include comprehensive and accessible information on sexual and reproductive health services in the territory to ensure that Yukoners have the resources they need to make informed decisions about their health.
- The goal of the Better to Know program is to improve Yukon's sexual health indicators through inclusive and evidence based comprehensive sexual health education.

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- Better to Know follows standards of practice set by the World Health Organization, Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education, Options for Sexual Health BC, and British Columbia's Curriculum Competencies.
- Evidence consistently shows that quality, comprehensive sexual health education, delivered by sexual health education experts, can contribute to positive health outcomes, with lifelong impacts including appreciation of sexual diversity, dating and intimate partner violence prevention, STI prevention/reduction, development of healthy relationships, prevention of child sex abuse, improved social/emotional learning and increased media literacy.

LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan - family planning:**Key facts:**

- The LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan lays out a commitment to improve access to information and resources to help LGBTQ2S+ families navigate family planning.
- The Department of Health and Social Services alongside partner organizations have taken steps to facilitate this action.
- The Government of Yukon began providing funding to Queer Yukon to create a health care navigator position in 2022. The position aims to help LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners access safe, equitable and timely health care services and can serve as an avenue to connect and find pathways that may facilitate family planning.
- To reduce the financial burdens associated with fertility treatment and surrogacy services, the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* was amended to reflect and incorporate these services as grounds for eligibility for medical travel coverage.

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- Additionally, individuals and families are encouraged to visit the Sexual Health Clinic in Whitehorse to talk with the team as an entry point.

Fertility Treatments:**Key facts:**

- Insured Health Services provides coverage for initial fertility consultations and diagnostic tests completed locally. However, surrogacy and fertility treatments themselves are not insured health services under the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*.
- We recognize the high cost of fertility treatment is out of reach for many Yukoners, to address this we committed to making fertility and surrogacy treatments and associated travel costs more affordable.
- Amendments to the *Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations* to provide medical travel for a defined list of fertility and surrogacy treatments have come into force as of October 17, 2024.
- This amendment will serve as a significant step forward in making fertility and surrogacy treatment more accessible to Yukoners who need these services to start or grow their families, including members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- This work will be followed by a second phase focusing on affordability of fertility treatment services and will be completed in collaboration with the Department of Finance.
- We will continue to explore options to address fertility-related and surrogacy services medical travel equity for all Yukoners including those who receive coverage under Non-Insured Health Benefits, RCMP, Canadian Forces or as federal employees.

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- Thank you to all those on the ground taking the steps to support access to fertility and surrogacy treatments.

Background:

- The Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan can provide travel coverage for insured services and diagnostic testing for those having to travel when services are not available in one's home community, or in Whitehorse.
- The Confidence and Supply Agreement lists "include fertility treatment in medical travel" and "create a refundable tax rebate covering up to \$8,000 per year for fertility treatment and surrogacy expenses for eligible Yukoners for up to a maximum of five years".

Gender Affirming Care:**Key facts:**

- The Yukon continues to demonstrate leadership, in collaboration with community organizations, in advancing access and coverage for gender-affirming care and in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners.
- We have completed necessary regulatory amendments to allow Yukoners to receive health care insurance coverage for gender-affirming care services that are not insured by other provinces or territories.
 - These changes do not impact other services that are not insured under the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan.
- Yukoners can access a host of gender affirming services including top and bottom surgery, tracheal shave, body contouring, vocal coaching and hair removal.
- Insured Health Services provides coverage for individuals seeking facial feminization and will continue to do so.

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- Gender affirming policies B.13 and B.14 are scheduled for review in January 2025, with Insured Health Services working with Queer Yukon on a gender affirming care program review.
- All surgical assessment processes are completed in accordance with the Gender Affirming policies established by Insured Health Services, built from the *World Health Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care* (version 8).
- We are working to implement recommendations in the LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan to enhance health equity in the Yukon.

Background:

- Starting in 2023-24, we have provided **\$471K** (\$471,027) over three years to Queer Yukon to hire a health care navigator position to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners by removing barriers and identifying pathways to safe, inclusive, and supportive gender-affirming care.
- For Yukoners seeking hormone therapy, the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program covers multiple medications for individuals of all ages who are receiving gender-affirming care.
 - This includes testosterone, estrogen and progesterone, when used as treatments for gender dysphoria.
- Puberty blockers refer to a group of medications for youth that temporarily inhibit puberty by suppressing the production of hormones and preventing development of secondary sexual characteristics.
- Puberty blockers are intended for youth under the age of 18, with persistent and well documented gender dysphoria as determined by a qualified assessor who is a mental health professional who assesses, refers, and offer therapeutic services for children and adolescent as outlined by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.
- Taking into consideration the mental health and wellness of youth, the qualified assessor, in collaboration with the primary care provider, makes the

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recommendation to the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program for coverage of puberty blockers.

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits program covers leuprolide acetate as an exception drug for the suppression of puberty related to gender dysphoria.
- Parental consent is not explicitly required as part of the application or approval process for coverage through Insured Health Services.

Period Products:**Key facts:**

- Through a funding partnership between our government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Government of Canada, all Yukon schools have been equipped with free period products.
- Free period products are available in many Government of Yukon washrooms and we are in the process of making products available in all Government of Yukon buildings.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations has provided a supply of period products to several non-government organizations and Yukon First Nations offices and is ensuring these products remain available for distribution.
- Yukon University's campus housing has made period products available in communal bathrooms.
- As of December 15, 2023, federally regulated employers are required to make period products available in their workplaces at no cost.

Pregnancy Termination:**Key facts:**

- Our government is committed to supporting individuals in accessing the abortion care they need.

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- In 2018, our government provided universal coverage of Mifegymiso.
 - Mifegymiso is a Health Canada approved combination product containing mifepristone and misoprostol that are taken in sequence to terminate pregnancy.
- This summer, the Department of Health and Social Services upgraded the Better to Know website to include information on abortion resources in the territory.
- Yukoners looking for information on abortion care can visit Bettertoknow-yukon.ca for information on where to receive care.

Background:

- Therapeutic (surgical) and medical (medication) pregnancy termination options are available to Yukoners at no cost.
 - Medication Termination (Mifegymiso) is available in Dawson City, Watson Lake and in Whitehorse via the Opal Clinic.
 - Surgical terminations are performed at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Pregnancy termination options are available up to 15 weeks plus three days of pregnancy. For pregnancies over this threshold and up to 24 weeks, services are available through the British Columbia Women's Hospital and are covered through the Yukon Health Care Insurance Plan or by Non-Insured Health Benefits.

Queer Yukon services:**Key facts:**

- Queer Yukon has reached out to let the department know that they are pausing their programming as they undertake a review of policies and practices with the aim to ensure the safety of their staff and community members.
- The Government of Yukon provides and will continue to provide funding support for their health navigation program.

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- Under this program, staff at Queer Yukon continue to see patients via telehealth and phone and are available to answer questions by email to ensure continuity of case management supports, the provision of research and resources and meeting with care providers.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to be able to offer blood collection and lab work during this period. Individuals seeking this service will have to visit the outpatient lab at the hospital for blood collection.
- We look forward to their reopening and resumption of regular programming in recognizing the very important role played by Queer Yukon in supporting our community.
- I encourage anyone with further questions to visit the Queer Yukon website where they have helpfully provided context, and a contact email should there be any urgent needs.

Tax Credit for fertility treatment:**Key facts:**

- In October 2024, amendments to the Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations to provide medical travel for a defined list of fertility and surrogacy treatments came into force.
- To further improve access to fertility and surrogacy treatments for Yukoners, the Government of Yukon is developing a new refundable tax credit which will be administered by the Canadian Revenue Agency.

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- The Department of Finance anticipates introducing amendments to the Income Tax Act during the spring 2025 legislative sitting subject to legislative approval.
- The proposed tax credit is projected to have a maximum refund value of \$10,000 per year for up to \$25,000 in expenses.

WPATH training:**Key facts:**

- This Government is proud to have committed to improving access to Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary-affirming health care under the LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan. A key component of meeting this commitment is to provide World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) training and other appropriate training for health care practitioners and the medical community serving the Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary Yukoners.
- The Government of Yukon provides WPATH training to Yukon government clinicians and non-governmental organizations.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Staff attended WPATH training and have undergone additional training for northern, remote and Indigenous contexts as part of the onboarding process.
- Staff from Family and Children's Services, Midwifery, Yukon Communicable Disease Control program, the departments of Justice and Education, and other allied healthcare professionals have also attended the training.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control program staff have attended training regarding inclusive language, facilitated by Queer Yukon.

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- The Government of Yukon offers and encourages all staff to attend a workshop entitled “LGBTQ2S+ Awareness and Inclusion in Services and Practices”.
 - The workshop enables employees to gain cultural awareness of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities.
 - Attendees build awareness of inequalities that exist, gain tools to create more inclusive services and work environments and empower employees to develop a culture of continuous improvement.
 - This course is mandatory for many Health and Social Services staff, including nurse practitioners, social workers, clinic managers, license practical nurses, medical office assistants, registered nurses, and other healthcare professionals.
- Government of Yukon employees are also encouraged to attend additional educational sessions offered, such as Two-Spirit Awareness training.
- The current Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Medical Association establishes funding to promote equity, diversity and inclusion.
 - Funding includes opportunities for Physicians to learn about Yukon First Nations, Inuit and Metis People, LGBTQ2S+, gender inequality and anti-racism issues.

Approved by:

Matt King

November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note

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HSS 57
Fall 2024

Expansion of SART Services

Justice, WGED,
HSS

Recommended response:

- The Sexualized Assault Response Team, or SART, is a network of agencies that provide safe, comprehensive supports for victims of sexualized violence in Whitehorse.
- We are committed to expanding sexualized assault response services to Yukon communities. The departments of Justice, Health and Social Services, and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate are working closely with SART agencies to develop an action plan to support victims of sexualized assault in communities outside of Whitehorse.
- The Government of Yukon is working in partnership with other SART service providers to analyze the findings and recommendations from the What We Heard document in conjunction with leading practices and approaches in other jurisdictions, and to scope options and required resources to develop priorities for next steps on expansion.

Additional response:

- We are making progress in several areas including:
 - enhancing public communication to increase understanding of sexualized violence and awareness of existing services to support victims, such as the 24/7 toll-free support line and priority access to counselling through the Mental Wellness and Substance Use community hubs;
 - providing travel assistance for victims of gender-based violence; and
 - extending SART training to community service providers.

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Expansion of SART Services

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Context:

- Both the 2021 and 2023 mandate letters include a commitment to expand the services of the Yukon's SART to Yukon communities beyond Whitehorse.
- There are strong connections and cross-over priorities with the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Plus People Strategy, and the National Action Plan to end Gender-Based Violence.
- The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement includes a commitment to develop a low-cost transportation option for people travelling throughout the Yukon.

