



HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Spring 2025 Session Notes

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CASA Accomplishments:

1. Government of Yukon will allocate an additional \$2 million in each of the next three budgets to enhance recruitment and retention of new health care professionals across the Yukon. This will include programs aimed at supporting students pursuing studies in medical fields who commit to returning to work in the Yukon after graduation.
 - In the 2025-26 Main Estimate \$2.2M (\$2,193,000) was allocated to continue the response to the Health Human Resources challenges recoverable through Territorial Health Investment Fund.
 - A total of \$5M has been invested over three years between 2023 and 2026 for Health Human Resources initiatives.
 - We surveyed and engaged more than 600 front line workers to ensure alignment with the Health Human Resources Strategy and inform the development of retention programs.
 - We formalized expanded financial recruitment and retention incentives for several sectors of health and social employees in collective agreements.
 - We expanded recruitment marketing and campaigns, with plans to increase outreach.
 - We are finalizing development of a centralized health and social services recruitment website.
 - A number of health education bursaries are available to support Yukon students. There are bursaries for health professionals, medical students and nursing students. Our government is working to expand

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our programs to create greater incentives for students to return to work in the Yukon.

- We are working with Yukon University and providing support for the development of more health and social services educational programming.
- We funded the Yukon Medical Association to explore the viability of establishing a family medicine residency program in the Yukon.
- We implemented an agreement with the University of New Brunswick for two cohorts of a Yukon “Learn Where You Live” LPN – RN Pathway starting September 2024.
- 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.

2. Open a new medical walk-in clinic in Whitehorse by January 2024:

- The Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic began serving the community on December 18, 2023 out of its temporary location at 9010 Quartz Rd.
- In April 2024, the Clinic moved to its permanent location at 108 Jarvis St. in the Mah’s Point Building.
- The clinic is serviced by a multidisciplinary team including medical office assistants, licensed practical nurses, two permanent nurse practitioners, a mental health social worker and contracted physicians.

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3. Include fertility treatment in medical travel:
 - Amendments to the Travel for Medical Treatment Regulation to provide medical travel for a defined list of fertility treatments and surrogacy services came into force on October 17, 2024.

4. Create a refundable tax rebate covering up to \$8,000 per year for fertility treatment:
 - The Department of Finance is tabling a bill this legislative sitting to implement a tax rebate of up to \$10,000 for fertility treatments.

5. Establish a managed alcohol program within one year.
 - A Managed Alcohol Program opened in November 2024.
 - The program's 10-bed housing facility is located at 509 Hoge Street in Whitehorse. Medical oversight is provided by the Referred Care Clinic and an interdisciplinary team including support workers, nurses, social workers and a supervisor.

6. Directly support Yukon First Nations to design and implement additional government funded land-based healing programs.
 - 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 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

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approaches empower individuals to heal and grow, and support emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

7. Increase the number of bed nights available for detox by hiring additional Licensed Practical Nurses. Make funding available to Yukoners to seek out-of-territory treatment when Government of Yukon services are at capacity.

- Withdrawal Management Services at the Sarah Steele Building 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.
- Our government has increased funding for Withdrawal Management to hire 4 additional Licensed Practical Nurses.
- With these additional Licensed Practical Nurses, the program has been able to increase admissions and provide more comprehensive withdrawal care. This has also supported the hospital by intaking clients who may have otherwise sought care at the Emergency Department.
- We have increased our capacity by approximately 25 per cent since January 2023.
- Insured Health Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continue to work with Yukoners to ensure they receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care they need, including if that care is out-of-territory.
- In February 2022, Insured Health Services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment

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centres to support Yukoners to access pre-approved out-of-territory medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care at approved facilities.

- 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.

8. Create a working group comprised of the Yukon Minister of Health and Social Services and the Leader of the Yukon NDP to consider the Northwest Territories model of hemodialysis services.

- The Renal Care Working Group has met and preliminary discussions have begun.
- The intention of the Renal Care Working Group is to provide improved understanding of service delivery of hemodialysis services provided in the Northwest Territories in relation to our own services.
 - Officials have reached out to BC Renal and the Government of Northwest Territories to help inform our understanding of renal care.
- As of March 2024, BC Renal supports nine Yukoners who need dialysis, either in-center hemodialysis, home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis.

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9. Apply a \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients until a more comprehensive enhancement to Social Assistance rates is in place.
 - An increase in Social Assistance rates was implemented and continues to be provided to all Social Assistance recipients.

10. Review Social Assistance rates.
 - A review was completed in 2023-24, and options and next steps are now being considered.

Key Accomplishments:

- Opened a new **Health and Wellness Centre in Old Crow** in 2024. The centre is named *Natr'idizhii Sree Tr'agwandaii Hah Zehh*, meaning "place for healing and wellness." The new Health and Wellness Centre is based on a collaborative care model and provides a range of health care and social services for the residents of Old Crow.
- Passed the *Health Authority Act* in April 2024.
- Coordinated with Yukon Hospital Corporation to add an **additional ten acute-care hospital beds and two long-term care beds** in July 2024 and a **further six beds** in January 2025.
- Supported the Yukon Hospital Corporation to **expand surgical hours** at Whitehorse General Hospital in September 2024.
- Released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan (December 2023), a living document completed with community partners, summarizing 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

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spanning five key pillars aimed to boost delivery of care and improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals (December 2023).