Background:

- Engagement with First Nations governments, rural service providers and victims occurred in the summer and fall 2023. The What We Heard report was shared with key partners, stakeholders, and the public in spring 2024. The engagement included participants from each community with 244 people reached through interviews, sharing circles and online engagement.
- Work is already underway in many areas to improve services to victims, including:
 - developing an updated website and a refreshed communication campaign to create awareness of available services for communities,
 - cross-agency training for front-line workers in communities outside Whitehorse;
 - bolstering transportation options for victims who need to access services outside their communities; and
- 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.
- Additional priorities will be compiled into a more comprehensive list with recommendations based on a full analysis.

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Whitehorse SART

- SART in Whitehorse was officially launched March 6, 2020, and is based on the core principles of:
 - victim's choice;
 - dignity and respect;
 - preventing system re-traumatization;
 - cultural safety; and
 - access, equity and inclusion.
- Current Whitehorse SART member agencies include:
 - Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Justice and Women and Gender Equity Directorate;
 - Public Prosecution Service of Canada;
 - RCMP "M" Division;
 - Yukon Hospital Corporation; and
 - Yukon Women's Transition Home.
- Whitehorse SART agencies' responses to victims are guided by the Whitehorse SART protocol. The protocol is the first of its kind in Yukon and endeavors to make the network of services sustainable in Whitehorse.
- The Whitehorse SART protocol has been signed by the partner agencies and is available on sartyukon.ca. Educational materials about the protocol for front-line workers have been developed and are also available on sartyukon.ca.

SART – General information

- There are three main components of SART: victim support, legal/criminal justice services and medical services. Services are available for victims of all genders, ages and sexual orientations.
- Coordination of existing medical and victim services is supported by two Government of Yukon positions: the SART Victim Support Coordinator and the SART Clinical

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Expansion of SART Services

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Coordinator. They work in partnership to ensure there is continuity of care and a team-based, integrated approach for victims of sexualized violence.

- Available services include a 24/7 support line, accompaniments to the hospital and RCMP, 24/7 on-call physicians at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH) and rapid access to counselling through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Hubs.
- The RCMP Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee is led by the Yukon RCMP in line with national direction. Government of Yukon representatives take part in case reviews of sexualized assault investigations, through this committee.

Forensic Care

- SART is currently providing comprehensive forensic care in Whitehorse.
- In the Yukon, there are three options for care at health care facilities:
 - medical care (available in all communities);
 - forensic care with a sexual assault evidence kit (SAEK) sent to RCMP (available at WGH); and
 - forensic care “on ice” where the SAEK is stored at the hospital to give time to the victim to decide about reporting to the RCMP (available at WGH).
- Forensic care involves a forensic examination, which may include the completion of a sexual assault evidence kit, toxicology kit, and the writing of a forensic report for the purpose of collecting evidence or information which may be used in court.
- Specialized SART services, such as pediatric care, are also available at WGH. All community health centres continue to offer standardized clinic-based care to support victims. This ensures that individuals seeking medical care in the aftermath of such an assault have access to the services they need, right in their community.
- For those victims who choose forensic care as part of their journey through the criminal justice system, there is transportation support to assist them.
- Ongoing efforts are focused on evaluating how to expand access to SART services to all Yukoners, wherever they may reside.

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- Although forensic care is not available in community health centres, this does not diminish the commitment to providing comprehensive care and support to victims. The ongoing project to expand SART services across the Yukon aims for every individual to have the support they need in times of crisis.

Training

- Annual cross-agency training is provided for SART agencies and is available to any Yukon service providers who may receive disclosure of sexualized violence.
- Annual priorities are set through the SART training framework and often include topics such as:
 - cultural safety and awareness training for SART agencies and partners;
 - documentation for counsellors working with victims of sexualized violence training;
 - training on responding to specific populations, such as 2SLGBTQIA+ victims and child and youth victims;
 - a victim’s path through the criminal justice system training; and
 - Sexual Assault Law.

Approved by:

Deputy Minister, Justice

Date approved

Deputy Minister, WGED

Date approved

Deputy Minister, HSS

Date approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialized Medical Treatments**Health and Social
Services

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 makes evidence-informed decisions to support Yukoners' access to 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.
- The Yukon is a member jurisdiction and participant of both Canada's Drug Agency and the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance working to ensure Yukoner's have access to pharmaceutical supports in alignment with the rest of Canada.

Drugs for rare diseases:**Key facts:**

- 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.
- Drugs approved by Health Canada with limited and uncertain clinical evidence are a financial risk for the Yukon Government to cover.

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Specialized Medical Treatments

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Services

Background:

- The federal government has a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases with a three-year funding commitment of up to **\$1.5B** (\$1,500,000,000).
- **\$1.4B** of this money is for bilateral agreements with provinces and territories to help patients with rare diseases have access to treatments as early as possible,
 - Three-year agreements with provinces and territories are anticipated to be the first phase of the Strategy focusing on building, testing and learning in collaboration with governments and health system partners to derive findings which will inform future phases.
- In July 2024, the Governments of Canada and British Columbia signed an agreement to invest \$194 million over three years to improve access to new drugs for rare diseases.

Electroconvulsive therapy:

Key facts:

- Our government understands the importance of providing psychiatric treatment options.
- Electroconvulsive Therapy is a treatment for severe mental illness which involves brief electrical stimulation of the brain.
 - Electroconvulsive Therapy is not provided in the Yukon, but out-of-territory treatment can be accessed for eligible Yukoners through reciprocal billing when provided through a publicly funded facility elsewhere in the country.

Hemodialysis:

Key facts:

- The Renal Care Working Group has met and preliminary discussions have begun.

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Services

- The intention of the Renal Care Working Group is to provide improved understanding of service delivery provided in the Northwest Territories in relation to our own services.
 - Officials have worked with British Columbia Renal and the Government of Northwest Territories to help inform our understanding of renal care.
- As of March 2024, British Columbia Renal supports nine Yukoners who need dialysis, either in-center hemodialysis, home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis.

Ketamine:**Key facts:**

- Health Canada has become aware of an increased interest in the off-label use of ketamine for the treatment of different conditions, such as treatment-resistant depression and using various formulations, including compounded products. Health Canada has not assessed the risks and benefits of off-label use of ketamine for the treatment of different mental health conditions.
- 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 Drug Agency to review new and emerging research on its use for the treatment of certain conditions.

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Services

- Our government will continue to work closely with our partners, including Psychiatrists, to continue to offer Yukoners psychiatric treatment options and wraparound supports.

Oxygen:

Key facts:

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

Spirometry:

Key facts:

- The Department of Health and Social Services successfully executed a contract with TrueNorth to deliver spirometry services, the contract will be operational until July 2025.
- TrueNorth Respiratory has completed an average of 55 spirometry tests per month.
 - TrueNorth Respiratory received an average of 60 referrals a month.
- As of June 30, 2024, there are 213 active referrals on the list and awaiting a test.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialized Medical Treatments**Health and Social
Services

- Turnaround times for tests completed by a respirologist to return to the requesting health care provider 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.
- Testing in the communities is no longer conducted due to safety requirements. TrueNorth Respiratory strives to coordinate appointments with other trips into Whitehorse for clients from communities.

Trikafta:**Key facts:**

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

Session Briefing Note

Fall 2024

Specialized Medical Treatments

Health and Social
Services

Approved by:

 Matt King

 November 22, 2024

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date approved

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Hospital Capacity**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- As the population grows and ages, there is increasing demand for all hospital services including diagnostics, outpatient and inpatient services. This is a challenge being experienced across the country.
- We recognize that the health care system and our hospitals are working above regular capacity. I would like to take the time to recognize the hospital medical staff who are working tirelessly to meet the needs of Yukoners during this time.
- To ensure the acute care system is able to support those who need it, we are working with our partners to ensure patients are cared for in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources. This includes a system level response to surges in demand for acute care.
- In response to increased demand at Whitehorse General Hospital, we are working collaboratively as a health system to ensure Yukoners have access to care and services.
- This includes working with the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Physicians and other health and social care providers to support system needs and ensure access to care.
- Improving system capacity and access to services is connected to both the Health Human Resources Strategy and health system transformation. The hospital's contributions to this work is appreciated.

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- I want to thank staff across the department and Yukon Hospital Corporation for working together to support our system as we continue to respond to the evolving needs of our health and social care system.
- When our acute care system requires additional resources, some of the immediate actions we have taken include:
 - extending the hours of the new walk-in clinic as available,
 - ensuring that patients more suited to be cared for at home, through Continuing Care or in another setting were able to make those transitions as quickly as possible, and
 - quickly passing an Order in Council to increase hospital capacity.
 - Expanding capacity at both Whistle Bend Place and in the Thomson Centre to support long-term care space needs and the need for additional acute care beds.
 - Our government has also supported the need for increased in-patient mental health services with the funding of the new Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- The Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation are continuing to work together to incrementally increase the capacity of our system through ongoing optimization efforts.
- We also remind Yukoners not to delay their care and to seek care through the emergency department or their regular healthcare provider when needed.

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Bed numbers:**Key facts:**

- Whitehorse General Hospital has 55 general inpatient beds (68 total beds including secure medical unit, and maternity), this includes the 10 beds recently added in Thomson Centre
- Managing hospital occupancy is an ongoing challenge to ensure there are beds available for those who require admission to hospital. For surgical patients, this includes ensuring there is capacity to support post-operative care for planned and unplanned surgeries.
 - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, there were 18 elective surgeries deferred on the day of surgery due to lack of inpatient bed capacity.
 - In the 2023-24 fiscal year, there were 14 surgeries deferred on the day of surgery due to inpatient bed capacity.

Hospitalist and Emergency Department Physician staffing**Key facts:**

- Work to transition from a 'Doctor of the Day' model to a formal Hospitalist service at Whitehorse General Hospital has been on-going for the last 24 months. Formal program development has progressed slowly as issues related to the contract and staffing have been addressed.
- At present, the program is heavily reliant on locum Physicians and is experiencing vacancies. Recruitment efforts are ongoing
- The Department and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are aware of the Emergency Department Physician Group's concerns raised around

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same-day admissions and their request that the Hospitalist program take this on. We are working with all parties to come to a resolution.

- Time will be taken to allow representatives of the Hospitalist and Emergency Department Physicians to work to develop a formal process for same-day admissions.
- The Government of Yukon works collaboratively with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association in support of quality and sustainable hospital care. All parties meet regularly and are in close communication about the situation.

Hospital x-ray services:**Key facts:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation previously indicated that walk-in X-rays would not be available between the period of November 12 and December 29, 2024 due to the anticipated replacement of the outpatient X-ray machine.
- As a result of unexpected delivery delays, the machine has been rescheduled to arrive early 2025.
- Outpatient X-ray walk-in services will continue as per usual and are available Monday to Friday 7:30am to 11:30am and 12:30pm to 3:30pm
- Patients who scheduled appointments in anticipation of the slowdown will still have their appointments honoured should they choose.

Operating room capacity:**Key facts:**

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- Whitehorse General Hospital is seeing growth in all service areas leading to higher patient volumes, increased patient needs, and increased complexity of care and acuity. The Yukon Hospital Corporation expects these trends to be sustained through the next fiscal year and beyond.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to plan for the future of Surgical Services at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- In the fall of 2022, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the support of an independent expert, undertook a full review of Surgical Services and developed a plan to support surgical services sustainability which was published in January 2023.
- The hospital has undertaken several human resource strategies to address nursing vacancies in surgical services. As of September 27, 2024 there is only one FTE permanent nursing vacancy in surgical services. This has reduced the higher cost of travel nurse or agency nurse resources needed.
- In December 2023 and again in the first supplementary budget for 2024-25 the Government of Yukon announced additional funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to support the current level of surgical services.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has experienced sustained growth across services year over year. The following are some specific examples for Whitehorse General Hospital for the period of February 2023 to February 2024:
 - 16 per cent growth in inpatient days

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- Hospital occupancy pressures rising from 87 per cent in 2023 to 101 per cent occupancy in 2024
- 2 per cent growth in Emergency Department visits
- 5 per cent growth in number of surgical procedures completed
- 9 per cent growth in Laboratory visits
- 35 per cent growth in Chemotherapy services
- 24 per cent growth in demand for Medical Rehabilitation services
- Increase in overall total imaging exams
- Weekly volumes vary based on patient needs and staffing requirements.

Imaging volumes over the past three months were:

	June 2024	July 2024	August 2024
CT	663	654	739
MRI	178	331	245
Ultrasound	523	684	692
Mammography	284	389	347
X-ray	1,918	2,024	1,999

Surgical volumes over the past three months were:

	June 2024	July 2024	August 2024
General Surgery	38	37	42
Endoscopy	109	98	146
OB/Gyne	62	55	38
Orthopedics	40	51	41

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Ophthalmology	43	46	46
Other	21	36	22
Total	326	323	335

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

Surge planning:

Key facts:

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation and Department of Health and Social Services are working on advancing key components of the integrated system surge plan.
- The hospital is establishing a Code Gridlock policy to formalize the system’s surge capacity response. This is like other “code” responses used in healthcare environments.
- When surges are identified, the Corporation quickly notifies its system partners, convenes a response working group to ensure actions are identified (such as staffing required, expedite admissions to Continuing Care or request EMS support) and system-wide communication is clear. Situation updates and working group briefings are held regularly.
- Actions taken to date include increasing bed capacity in the short-term within existing infrastructure at Thomson Centre.

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- In July 2024, 10 residences were moved successfully from Thomson Centre to Whistle bend Place, allowing the creation of 10 acute care beds to increase hospital capacity.
 - The changes will not expose long-term care residents to increased risk from hospital patients.

Surge response:**Key facts:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are co-developing an integrated surge plan for the health system that will prioritize an effective response to future surges, identify contributing factors and continue working together on quality improvement processes focused on prevention and guided by a home first philosophy.
- Measures that have been taken in the past include:
 - Use of non-conventional spaces at Whitehorse General Hospital for inpatient care including the Surgical Daycare Unit, Emergency Department, and Thomson Centre
 - The expansion of hours at the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic, subject to staff availability.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association sending out communications to the physician community to outline the steps being taken to address the surge.
 - Emergency Medical Services being made available to mitigate pressure on hospital staff. Paramedics assessed patients, provided care as per their medical guidelines, and worked alongside hospital staff to reduce wait times.

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- Provided support for the Yukon Hospital Corporation on discharge planning for patients that required an alternate level of care or could be cared for at home, freeing up inpatient beds;
- Leveraged housing and Mental Wellness supports to support patients after discharge, as available.

Background:

- Whitehorse General Hospital has been in a steady surge state since February 2024.
- Some recent occurrences include:
 - August 26, 2024 – September 12 Whitehorse General Hospital had 75+ inpatients daily with some days exceeding 80 inpatients (hospital bed capacity 63).
 - On February 7, 2024, Whitehorse General Hospital had 22 patients without a bed who required admission or were out-of-territory awaiting repatriation.
 - On July 9, 2024, Whitehorse General Hospital had 19 patients without a bed who required admission. Activation of non-traditional spaces was required, including the conversion of meeting space and clinical administrative offices as well as hallways and alcoves with partitions for privacy. Non-urgent, scheduled surgical procedures were deferred to maintain emergency capacity.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note

Hospital Corporation Management

Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon works with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are identified and met.
- We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.
- 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.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an active participant in the Health Human Resources Steering Committee and has internal strategies that include developing staff from within through internal education and mentorship programs and partnering with academic institutions.
- As the population grows and ages there is increasing demand for all acute care services including diagnostics, outpatient lab, inpatient services and surgical services. This is a challenge being experienced by every province and territory across the country.
- To ensure the acute care system is able to support those who need it, we are working with our partners to ensure patients are cared for in the right place, at the right time, with the right resources.

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Accreditation:

Key facts:

- Yukon's hospitals participated in the Accreditation survey process in May-June 2023. The three hospitals received accreditation with nearly 92 per cent compliance with the standards and practices assessed.
- Accreditation is a process where peers from Canada's health system visit the Yukon's hospitals to look at policies and processes and observe practices and patient interactions to assess compliance with national standards and required practices.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation voluntarily participates in the improvement process with Accreditation Canada and is part of the Yukon Hospital's commitment to improve quality of service.
- Our hospitals strive for the best care every time (but also recognizing that we can always improve) and Accreditation supports this by providing information to support ongoing, continuous quality improvement efforts.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation's lab has not participated in a lab-specific accreditation, which is a separate, voluntary process that is offered by Accreditation Canada and other organizations. Participation in lab-specific accreditation is part of a longer-term plan.

Ernst and Young Report:

Key facts:

- The Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation are 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 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 and the Yukon Hospital Corporation appreciate the work of Ernst and Young and the important recommendations they have provided to enhance processes and ensure funding needs are well understood moving forward.
- In response to the review, we are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and have implemented many of the recommendations through the Transfer Payment Agreements, as well as with frequent, transparent communication with the Hospital's leadership team.
- Ernst and Young's review provides valuable preparatory insights to improve fiscal governance as we move towards the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon.
- Our government looks forward to continuing our ongoing work to improve financial processes with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and remains committed to working together to identify and meet funding needs.

Financial summary:

Key facts:

- The funding allocated for Yukon Hospital Corporation reflects the Corporation's anticipated budget for 2024-25.
- Changes in funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation in 2024-25 mains compared to the first supplementary estimate are driven by need and capacity considerations.

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- There is a total of **\$10.4M** (\$10,430,000) in increases from the 2024-25 main estimate including:
 - **\$5.7M** (\$5,675,000) to increase bed capacity;
 - **3.4M** (\$3,406,000) to support the alleviation of staffing pressures;
 - **\$553K** (\$553,000) for pension solvency and interest;
 - **\$400K** (\$400,000) for breast cancer screening; and
 - **\$396K** (\$396,000) for the transfer of tumor testing to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- As of July 31, 2024, there were 695 FTEs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including:
 - 647 FTEs at Whitehorse General Hospital
 - 25 FTEs at Watson Lake Community Hospital
 - 23 FTEs at Dawson City Community Hospital.

Mental Wellness Unit:

Key facts:

- Between 2019-20 and 2024-25, we budgeted **\$27.8M** (\$27,770,000) to build the new Mental Wellness Unit (formerly referred to as the Secure Medical Unit or the Short Stay Psychiatric Unit). Yukon Hospital Foundation has committed \$2M to the \$29.8M budget.
 - In 2024-25, we budgeted **\$6.9M** (\$6,940,000) for capital for the Mental Wellness Unit.
 - This includes a first supplementary increase of **\$1.9M** relating to unspent budget from 2023-24.

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- 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 Unit is nearing completion and is anticipated to be operational in early 2025 with five beds purpose built for mental health patients only and future capacity to include 12 beds once fully operational.
- Business planning has been undertaken to redevelop the current Secure Medical Unit to create an additional eight in-patient beds for medical and surgical programs.
 - These renovations are expected to take approximately six to eight months to complete following the opening of the new Mental Wellness Unit.

Surgical services planning:

Key facts:

- We recognize that surgical care is essential for the expanding population of the territory.
- Demand for surgical services has increased at a more rapid rate than previous data modelling suggested. We are working to support this increase and plan for a comprehensive and sustainable future, with improved efficiency of service delivery and patient safety.
- Surgical services planning requires two primary streams of work.
 - Long term planning and redevelopment
 - Sustainability of the current service

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- Starting in 2012, Yukon Hospital Corporation developed and followed a Strategic Master Plan. The plan identified capital development needs through 2035, including the new emergency department, MRI, Mental Wellness Unit and an expanded surgical services wing.
- Redevelopment of surgical services also includes expansion in inpatient bed capacity with an additional 30 inpatient beds.
- In 2019, YHC conducted long-term planning related to future needs of surgical services at Whitehorse General Hospital. This is a large, complex, long-term planning initiative with a five-to-seven-year time horizon. It required comprehensive stakeholder involvement to ensure it appropriately meets the needs of Yukoners, care providers, and funders.
- A needs assessment and high-level functional service program were completed with engagement of surgeons, other Physicians, Surgical Nursing and support staff, however this work is currently on hold due to priorities of the pandemic and current health system pressures.
- Surgical standards have evolved over time. The surgical spaces at Whitehorse General Hospital are no longer fit for purpose and need to be re-developed to meet modern standards, in addition to meeting projected population needs.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working on health infrastructure planning for the entire health system, including but not limited to the Whitehorse General Hospital.

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Background:

- The number of surgical cases completed per year has dramatically increased from 2,617 in 2017-18 to 4,085 in 2023-24 this is a 56 percent increase.
- It is projected for the 2024-25 fiscal year this program could complete 4,400 surgical procedures.
- Interim plans have been implemented to better support the service and the staff through extension of resourced surgical hours. This means staff are regularly scheduled later in the day, which decreases use of overtime resources and risk of staff burnout.

Surgical services slowdowns:

Key facts:

- Recognizing the hard work of the hospital staff in supporting Yukoners' access to surgical care, the hospital endeavors to strike a balance between access to care and ensuring staff have the time to rest and recharge
- Planned surgical slowdowns are a part of regular hospital operations and happen throughout the year during the holiday season, spring break and summer.
- The planned slowdowns for the past fiscal year were December 18, 2023 to January 5, 2024, March 18 to 22, 2024, and July 2 to 12, 2024.
- During the annual summer slowdown, new positions were added to support the extension of surgical hours, including full-time Nurses, medical device reprocessing Technicians and additional help with operating room booking and registration.
- The Hospital continues to provide urgent care surgeries and some planned surgeries during these periods.