Primary Care:

- Worked with the Francophone community to launch **modernized health care cards** in January 2025.
- 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).

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services:

- Established a **Managed Alcohol Program** in November 2024.
- 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.
- Completed two land-based family camps to support family healing.
- 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

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- Expanded access to a safer supply of opioids to include fentanyl patches and hydromorphone tablets for people living with opioid use disorder.

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 British Columbia** 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).
- Established a **First Nations Advisory Committee** to review policies and provide input into services.
- 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).

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- 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)

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.

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- 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 (2021).

Social Services:

- Operated a **warming centre** at the Jim Smith building in winter/spring 2024 and 2025.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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

March 5, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with NGOs, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations and our community partners to meet the needs of the community and 405 Alexander guests.

Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon is working to support our community and vulnerable populations by providing 24/7 shelter, supportive living units and a range of drop-in services at 405 Alexander.
- The Department of Health and Social Services supports 405 Alexander guests with Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach services, including the Referred Care Clinic's Opioid Treatment Services, Emergency Medical Services and Home Care.
- The Government of Yukon is addressing the complex challenges of homelessness, substance use and public safety in Whitehorse through continued collaboration with Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- In October 2024, we completed the jury's eight recommendations. Among them, the Government of Yukon and Connective have reviewed 104 policies, implemented and trained staff on new procedures, developed a critical incident reporting framework, and continue to work on creating a safe, welcoming space for guests of 405 Alexander.

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Improvements and updates:

- New and updated policies and procedures at 405 Alexander were introduced throughout 2024 and are continuing into 2025.
- The Government of Yukon and Connective both reviewed policies and procedures, recommending and implementing ongoing improvements.
- Per the jury's recommendations from the inquest, all policies were reviewed and updated by October of 2024. Connective is committed to ongoing annual reviews of policies and procedures.
- A gate has been installed in front of the dining room at night to reduce the areas where people gather, allowing staff to more closely monitor common areas and provide greater oversight.
- Shower and washroom checks are performed every 15 minutes to ensure safety and provide greater oversight.
- Monthly talking circles have been introduced and guest rights and responsibilities are posted, ensuring feedback from guests is heard regularly.
- A Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee dedicated to 405 Alexander staff was established in spring 2024.
- Incident reporting procedures have been improved. The procedures are guided by an incident reporting matrix co-developed with the Yukon government in October 2024.

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, 2024, to January 31, 2025, the average occupancy rate per night was 45.9 shelter guests (85 per cent).
- From April 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, there were an average of 18.6 residents per month living in the Housing First program.

405 Alexander programming:

- Ongoing programming at 405 Alexander in February included:
 - The Council of Yukon First Nations Cultural Programming
 - EMS Paramedic Specialist Program
 - Downtown Outreach Clinic (KDFN and Home Care) – weekly on Wednesdays. This is in addition to Connective’s regular outreach worker, who is available onsite to provide one-on-one supports.
 - Mental Wellness and Substance use Services Counsellor on site – weekly on Mondays
 - Referred Care Clinic – twice-weekly on Mondays and Thursdays
 - Blood Ties Four Directions Outreach – weekly on Wednesdays
 - Connection Circle – monthly
- Upcoming training for staff includes:
 - Grief and Self Care Workshop with Hospice Yukon
 - Safe Spaces training with Queer Yukon

Available supports:

- Opioid Treatment Services from the Referred Care Clinic for guests of 405 Alexander are available on-site two days a week. This approach

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has been successful in increasing engagement in Opioid Treatment Services.

- We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to increase awareness among guests of 405 Alexander of the Supervised Consumption Site and have expanded the services and hours of operation onsite and through the outreach van.
- Guests have access to harm reduction education and supplies, including Naloxone kits and connection to appropriate supports and services.
- Naloxone kits are available to guests, staff and visitors, throughout the building.
 - At least 96 overdoses have been reversed since Connective assumed operations of 405 Alexander in October 2022.
 - In 2024, 2,100 Naloxone kits were distributed at 405 Alexander.
 - From November 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025, EMS has delivered 395 Naloxone kits to 405 Alexander. In that time, 405 Alexander has distributed 200 Naloxone kits.
- Shower spaces are equipped with Brave Sensors, designed to detect when movement has stopped and notify staff of an issue requiring an immediate wellness check.
 - Brave Sensors rely on cellular signal reception, leading to occasionally inconsistent reliability.
- Guests have access to Social Workers and nursing support.
- Shelter guests also have access to cultural support and programming through the Council of Yukon First Nations.