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Whitehorse General Hospital surgical services

Key facts:

- The surgical services program has operated from Whitehorse General Hospital since 1951; however, infrastructure has not seen significant upgrades since 1997 and other factors such as the Yukon's growing and aging population, the evolution of surgical standards, the need to meet modern standards, and work to support Yukoners to access services closer to home have an impact on health system and surgical planning.
- Starting in 2012, Yukon Hospital Corporation developed and has followed a Strategic Master Plan. The plan identified capital development needs through 2035, including a new surgical wing as a priority need after the implementation of a new Emergency Department and Mental Wellness Unit.
- The new Emergency Department was completed in 2018, and the Mental Wellness Unit is on track to open in 2025.
- In keeping with the Master Plan, the Yukon Hospital Corporation conducted long-term planning related to future needs of surgical services at Whitehorse General Hospital in 2019 resulting in the Whitehorse General Hospital Surgical Services Renewal Project report.
 - This is a large, complex, long-term planning initiative with a five-to-seven-year time horizon.
 - A needs assessment and high-level functional service program were completed with engagement of surgeons, other physicians, surgical nursing and support staff.

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- Planning included consideration of current and rapidly changing quality standards and projected future service demands.
- Work on the Whitehorse General Hospital: Surgical Services Renewal Project began in August 2018 and ran for five months, culminating in early January 2019 with a Functional Program version. The consultant team was asked to return to Whitehorse for further sessions to inform the report ultimately provided in March 2019.
- The report was guided by a clear vision statement, “integrated, collaborative and patient centred surgical services program, providing excellent, efficient and safe ambulatory daycare and inpatient surgery.”
- This report aims to ensure that Yukon is able to maintain a robust elective surgical services program recognizing that Surgical care and increased inpatient bed capacity are both essential for the expanding population of the territory
 - Short-term improvements have been made within the existing surgical areas to mitigate challenges including:
 - Flexible Operating Room suite to help move day procedures like endoscopy out of the main Operating Rooms.
 - Scope reprocessing unit developed adjacent to the flexible Operating Room suite.
 - Introduction of a post-anesthesia care unit and trained post-anesthesia staff to improve the quality of patient care post-surgery.
 - Improved patient access and flow through patient registration, pre-operative clinic and outpatient clinics like cast clinic and minor procedures being co-located in a surgical services hub.

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- Work is ongoing with the orthopedic group to determine how best to support the staff and patients given the rising demand for orthopedic surgery. This includes investment in increasing the number of total knee and total hip replacement surgeries completed each year.
- Strategies to support staff recruitment and retention include:
 - Efforts made to recruit, retain and develop Operating Room Registered Nurses from within through a mentorship program. These efforts have been successful; currently there is one vacant nursing position within surgical services.
 - Interim plans implemented to better support the service and the staff through extension of resourced surgical hours. Staff are regularly scheduled later in the day, which decreases use of overtime resources and risk of staff burnout.
 - Surgical hours were recently expanded, along with surgical staff increases, to stabilize the operations of the Operating Room and reduce pressures on staff.
- The number of surgical cases completed each year increased by 55 per cent between 2017-18 and 2023-24.
- We recognize there is outstanding work to be completed as laid out in this report, with the priority being four operating rooms which meet modern design and safety standards and additional inpatient beds.
- We continue to work collaboratively with Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association on innovative ways to respond to pressures in the system and incrementally expand surgical services capacity.

Yukon Hospital Corporation loan:

Key facts:

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- In 2019-20 fiscal year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation requested additional financial support to cover pension solvency payments, which is an operational cost for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- The Government of Yukon complied with this request.
- Due to the nature of the request and the regular year-over-year variances in pension solvency costs, a loan was determined as the best way to manage the cost at that time.
- The Government of Yukon provides funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to cover the principal and interest payments so that the hospital does not take on the acute financial burden.
- We maintain an ongoing cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as we respond to funding needs, including ensuring health care professional can feel confident that when they retire their hard-earned pension will be waiting for them.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association to ensure 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 Yukoners' timely and appropriate access to speciality services closer to home and reduce the need for out-of-territory medical travel.
- We support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's visiting specialist programs, which provide clearer and faster pathways to some specialist services in the Yukon.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have developed a tripartite selection policy to support the recruitment of specialist positions in a transparent and collaborative manner.
- Interim strategies are required to support the sustainability of surgical services until long-term redevelopment plans are realized. Plans have been implemented effective September 9, 2024 to better support the service and the staff through extension of resourced surgical hours.
 - This means staff are regularly scheduled later in the day to support the service, which decreases use of overtime resources and risk of staff burnout. It is projected for the 2024-25 fiscal year this program could complete 4,400 surgical procedures.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen an improvement in wait times across medical imaging services, specifically CT scans, X-ray,

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MRI and Mammography driven by the introduction of new equipment and supported by improved staffing.

- Managing hospital occupancy and ensuring patients receive care at the right place and at the right time remain a daily priority.

Cardiology:**Key facts:**

- Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by three visiting Cardiologists who provide eight visits per year and two visiting Pediatric Cardiologists who offer two visits per year.
- In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, 1,517 patient appointments were provided through the cardiology program.
- As of October 31, 2024 there have been 1,373 visits for the cardiology clinic this fiscal year
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is expecting to see the same or slightly more patients in the cardiology program in fiscal year 2024-25 compared to last fiscal year.
 - There are a number of variables that impact patient appointments completed in each year, including timing of visits (including virtual visits) and the number of residents that accompany the specialist on their visit.
- Wait times fluctuate based on the frequency of visits by the visiting specialist. The wait time to access a visiting cardiologist is approximately six months. The target is three months.
- As of October 31, 2024, there were 289 individuals on the wait list, down from 312 in June 2024. This is down slightly from 329 individuals waiting as of June 30, 2023.

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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation triages referrals for cardiology services with those with the highest need supported first.

Discharges strategy and patient oriented discharge summary:**Key facts:**

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

Emergency Room:**Key facts:**

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- Our emergency departments are open every hour of every day to provide care for anyone in need.
- Emergency Departments are a vital part of some patients' care journeys, including some visits that are less urgent but are still appropriate uses of the emergency department.
- Most visits to the Emergency Department are appropriate for this setting. There is a proportion of patients who could have their care needs met in another model of care such as a walk-in clinic or urgent care clinic.

Background:

- At the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year, Yukon's three hospitals had supported 42,046 emergency department visits (36,838 at Whitehorse General Hospital, 2,669 at the Watson Lake Community Hospital and 2,539 at the Dawson City Community Hospital).
 - In 2022-23, Yukon's three hospitals supported 41,743 Emergency Department visits (36,326 visits at Whitehorse General Hospital; 2,735 visits at the Watson Lake Community Hospital and 2,682 visits at the Dawson City Community Hospital).
- On average, outpatient Emergency Department visits across all hospitals lasted just over two hours from patient arrival to discharge.
- Patients arriving at the Emergency Department who required inpatient admission were cared for in the Emergency Department for an average of ten hours from arrival to transfer to inpatient unit.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has not been required to close the emergency departments at any of the three hospitals in the Yukon.

Hospitalist model and inpatient services:**Key facts:**

- In partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Chief of Medical Staff and the Yukon Medical Association, the Government of

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Yukon has been working to formalize the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

- In previous years, inpatient care was provided by Family Physicians supporting their own patients and a Doctor of the Day model to provide inpatient care to unattached patients.
- A hospitalist service is a dedicated roster of Physicians that provide inpatient care to attached and unattached patients.
- 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 become up to a four-person model to support inpatient care.
- This evolution took place due to the fact that the majority of Family Doctors have now handed over care for their patients to the Physicians who are providing hospitalist services.
- The changing ways physicians practice, coupled with the increase in Yukoners without a primary care physician and the increasing complexity of health care needs, necessitated a shift in how inpatient care is provided and we are supportive of that shift.
- In partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association, an enhanced compensation package and Expression of Interest has been shared locally and nationally.
- The Yukon Medical Association's enhanced recruitment for locum physicians has resulted in 32 Physicians supporting the hospitalist program since January 2024.
- Formalization of the hospitalist program is underway. The Hospital Corporation, with support from the Department of Health and Social

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Services and Yukon Medical Association, is working with hospital Physicians, Nursing and allied health professionals to develop structures, processes, policies and flows to support a sustainable service that provides quality medical care.

- The 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 and quality outcomes, in that it will be person and family centered, accessible, integrated and safe;
 - focus on population health and address health equity;
 - be sustainable and make best use of available resources so that it may be efficient and effective; and
 - foster a positive work environment and maintain a robust healthcare workforce.
- We anticipate this program will support the continuous availability of Physicians, particularly during the daytime, to provide inpatient care and consultation with allied health providers. Changing the model will also reflect the ways Physicians are practicing in the Yukon and in other jurisdictions.
- Moving forward, these changes are also expected to assist in attracting locums and other Physicians to the territory in the long term to provide hospitalist services and clinical services.
- Part of this effort is to ensure physician compensation is fairly and equitably set within the local and national market and health system resources are managed effectively.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- The Government of Yukon is committed to this program and appreciates the collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon Medical Association to advance this and other critical physician initiatives forward.

Background:

- The “Doctor of the Day” program at Whitehorse General Hospital has been in place since 2008. The model of care was developed at a time when growing demand for inpatient services necessitated a shift from the existing model, which had the second on call Physician in the Emergency Department providing care for unattached patients and the patients of Physicians who did not have active hospital privileges.

Infusion Services:**Key facts:**

- 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 continues to offer iron infusions, phlebotomy and port-a-cath flushes.
- The reduction in services is to support the safety of patients during more complex or specialized procedures.
 - Providing complex infusions requires a planned and appropriately resourced program due to the way they are ordered, administered and monitored.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

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

Internal medicine**Key facts:**

- Internists are Physicians who have extensive training and skills in preventing and managing complex disorders of the body and diseases of internal organs.
- They diagnose, treat, offer preventative care and follow patients with a wide range of non-surgical illnesses.
- Our specialist clinic Internists may order cardiac stress testing, lab tests, pulmonary function testing, X-ray, ultrasound and CT (computed tomography) investigations for patients.
- Whitehorse General Hospital has one visiting Internal Medicine Specialist, who is often accompanied by residents (doctors pursuing further in-depth training within a specialty branch of medicine).

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- Wait times for accessing the visiting Internist is three months and Yukon Hospitals is meeting this target.
- The Internal Medicine Specialist visits approximately 12 times per year for a period of three to five days.

Background:

- Access to Internal Medicine to support both outpatients and inpatients has been identified as a priority by Yukon Physicians and Hospitalists.
- The Access to Specialty Care Committee (tri party committee consisting of representatives from the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation and Department of Health and Social Services) have recommended that the Government of Yukon investigate the feasibility of a resident Internal Medicine program, to support both outpatients and inpatients.

Mammography:**Key facts:**

- Yukon Hospitals provide both Diagnostic and Screening Mammography services (mammograms).
- Yukon Hospitals follow national guidelines for breast cancer screening.
- Breast cancer screening wait times are exceeding national targets.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation has begun providing breast density scores directly to patients as of January 2024.

Background:

- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 3,512 Mammograms.
 - During the 2022-23 fiscal year, Yukon Hospitals completed 2,400 Mammograms.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25 Yukon Hospital Corporation is projected to complete 4,500 mammograms with 2,448 mammograms already completed between April 1 2024 and October 31 2024 .

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- This represents nearly a doubling of mammograms compared to two years ago.
- Diagnostic Mammograms aim to be completed within seven days of referral and are being completed within target.
- Annual & High-Risk Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 12 months. As of October 31, 2024, Annual and High-Risk Screening Mammograms are being completed within 14 months.
- Routine Screening Mammograms aim to be completed every 24 months. As of October 31, 2024, Routine Screening Mammograms are being completed within 27 months.

MRI:**Key facts:**

- Yukon hospitals follow national guidelines in triaging MRI referrals to ensure those with the highest need are supported first.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is using agency MRI technologists to maintain this service and is actively trying to recruit the two FTE vacant MRI technologist positions.
- To ensure appropriate utilization of this specialized service, based on Yukon's population, Yukon Hospital Corporation should be completing 3,100 MRIs per year.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to complete 3,200 MRI exams. As of October 31, 1,730 MRIs have been completed.

Background:

- For the fiscal year 2024-25, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to complete 3,200 MRI exams.
- In the 2023-24 fiscal year, 2,659 MRI exams were completed.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- This was shy of the 3,100 target, due to the health human resource challenges in MRI.
- Urgent MRI cases aim to be supported within seven days and are completed within this target.
- Semi-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 30 days as possible. As of August 31, 2024, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 47 days.
- Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 180 days as possible. As of August 31, 2024, these are being completed within 140 days.

OBGYNs:**Key facts:**

- Obstetric-Gynecologists are based at an independent clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital with care accessed through a referral.
- The Yukon is currently supported by two resident Obstetric-Gynecologists.
- The Obstetric-Gynecologists, Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are working collaboratively to implement service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets plan.
- Access to services is based on level of need.
- Wait times for non-urgent services in the OB/GYN clinic are approximately 10 months.
- When necessary, medical travel is available to Yukoners in communities who need to access these services in Whitehorse.
- Reproductive and prenatal services are also available through a number of General Practice Physicians and Nurse Practitioners.
- We are working in collaboration with contract OBGYNs to enhance service delivery through provisions in our contracts. This includes specific actions to reduce and control wait times:

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- Wait time of less than one month for urgent referrals.
- Make a meaningful effort to reduce wait times for non-urgent referrals to less than six months.
- Work with representatives of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to implement service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets, based on Ontario model, within six months of contract initiation.
- When three Specialists comprise the OBGYN Group, work with the department and Yukon Hospital Corporation to adjust clinic and/or Operating Room scheduling as needed to support meeting wait time targets.
- We have also made it a requirement for quarterly wait time reports to be sent to the department.
- Using the Tripartite Selection Policy, the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation and the department are working collaboratively to recruit for a third Obstetric-Gynecologist position in the territory to support timely and appropriate reproductive and maternal health care for Yukoners.

Ophthalmology:**Key facts:**

- In 2022 a funding agreement with the Department of Health and Social Services was established allowing for up to 600 cataract surgeries per year.
- We are meeting our target of completing cataract assessments within four months.

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Services

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

Orthopedics:**Key facts:**

- The Yukon is currently supported by two resident Orthopedic Surgeons with additional coverage provided by locums.
- We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the resident Orthopedic Surgeons to explore opportunities to ensure the success and stability of the program in the future.
- In 2022-23, a total of 104 joint replacement surgeries were completed in-territory.
 - In 2022-23, there were 28 joint replacements completed out-of-territory. This compares to 71 joint replacement surgeries completed out-of-territory in 2018-19.
- Yukon Hospitals have met, and exceeded, the service levels agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding:
 - The Memorandum of Understanding includes 100 total joint procedures. In 2023-24, a total of 107 total joint procedures

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

were completed (55 total knee replacements and 42 total hip replacements).

- The Memorandum of Understanding includes 480 total orthopedic surgical procedures (all types). In 2023-24, a total of 568 orthopedic procedures were completed.
- In 2023-24, there were 2,918 cast clinic visits supported which was more than any year prior.
 - In 2022-23, a total of 2,480 visits to the cast clinic were supported
- As of October 31, 2024 there were 209 individuals on the wait list for a total knee replacement and 65 on the wait list for a total hip replacement.
- In addition to scheduled orthopedic surgeries, they also provide urgent and emergency consultation and surgeries.
 - The orthopedics program is seeing increased demand for urgent/emergency surgeries. This means that available surgical time for orthopedics is increasingly being used to support non-planned surgeries.
- Total joint replacement T2 wait times (request for surgery until surgery completed):
 - 18 months for total knee replacement surgery.
 - 12 months for total hip replacement surgery.

Pediatricians:**Key facts:**

- Yukon Pediatricians provide a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to child health that addresses social determinates and child equity.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Specialist and Hospital Services**Health and Social
Services

- 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 per cent since its implementation in 2017.
- The pediatric group provides:
 - 365 days of on-call coverage to Whitehorse General Hospital;
 - Availability Monday to Friday at the pediatric office for consults and follow-up;
 - Community outreach to rural communities (residents of Beaver Creek and Burwash Landing attend Haines Junction);
 - Support for neonatal and pediatric medevac;
 - School-based clinics including the Independent Learning Centre; and,
 - Clinics at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre with the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Rheumatology:**Key facts:**

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

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Specialist and Hospital Services

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Services

- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 454 patient appointments were provided.
- For the 2024-25 fiscal year, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to provide 450-475 patient visits.
- As of August 31, 2024 there were 160 patients on the waitlist to access these services. This is down from 222 individuals on the wait list as of June 30, 2023.
- The wait time to access a visiting rheumatologist is approximately 15 months. The target is six months.
- Yukon Hospitals is working with the visiting Rheumatologist and exploring options to increase access to this service.

Approved by:

Matt King

2024-11-22

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

Recommended response:

- Since its introduction in 2019, the Government of Yukon has been supportive of carbon pricing as a policy to help us reduce emissions and move toward our ambitious climate targets.
- We take a balanced approach to carbon pricing in the territory, one which considers the need to reduce emissions as well as the fair return of carbon pricing revenues to Yukoners.
- The Yukon's carbon rebate is revenue neutral. We are committed to both reducing carbon emissions in the territory and to returning all the federal government's revenues to Yukoners.
- Returning proceeds to individuals, municipal governments, Yukon First Nations, businesses, and mining operations is a critical part of our approach to carbon pricing in the Yukon.
- We are returning 100 per cent of the federal carbon levy to these five rebate groups who receive more, on average, than they pay in carbon pricing levies.

Additional response:

- The departments of Environment and Finance work together to coordinate with our federal counterparts to assess the implications of carbon pricing in the territory and to ensure the needs of the territory are recognized in national policy.
- This includes retaining control over how revenues are distributed back to Yukon individuals, municipal governments, Yukon First Nations and businesses.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

- It also includes excluding the carbon price from electricity generation and aviation, in recognition of the unique constraints of our northern jurisdiction.

Third response:

- Carbon pricing is just one tool in our toolkit to address the climate emergency.
 - We continue to implement Our Clean Future to reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions and, more broadly, to reduce the impact of the carbon levy on Yukoners.
 - In December of last year, we announced 42 new actions under Our Clean Future as part of the third Our Clean Future annual report outlining the progress we have made on the strategy.
 - Although we have made progress on many of our commitments, there is still significant work required to meet our target of reducing our emissions by 45 per cent by 2030.
 - Ensuring that we utilize every policy lever at our disposal, including carbon pricing, is essential to meet our goals.
 - Together, we are finding solutions to reduce our emissions while strengthening our economy and supporting our industry partners.
-

Context—this may be an issue because:

- Carbon pricing remains a highly sensitive topic across the country with many provinces and territories voicing their own perspective on how they would like to see this pricing mechanism handled moving forward.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**Environment & Finance

- In October 2023, the federal government announced a temporary 3-year exemption for home-heating oil from the federal carbon price, with the intention of helping Atlantic Canada in particular.
 - While Atlantic Canada welcomed this change, the exemption has received considerable backlash. Most provincial governments (except for British Columbia) have called for extending the carbon price exemption to all home-heating fuels (including natural gas).
 - Critics also argued that the exemption undermines the credibility of the carbon tax and may weaken the incentives to switch to lower carbon heating options.
-

Background:

- The federal Draft Regulations Amending the Fuel Charge Regulations stipulate that all heating oil will be exempt from the fuel charge starting November 8, 2023, until April 2027.
- This means that light fuel oil consumption in all buildings, including residential, commercial, and institutional, will be exempt from the fuel charge.
- Nearly half (49.2% in 2022) of Yukon homes use oil-based heating.
- In Yukon, individuals, businesses, placer/quartz mining operations, Yukon First Nations governments and municipal governments are all eligible for a rebate for carbon pricing.
- Individuals who live outside of Whitehorse receive a remote supplement, which was recently increased from 10 to 20% (and is now in line with the federal remote supplement for backstop jurisdictions including Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan).
- On September 12, 2024, British Columbia's Premier David Eby announced that if the federal government were to remove the carbon pricing backstop, then British Columbia would end the carbon levy in the province.
- British Columbia has had its own carbon pricing system in place since 2008.

Session Briefing Note**Fall 2024****Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**

Environment & Finance

- British Columbia and the Yukon were the remaining supporters of carbon pricing as a climate change policy, with all other provinces publicly opposing the federal system. In late 2023, the newly elected Premier of the Northwest Territories also called for an exemption from the federal carbon levy for the territory.
- To date, Canada has been firm on granting no exception to the backstop.

Approved by:

Dennis Berry

October 2, 2024

A/Deputy Minister of Environment_____
Date approved

Jessica Schultz

October 1, 2024

Deputy Minister of Finance_____
Date approved

Fall 2024

Eagle Gold Mine - Impacts

ECO-FIN-EMR

Recommended response:

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the seriousness of the heap leach failure that occurred at the Eagle Gold mine on June 24 and is treating the response as a government priority that reflects the urgency of the situation.
- Our priorities are to ensure the health and wellbeing of Yukoners and to protect the environment.
- An Independent Review Board has been established to investigate the heap leach failure that occurred at the Eagle Gold mine. Three highly qualified experts are on the Independent Review Board. The objective of the investigation is to determine the causes of the heap leach facility failure.
- We are committed to working with the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun to develop remediation strategies for the failure. A joint team of technical experts hired by the Government of Yukon and the First Nation meet on a regular basis to inform our actions.
- For the most up to date information on the situation at Eagle Gold Mine and actions we are taking, you can visit Yukon.ca/victoria-gold-updates.

Additional responses:

- On August 14, 2024, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. was appointed by the court as Receiver of the assets and property of Victoria Gold Corp.

Eagle Gold Mine -

ECO-FIN-EMR

Impacts

The Receiver is responsible for overseeing remediation of the heap leach failure and its environmental impacts, including compliance with territorial and federal orders.

- The Government of Yukon is committed to a thorough accounting of events leading up to the failure and the development of recommendations so that a similar event does not happen again in the Yukon.
- Once the causes of the failure are determined by the Independent Review Board, this information will inform the most appropriate subsequent steps and potential investigations, including consideration of a public inquiry.
- As of September 4, 2024, there are 27 liens against Victoria Gold worth over \$58.7 million.

Environmental and health impacts:

- The Department of Health and Social Services is monitoring impacts on human health. This includes ongoing review of any technical information and water sampling results, as well as situational reports, as they become available. Results from surface water samples taken show that the regulated drinking water system serving the area continues to meet the guidelines for drinking water quality.
- Water is sampled both at the site and downstream of Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold Mine. Water samples are collected regularly at select sites to monitor water quality. The results of the testing will let us know the

Eagle Gold Mine - Impacts

ECO-FIN-EMR

impacts and inform next steps.

- Technical experts from the Government of Yukon, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans are working closely together to monitor the fish and wildlife in the surrounding areas of the Eagle Gold Mine.

Economic and labour market impacts:

- Operations ceased at Eagle Gold Mine after the heap leach failure occurred. This situation has changed the outlook for mineral production in the Yukon and resulted in a notable downward revision in the medium-term outlook for the Yukon's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The 2024-25 Interim Fiscal and Economic Update released in early October includes the latest forecasts for real GDP.
- At the close of 2023, Victoria Gold had 471 direct hires and another 134 on contract.
- Of the more than 600 employed, the company reported that about 34 per cent were local, amounting to approximately 200 local workers. This represents about 0.8 per cent of the territorial labour force.
- Any possible negative impacts on the labour market are expected to be short-lived, as many displaced workers are likely to be reabsorbed into what is currently a tight labour market. The Yukon's unemployment rate is about half the national figure and the local job vacancy rate has been among the highest in the country throughout

Eagle Gold Mine - Impacts

ECO-FIN-EMR

2024.

- Monitoring of labour market data, such as the number of unemployed and the number of Employment Insurance claimants, for potential impacts of the mine closure is ongoing.
- As the Eagle Gold situation continues to unfold, we should have a better understanding if there may be longer-term impacts for the local economy.

Context — this may be an issue because:

- The June 24, 2024 heap leach failure at the Eagle Gold Mine affects the environmental and socio-economic wellbeing of Yukoners – from an environmental and business perspective.

Background:

- On June 24, 2024, a failure occurred at the heap leach facility of the Eagle Gold Mine operated by Victoria Gold Corporation.
- On July 30, 2024, the Premier provided remarks to the Council of Yukon First Nations' General Assembly on a variety of topics including mining and the incident at Eagle Gold Mine
- On August 5, 2024, the Premier provided a statement on mining activity in the Traditional Territory of First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun.
- On August 14, 2024, the Government of Yukon with First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, submitted an application for receivership of Eagle Gold Mine.
- On August 16, 2024, the receivership was granted. It was appointed to PricewaterhouseCoopers. Implementing a receiver is an established process under federal bankruptcy legislation. Decision making and responsibility has

Eagle Gold Mine - Impacts

ECO-FIN-EMR

shifted from Victoria Gold to PricewaterhouseCoopers, with direction from the Yukon government.

- As of September 20, 2024, the Government of Yukon has done 10 technical briefings to continue to keep Yukoners informed with up-to-date information.
- The Yukon.ca website is updated on a regular basis along with weekly information bulletins to inform the public on the Victoria Gold heap leach failure's current situation.

Approved by:

Justin Ferbey

October 9, 2024

Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office

[Date approved]

Lauren Haney

October 9, 2024

Deputy Minister, Energy, Mines and Resources

[Date approved]

Jessica Schultz

October 9, 2024

Deputy Minister, Finance

[Date approved]

Recommended response:

- Yukoners continue to face challenges across the housing continuum, which include:
 - Homelessness and a lack of access to housing with services;
 - A lack of affordable rental supply; and
 - High house prices and mortgage rates.
- Exceptionally high building costs and high borrowing costs due to interest rates are creating significant challenges for both Yukon Housing Corporation and partners.
- The corporation's five-year strategic plan, Creating Home, will help transform affordable housing service delivery through the adoption of a more client-centred and collaborative approach that integrates support and leads to better outcomes for Yukoners.

Additional response:

- Across governments, we are working with stakeholders to develop new land parcels, increase housing stock while also responding to the findings of the 2022 Office of the Auditor General Report on Housing.
 - We continue to advance projects that provide new housing to meet Yukoners' needs.
-

Context:

- The combination of high rental costs, limited affordable housing options and difficulties in securing mortgages, continues to be a challenge for many Yukoners.
-

Background:

General housing information in the Yukon

Homelessness

- At least 197 people were experiencing homelessness in the 2023 Whitehorse Point-in-Time Count. This included: 58% men; 38 % female; 4% other.

Rental housing

- According to the Census 2021, within the renter population in Whitehorse:
-

Housing Issues

Yukon Housing Corporation

- 22.7% of households live in unaffordable housing;¹
- 17.9% live in unsuitable housing; and
- 10.5% live in inadequate housing.

Rents and vacancy rate, Yukon (YBS)

	October 2022	April 2023	October 2023	April 2024
Median rent (all types)	\$1,300	\$1,325	\$1,350	\$1,420
Vacancy rate (all types)	1.9%	2.2%	1.8%	1.8%

Housing construction

- Labour shortages contribute to higher construction costs and are leading to lower residential construction output.²

Residential building construction, Yukon (YBS)

	January-June 2023	January-June 2024
# residential permits issued*	518	329 (-35% decrease)
\$ value of new permits*	\$59.4 million	\$47.6 million (-20% decrease)

*In addition to new dwelling units, residential permits include renovations, garages, and additions. The totals do not include permits issued for plumbing or stoves.

House prices

- Yukon Bureau of Statistics reports that there were 84 real estate transactions recorded in Whitehorse in the first quarter of 2024 – a decrease of 35 compared to the first quarter of 2023 (119).
- While average prices for single-detached homes in Q1-2024 had fallen relative to Q1-2022 and Q1-2023, condo prices for Q1-2024 had increased 13% since Q1-2023.

Average House Prices, Whitehorse (YBS)

Residence type	Whitehorse Average House Prices		
	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	% Change
Single-detached house	\$635,000	\$629,500	-0.9%
Condominium	\$403,800	\$456,400	13.0%

¹ Housing costs are considered “unaffordable” when they exceed 30% of household income.

² Northern Housing Report, 2023

Yukon Housing Corporation Approach to Address Housing Issues

Creating Home – YHC’s new strategic plan

- Creating Home draws on a recognized framework intended to re-design and transform health care delivery, called the Quadruple Aim, and adapts it to housing.
- This innovative approach to housing delivery will lead to better outcomes by:
 - Improving the client and provider experiences;
 - Strengthening community wellbeing; and
 - Contributing to a sustainable future.
- Creating Home represents a significant shift in how Yukon Housing Corporation operates and delivers housing services.

Capital builds recently completed by YHC or partners:

- Since 2022, 10 YHC-led projects have been completed, creating a total of 77 new residential units; and
- 8 major partnership projects have been completed through the Housing Initiatives Fund, creating over 276 new units.

YHC projects completed 2022-2024

YHC Project	Construction Start Date	Construction Completion Date	Number of Units
401 Jeckell Street, Whitehorse	May 2020	December 2022	47
RHI affordable triplex, Whitehorse	June 2021	June 2022	3
RHI affordable triplex, Watson Lake	June 2021	March 2022	3
RHI affordable triplex, Mayo	June 2021	March 2022	3
Accessible duplex, Mayo	July 2022	June 2023	2
Accessible duplex, Carmacks	August 2022	July 2023	2
RRDC staff trailer, Ross River	June 2023	December 2023	3
10-plex*, Old Crow (*Asset owned by HPW and managed by YHC)	Summer 2021	January 2024	10
Accessible duplex, Faro	Summer 2023	Spring 2024	2
Affordable duplex, Dawson City	August 2022	June 2024	2
Total units completed (YHC projects):			77

Major partnership projects completed 2022-2024

Project (Lead)	Construction Completion Date	Number of Units
Bringing Citizens Home, Whitehorse (Champagne and Aishihik FN)	Summer 2022	20
Cornerstone multi-use building, Whitehorse (Opportunities Yukon)	July 2022	53
Normandy Living seniors supportive residence, Whitehorse (KBC)	December 2022	84
Boreal Commons apartments, Whitehorse (536754 Yukon Inc)	January 2023	87
Affordable modular housing, Mayo (Na-Cho Nyäk Dun FN)	March 2023	8
Jëje Zho 12-bed men's shelter, Dawson City (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in FN)	July 2023	8
VGFN elders complex, Old Crow (Vuntut Gwitchin FN)	January 2024	9
VGFN mobile homes, Old Crow (Vuntut Gwitchin FN)	March 2024	7
Total units completed (major partnerships):		276

Underway or upcoming housing capital projects for YHC and partners

YHC – Underway (113 units):

- 10-unit Supported Living Residence in Watson Lake
- 34-unit residential building with 8 accessible units in Dawson (former Korbo Apartments)
- 45-unit residential building, which includes 9 accessible units in Whitehorse (former Ryder Apartments)
- 6 staff units across three duplexes in Burwash Landing
- 18 two-bedroom units – purchase of 190 Olive May Way in Whitehorse

YHC – Upcoming (37+ units):

Community housing	Staff housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 units in Mayo • 6-plex in Teslin • 6-plex in Carcross • 6-plex Haines Junction • Accessible triplex in Whitehorse • Accessible duplex in Ross River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible duplex in Destruction Bay • Accessible duplex in Pelly Crossing

Major partnership projects underway (299 units):

Project	Anticipated Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date	Number of Units
Safe at Home Society's permanent supportive housing project "The Hearth"	March 2024	Spring 2026	67
Safe at Home Society's temporary housing project at 408 Alexander	May 2024	October 2024	17
DDDC's affordable rental project "Winter Crossing"	Spring 2024	Spring 2026	105
Northern Community Land Trust Society's "Project 1096"	June 2024	December 2025	32
HIF-7 funding recipients	Spring 2024	Fall 2026	78
Total units			299

Rent subsidy programs to make life more affordable for renters and seniors

- July 2023, the corporation acquired an additional 16 units for lease from Normandy, for a total of 26 units to lease to clients through its rent supplement program.
- Since 2020, the corporation has supported over 300 households pay rent through the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit. As of September 2024, 170 clients are receiving monthly support.

Support for homeowners

- March 8, the corporation announced the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit Homeowner Stream for homeowners in severe core housing need³ with annual household incomes under \$100,000:
 - Clients received a one-time payment of \$1,000.00 for Whitehorse homeowners and \$1,500.00 for homeowners living outside of Whitehorse.
- June 2023, the Yukon government launched an \$8.25 million flood recovery program for residents and businesses affected by flooding in the Klondike Valley.
- April 2023, Yukon Housing Corporation launched the expanded Yukon Home Ownership Program to provide qualified households with mortgages to build or buy their homes across the territory, including Whitehorse.
- The program was recently discontinued due to low uptake and the corporation is currently exploring alternative program options to support homeownership.

³ Severe core housing need is spending 50% or more of a household's income on shelter costs.

- In 2020, Yukon Housing Corporation launched the revised Home Repair Program to support low to moderate-income Yukon homeowners to remain in their homes and age in place by providing funding to address mobility requirements, repairs or core housing needs.

Support for new residential land development

September 2024	<p>As part of the Government of Yukon's ongoing commitment to increase land and housing availability and support business growth, new residential and industrial lots were released in partnership with municipalities and Yukon First Nations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> seven residential lots in Haines Junction, Mayo and Watson Lake; and three industrial lots in Teslin and Haines Junction <p>This was the sixth lot release this year and is a direct result of the Government of Yukon's historic investment in land development. Through the lotteries and tenders process, the Government of Yukon has released 685 lots across the territory since 2021 and is on track to release over 1,000 lots by 2026 (TAB #59).</p>
August 2024	<p>As part of its efforts to work in collaboration with municipalities and Yukon First Nations governments to address housing and business space needs across the territory, the Government of Yukon released 33 new residential lots across the Yukon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twelve lots were made available in Carmacks and Faro 21 country residential lots were made available in the Lone Tree subdivision north of Teslin.
June 2023	Government of Yukon partnered with the Government of Canada and the City of Dawson to develop four new residential lots in Dawson.
February 2023	120 lots, including single family, multi-family and townhouse lots in Whistle Bend made available through public lottery.
March 2023	Government of Yukon partnered with Liard First Nation on developing 43 new residential lots on Frances Avenue in Watson Lake.
March 2023	74 residential lots in Logan, Mayo and in Whitehorse's Whistle Bend made available through public lottery.
November 2022	Signed a loan agreement with Kwanlin Dün First Nation's arm's-length development corporation, Chu Níkwän Limited Partnership, for a new

Session Briefing Note

TAB #66
Fall 2024

Housing Issues

Yukon Housing Corporation

	residential land development project at Copper Ridge West in Whitehorse, the first large-scale residential land development on settlement land in the Yukon. An amended loan agreement was signed August 2023 with Chu Níkwän for the same development.
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25-09-24
Date approved

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Recommended response:

- Inflation has continued to improve in recent months, but Yukon households continue to see their budgets stretched by elevated prices, with lower-income households often feeling the worst effects.
- The Government of Yukon continues to monitor inflation and its impact on Yukoners, so that we can take steps to ease the burden.
- As inflationary pressures continue to lessen, efforts to make life more affordable for Yukoners and to help industry are shifting from short-term assistance to measures with the potential to provide longer-term benefits, such as actions to improve home affordability.

Additional response:

- The Main Estimates for this year has continued to build on existing supports for Yukoners by making sure they can access essential services at prices they can afford.
- Budget 2024-25 included investments to advance affordable housing projects across the territory. From the Housing First Project in Watson Lake to the recently awarded replacement of the Ryder Apartments in Whitehorse, the Yukon government is taking action to build more affordable homes for Yukoners, especially those in vulnerable situations.

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Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

- There is also over \$42 million in continued funding for early learning and childcare. This includes funding for the universal childcare program, which has reduced childcare fees to less than \$10 per day, on average.
- We are also making life more affordable and leading the nation with our Yukon-wide dental program, which has \$5.4 million in continued funding for 2024-25.
- To make sure that more people have the option of staying home when they are sick, the Temporary Paid Sick Leave was extended.
- We also extended the Interim Electrical Rebate, which provides welcome relief from power bills to Yukoners across the territory.
- In addition to items included in the 2024-25 Main Estimates, additional initiatives in many departments are continuing to assist Yukoners with the cost of living.
- The Department of Community Services, for example, is developing a program that will see free transit passes provided to non-governmental organizations, vulnerable populations and youth.
- The Department of Health and Social Services will also provide additional funding of \$777,000 for Safe at Home to provide temporary supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

- These are just a few examples of the many programs and initiatives that continue to support Yukoners.

Third response

- The Government of Yukon has also remained responsive to higher inflation in recent years through its various grants and subsidies, which are indexed to inflation. These include:
 - Subsidies for medical travel
 - The Yukon Child Benefit
 - Social Assistance Payments
 - Student Financial Assistance
 - Seniors' benefits
 - The Pioneer Utility grant
 - The Comprehensive Municipal Grant Regulation
 - Residential rent caps
- The Yukon's minimum wage is also responsive to price changes, as its annual change is tied to inflation in the previous year.
- After growing 6.8 per cent in 2023, the minimum wage increased a further 4.9 per cent to \$17.59 per hour on April 1, 2024.
- The Yukon's minimum wage is the second highest wage in Canada, behind only Nunavut's minimum wage of \$19.00 per hour.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

- These increases also contribute towards the strong earnings growth we continue to see in the territory, where average weekly earnings grew 6.1 per cent over the first half of 2024. This is the strongest growth in the country.

Context—this may be an issue because:

- Inflation has fallen from historical highs, but Yukoners are still dealing with higher prices for a variety of goods and services following a lengthy period of elevated inflation.
- The moderation of inflationary pressures that began to take hold late last year has continued into 2024. Growth in the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been much lower in every month in 2024, and inflation in recent months has been near or below the historic average of 2 per cent.

Background:

Inflation – Recent performance and outlook

- Following ten increases in the overnight rate since March 2022, the Bank of Canada has made three 25 basis point cuts in 2024, with the overnight rate dropping from 5.0 per cent to 4.25 per cent. Expectations of further rate cuts this year and in 2025, could further reduce pressure on shelter prices as mortgage rates decline.

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Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

- Both locally and nationally, price pressures have lessened, and inflation continues to trend towards historic norms. The current outlook for the Whitehorse CPI reflects expectations of a return to 'normal' levels of inflation, with the inflation forecast of 2 per cent in 2024, much improved from 4.9 per cent in 2023 and 6.8 per cent in 2022. Beyond 2024, annual inflation is expected to remain at 2 per cent over the remainder of the five-year forecast.

PROGRAMS AND OTHER MEASURES THAT SUPPORT AFFORDABILITY

Five-Year Capital Plan projects supporting housing affordability (Yukon Housing Corporation)

- The **Old Crow 10-Plex Mixed-Use Housing** facility is complete and opened in April 2024.
- Construction of the **10-plex Housing First Project in Watson Lake** began in the summer of 2023. It is scheduled to be completed in the fall 2024.
- Construction of the **Faro and Dawson Duplex** projects started in summer 2023 and is now complete.
- Groundwork began at the old **Ryder Apartments in Whitehorse** in September 2024 and we are aiming for completion in spring 2026. When completed, the new complex is anticipated to deliver over 45 new units.

Universal Child Care Program (Education)

- Universal child care is available to all Yukon families using licensed child care spaces. The universal child care program has reduced fees to less than \$10 per day, on average, for families across the Yukon.

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Inflation and Affordability

(Corporate Note)

Dental Care program (Health and Social Services)

- The Yukon's Dental Program was launched in 2023 and provides \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to Yukoners without dental coverage. The program will cover dental treatments necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease, treat cavities, and restore chewing and social function. It will also offer full coverage for preventive care, such as routine dental cleaning.

Paid sick leave program (Economic Development)

- On April 1, 2023, the Department of Economic Development launched the Paid Sick Leave Rebate. The program runs for two 12-month blocks:
 - April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024; and
 - April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025
- The Paid Sick Leave Rebate is a temporary program that offers up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to employees and self-employed Yukoners that earn less than the average private-sector wage of \$33.94/hour. The program includes all illnesses (and injuries not covered by any other Act, benefit, or program). The program is available to employees regardless of whether their employer offers paid sick leave, though employees must use all paid sick leave available to them through their employer before they are eligible for the Paid Sick Leave Rebate. The program is still in effect and will run until March 31, 2025.

Yukon Child Benefit (Health and Social Services and Finance)

- The Yukon Child Benefit provides monthly payments to modest and low-income households who have children under 18. The maximum benefit per child is now tied to inflation, effective the 2023–24 benefit year.

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Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement (Health and Social Services)

- The Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement provides a monthly income supplement for eligible Yukoner senior's receiving Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) from the federal government. This amount is adjusted for inflation in October, each year.

Inflation Relief Rebate and Interim Electrical Rebate (Yukon Development Corporation)

- The Inflation Relief Rebate, a \$50 rebate that was automatically applied to electrical customers' bills, was a temporary measure to address inflation. The Inflation Relief Rebate was most recently applied to all ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy bills for November and December 2023 and January 2024.
- The Interim Electrical Rebate continues to provide residential electrical customers with a maximum rebate of \$22.62 per month based on the electricity they consume, up to 1,000 kilowatt hours (up to \$271.44 per year). This affordability measure will continue until March 2025.

Social Assistance Review (Health and Social Services)

- Health and Social Services is undertaking a review of the Yukon's Social Assistance rates to inform options to improve the delivery of the program and ensure it is meeting the needs of program clients.
- While the review is underway, the department is providing a \$100 monthly increase to eligible Social Assistance recipients.

Out of Home Childcare Increases (Health and Social Services)

- To offset inflationary cost of living increases and provide sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of children placed in their care, Health and Social Services provided an ongoing 10 per cent increase to monthly payments to caregivers of children in out of home care in 2023-24, on top of the annual indexed increase.

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Inflation and Affordability

(Corporate Note)

- Combined, this amounted to a 16.46 per cent rate increase for community and extended family caregivers. The new rates are as follows:
 - Whitehorse: \$46.86 per day
 - Rural Communities: \$50.16 per day
 - Old Crow: \$86.40 per day
- Rates are indexed annually to the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index, with an increase of 2.4% scheduled to take effect in October 2024.

Supportive Housing (Health and Social Services)

- \$777,000 for Safe at Home will go towards establishing temporary supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.

Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit Rental Subsidy (Yukon Housing Corporation)

- The Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit offers a rental subsidy for low-to-moderate income renters.

Comprehensive Municipal Grant (Community Services)

- The Comprehensive Municipal Grant is how the Government of Yukon directly funds municipal governments. This core funding supplements municipal resources and pays for vital services, like the provision of fresh drinking water, the collection of solid waste and recycling, recreation programming and other services as required under the Municipal Act and other legislation.
- The high inflation seen in 2022 (6.8 per cent) increased the grant payments provided in April 2024. This resulted in a \$2.3 million increase for Yukon municipalities with overall contributions of over \$24.5 million for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

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Inflation and Affordability
(Corporate Note)

Energy retrofits and funding to improve efficiency and offset costs (Energy, Mines and Resources)

- Energy efficiency rebate programs are available for the transportation sector, renewable heating sector, and the construction sector focusing on high efficiency buildings.
- For existing homes, the Energy Branch offers the Good Energy rebate program for high performance heating systems and upgrades to thermal enclosures including insulation and windows, and high-performance new homes. Taking these measures will save homeowners money on their energy costs.
- Between January 1, 2018, and June 30, 2024, 286 high-performance retrofits to residential, commercial and institutional buildings have been completed across the territory.
- Innovative programs like the Better Buildings Program that offer up-front funding, combined with our Good Energy rebates, make energy retrofits more accessible and affordable for Yukoners.

Approved by:

Jessica Schultz

September 25, 2024

Deputy Minister
Department of Finance

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note

Our Clean Future Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

Recommended response:

- We recognize the urgency of the climate emergency and launched Our Clean Future in September 2020 to map our route forward.
- The Government of Yukon continues to make significant progress on implementing Our Clean Future.
- In 2023, we announced the addition of 42 new actions to help us reach our climate goals, which brings the total number of climate actions to 178.
- These new actions are a product of the important work of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council, the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, Navius Research and the findings in the Climate Risk Assessment report.
- We continue to track our progress on goals, targets and actions. Information on our progress was most recently published in [November in the 2023](#) Our Clean Future Annual Report and on the Our Clean Future website.
- Since releasing Our Clean Future in 2020, the Government of Yukon has completed [68](#) Our Clean Future actions, [105](#) are in progress or ongoing and [5](#) have not yet been started.

Additional response:

- As we continue to address climate change, it is important for us to look back on our progress as we diligently work towards our objectives.
- Under Our Clean Future, the government is focused on ensuring the Yukon is highly resilient to climate change impacts by 2030. (See ENV BN #21)

Session Briefing Note
Our Clean Future
Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

- This year, we:
 - Completed flood maps for the Southern Lakes region, [Teslin](#) and Carmacks. Flood hazard mapping for Old Crow and the City of Dawson and the Klondike Valley are expected to be completed in 2025. [A flood hazard mapping study for Mayo is also underway and will be completed in 2026.](#)
 - Worked with municipalities and First Nations governments to finalize the Community Wildfire Protection Plans in Faro, Haines Junction, Teslin, the [City of Dawson and Whitehorse](#). [Plans for Beaver Creek, Mayo, Old Crow, Watson Lake, Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing are underway.](#)
 - Advanced climate change preparedness by initiating development of a permafrost monitoring system for key public buildings, and guidelines to address climate hazards in major infrastructure projects.
 - Established a geohazard mapping program to understand risks from climate change to the Yukon's transportation corridors.
 - Completed flood risk mapping for all transportation corridors in the Yukon.
- We are committed to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and we support Yukoners in the transition to cleaner transportation options and energy efficient homes and buildings.
- This year, we:
 - Began providing rebates for medium-duty electric vehicles.
 - Passed an electric vehicle charging station regulation under the *Public Utilities Act* to allow First Nation governments, private

Session Briefing Note

Our Clean Future Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

businesses and municipalities to sell electricity through electric vehicle charging stations.

- Installed electric vehicle chargers in every road-accessible community in the Yukon, enabling zero-emissions travel throughout the territory. 19 fast charging stations are now operational throughout the territory, [and one new Level 2 charger in Swift River](#). (See EMR BN #30)
- Since 2020, we have provided rebates for 518 energy efficient new homes, exceeding our 2030 target of 500.

Third response:

- Existing actions put us on track to reduce the Yukon's emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. However, there is still significant work required to meet our target reduction of 45 per cent by 2030.
- [One of the major drivers of emissions is population – more people means more cars on the road and more homes to heat.](#)
- [However, as the population of the Yukon continues to grow, we aren't seeing the rate of emissions increase that we would expect.](#)
- [We are seeing lower emissions per Yukoner than we saw in 2010.](#)
- [This is a promising sign that the emissions intensity of everyday life for Yukoners may be starting to decrease.](#)
- We [passed](#) legislation to set a target of a 45 per cent reduction in mining sector emissions per unit of production by 2035.
- We will continue to build on Our Clean Future as we learn more and implement new actions. This will be reflected in future annual reports.

Session Briefing Note

Our Clean Future Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

- We will continue to find opportunities to reach our targets as we work with experts, stakeholders and partner governments across the territory and beyond.

Context — this may be an issue because:

- Climate change and the government's progress in delivering on Our Clean Future commitments is of interest to Yukoners.

Background:

- Our Clean Future was released on September 14, 2020, and now has 178 actions, of which 136 are original actions and 42 are new actions. These actions seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the Yukon to be highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030.
- The Government of Yukon reports annually on progress for the implementation of Our Clean Future. Four Annual Reports have been published to date, with the latest report released on [November 12, 2024](#) (capturing [2023](#) data).
- The Our Clean Future website was launched in December 2023, which shows the government's commitments and successes towards fighting climate change.

Approved by:

Dennis Berry

November 19, 2024

Deputy Minister, Environment

Date approved

Paul Moore

November 13, 2024

Deputy Minister, Energy, Mines and Resources

Date approved

Session Briefing Note

Supplementary Overview (Corporate Note)

Recommended response:

- The 2024-25 Supplementary Estimates No. 1 forecasts an overall gross increase of \$150.1 million in O&M spending, with an offsetting increase of \$20.7 million in recoveries. The net increase in new O&M spending is forecast at \$129.4 million.
- Capital spending for Supplementary Estimates No. 1 reflects a slight overall gross decrease of \$299,000 in spending and a \$4.2 million decrease in recoveries, resulting in a net increase in spending of \$3.9 million. These adjustments are mainly the result of updated cashflow forecasts for various projects.
- Revenues are projected to decrease by \$8.8 million, primarily due to a revenue forecast update from Canada which revised the projection for Corporate Income Tax downward by \$6.7 million as well as a reduction in royalty payments from Victoria Gold of \$2.5 million. This is partially offset by a \$350,000 increase for driver licenses due to recently increased fees.
- The Yukon government continues to maintain a surplus. As part of the 2024-25 Main Estimates, the Yukon government budgeted for a \$50 million contingency to address emergency pressures. \$50 million of the contingency has been applied towards the pressures identified in the Supplementary Estimates No. 1.
- The use of the contingency fund allows the government to present a revised surplus of \$75.4 million as part of these Supplementary Estimates. Changes in the Supplementary Estimates result in a revised year-end net debt of \$530.4 million

Session Briefing Note
Supplementary Overview
(Corporate Note)

Additional response:

- The Supplementary Estimates reflect an O&M increase mainly for:
 - \$50 million for payments to the Receiver for environmental protection work at the Eagle Gold Mine;
 - \$34 million for pressures in Insured Health reflecting support for the wellbeing of Yukoners;
 - \$21 million for wildland firefighting costs in response to the significant fire season experienced in the territory and which helped ensure the safety of Yukoners; and
 - \$10 million for various Yukon Hospital Corporation funding requirements including the added O&M costs of converting ten beds at the Thompson Centre for Acute Care use.
- For the Supplementary Estimates, updates to the 2024-25 Capital Plan have resulted in a decreased allocation of \$299,000. Notable changes include:
 - \$1.9 million towards the completion of the Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital;
 - \$1.9 million for long-term and acute care bed optimization at Whistle Bend Place and Whitehorse General Hospital;
 - Decrease of \$3.2 million due to cash flow revisions for the construction of the school in Burwash Landing;
 - Decrease of \$600 thousand for the creation of new campsites aligning costs with the revised project timeline.

Session Briefing Note

Supplementary Overview

(Corporate Note)

- There is an increase of 46.6 in FTEs (Full Time Equivalents) for Supplementary Estimates No. 1. These are primarily to hire new long-term care staff in support of additional care beds at Whistle Bend Place, for the Aging with Dignity initiative and new FTEs for schools including teachers, clerical and custodial staff.
- There is also an increase in FTEs related to a transfer in the Capital Planning Office from Highways and Public Works capital budget to Finance in the O&M budget.

Corporate approach to fiscal sustainability:

- We continue to work to ensure that government spending is allocated in a way that meets key priorities and long-term goals.
- To meet these priorities, departments continue to follow established processes to ensure that funding is distributed efficiently and effectively across public services and programs.
- This means regular financial scrutiny is applied to decision-making and that new requests for funding are approved in a financially sustainable way, while continuing to provide the services that Yukoners expect.
- This coordinated approach to funding ensures that government can respond to new and evolving challenges, while managing resources responsibly.

Session Briefing Note
Supplementary Overview
(Corporate Note)

Context—this may be an issue because:

- The 2024-25 Second Appropriation Act is tabled in the fall session and will be the subject of debate.

Background:

- Supplementary Estimates are used annually by a government to account for unforeseen spending at the time of tabling the annual Budget. It is common to have one or two spending updates throughout the fiscal year.
- They are tabled during the fall and spring sessions, debated and voted on in the legislature and provide departments with increased spending authority for O&M and Capital for the current fiscal year.

Approved by:

Jessica Schultz

September 19, 2024

Deputy Minister, Finance

Date approved

Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Update on Calls to Action

Executive Council
Office

Recommended response:

- Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility of all governments and individuals in the Yukon.
- Our government is deeply committed to advancing reconciliation through collaboration and partnership with Indigenous governments and groups.
- We continue to share our progress toward addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, most recently through a progress report and Pathways magazine both released in Fall 2023.
- The magazine and report provided an update on the actions being taken across the Yukon government and in collaboration with First Nation governments and groups in areas including child welfare, health, education and justice.

Additional response:

- The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments are leaders in demonstrating a collaborative approach to reconciliation.
- While there is still work to do, targeted investments are resulting in meaningful change and creating better programs and services for all Yukoners.
- We will continue our collaborative work to implement and report on the Calls to Action, including through work on the Yukon Forum joint priorities and by implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

Context—this may be an issue because:

- The 2023 mandate letters include a commitment to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) Calls to Action.
- The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement includes a commitment to working with Yukon First Nations to continue to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through targeted investments.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Update on Calls to Action

Executive Council
Office

Background:

- The TRC report *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* was released in 2015 and contains 94 Calls to Action on redressing the harms resulting from Residential Schools and creating better relations between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous Peoples. There are 32 Calls to Action that relate directly to YG.
- The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations (YFNs) collaborated on addressing the Calls to Action under the 2017 Yukon Forum Joint Priority Action Plan and through other reconciliation initiatives, such as supporting the important work of the YFN-led Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project.
- The Government of Yukon has taken additional steps to address the Calls to Action, including:
 - establishing the position of Assistant Deputy Minister of First Nations Initiatives at the Department of Education, signing an agreement to establish a YFN School Board and entering into education agreements with all YFNs (speaks to Calls 7 and 10 directed to the federal government);
 - supporting Indigenous athletes and the North American Indigenous Games (Call 88);
 - implementing the YFN Procurement Policy (relates to Call 92) and the Representative Public Service Plan: *Breaking Trail Together* (relates to Call 7);
 - working with YFNs and Yukon Indigenous women's groups to implement the Yukon's *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit+ People Strategy* (MMIWG2S+ Strategy) (relates to Call 41);
 - participating at the Trilateral Table on the Wellbeing of YFN Children and Families to address gaps for culturally appropriate parenting programs (Call 5); and
 - receiving input from YFNs on Health and Social Services programming through the Mental Health Advisory Committee (relates to Call 19).

Approved by:

Justin Ferbey

2024 08 20

Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office

Date