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Connective extension:

Speaking notes:

- The emergency shelter and the 20 Housing First units located at 405 Alexander are operated by Connective in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- In fall 2024, the Department of Health and Social Services looked into exploring the market for shelter operators. With careful consideration, the department chose to work with Connective for an extended time to strengthen the changes and improvements that came out of the jury's recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest in April 2024.
- The work that has been done since spring 2024 has been dedicated to updating policies and procedures, training staff on these updates, integrating changes to create safer spaces for both guests and staff, and providing culturally appropriate supports, services and programs that have a meaningful impact.
- The Government of Yukon is extending agreements with Connective for 405 Alexander, Housing First at Wood Street, and Whitehorse Residential Services until June 30, 2025, ensuring stability while long-term sheltering solutions are developed.
- This short-term extension maintains existing service levels while reinforcing oversight, operational standards and collaboration to improve shelter operations, safety and community partnerships. Our team is currently working with the service provider to incorporate

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program separation between the shelter space and housing with more controls and staffing.

- This short-term extension does not maintain the status quo as it includes stronger oversight, operational improvements and enhanced accountability measures to improve safety and service delivery.
- The Government of Yukon is investing \$2.07 million in this three-month extension, covering shelter operations, staffing, security enhancements and culturally relevant programming.
- Clients will not experience service disruptions, and operational changes such as increased staffing, security measures and Indigenous-led programming will strengthen support for vulnerable Yukoners.
- This extension aligns with the April 2024 Coroner's Inquest recommendations, the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and downtown safety initiatives to improve shelter operations and community wellbeing.
- The Government of Yukon will be working with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations and community partners to explore long-term sheltering solutions with plans to develop a Territorial Sheltering Strategy that ensures sustainable and culturally appropriate services.
- The three-month extension includes \$1.36 million for 405 Alexander, bringing the total agreement to \$15.39 million; \$547,327 for Housing First and Whitehorse Residential Services, bringing the total

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agreement to \$7.17 million; and \$165,461 in additional operating funds, bringing the total support agreement to \$827,308.

- This short-term measure ensures service continuity while the Government of Yukon works with partners to finalize long-term shelter plans and agreements.
- Operational improvements at 405 Alexander have strengthened safety and oversight, including enhanced training, washroom checks, new harm reduction measures and staff security enhancements.
- Both 405 Alexander and the Housing First building are governed under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, ensuring tenant rights are upheld during the extension period.
- The Government of Yukon is working closely with Yukon First Nations and community organizations to improve culturally relevant programming and strengthen shelter services.
- 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 revitalized sheltering system model that reflects the changing needs of the downtown community.

Background:

- 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 took on operations of 405 Alexander in October 2022.

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- In 2024–25, the Main Estimates for 405 Alexander, Housing First and Whitehorse Residential Services was \$6.3M (\$6,309,069). An additional \$1M (\$1,022,000) is recommended for approval for period 8. If approved, the total for 2024–25 will be \$7.6M (\$7,636,069).

Connective Program Review

- Three program reviews were conducted to evaluate all programs currently operated by Connective Support Society in the Yukon.
- The Yukon government hired the consultant Meyers, Norris, Penny (MNP) to conduct an independent review of the Whitehorse Housing First Program in 405 Alexander and on Wood Street as well as both Supervised Housing and Reintegration programs.
 - We also conducted a thorough review of the existing TPAs to measure compliance and identify gaps.
- The results of those reviews will be tabled in the legislative assembly Spring 2025 (anticipated date: March 31, 2025), along with copies of the Transfer Payment Agreements and other supporting documents.
 - This includes two formal evaluation reports, covering Housing First (HF) programming and the Supervised Housing and Reintegration Program (SHARP).
- The review of 405 Alexander (Whitehorse Emergency Shelter) was not a standalone third-party evaluation like Housing First and SHARP. Instead, an extensive line-by-line review of the Transfer Payment Agreement was completed. This process was initiated in January 2024 and expanded in October 2024.
- Officials have worked closely with Connective to make improvements to the operating model and is planning to change the way the

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apartments in the shelter are operated, focusing more on a program model.

- A Leadership Summit was held April 11, 2025, with Yukon First Nations to discuss sheltering options. Information from the Summit will inform next steps.
- In the meantime, 405 Alexander is providing a service to people who need the help with emergency accommodations, food and to connect to services. The future operating model will build on what has been learned so far in order to balance improvements for clients, downtown safety and cultural safety.
- As per our regular program reviews procedures, reviews of all programs operated by Connective Support Society (Connective) have been completed.
- The three programs under review are:
 - Shelter and Housing First programming at 405 Alexander Street.
 - Housing First programming at 5th Avenue and Wood Street.
 - Supervised Housing and Reintegration Program for men and women.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice have analyzed the results of the reviews and are working to determine next steps for each program.
- The SHARP evaluation found that the program provides a critical bridge between incarceration and reintegration but identified areas for improvement, including refining program scope and requirements, relocation and funding additional resources.

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- The Housing First evaluation identified both successes and challenges in delivering low-barrier supportive housing, with recommendations focused on enhancing staffing levels, increasing access to culturally appropriate programming, and improving service delivery coordination.
- The 405 Alexander review was conducted through a line-by-line assessment of the Transfer Payment Agreement, which highlighted operational challenges, including:
 - a misalignment between staffing levels and service demands;
 - the need for improved case management; and
 - the necessity of strengthening partnerships with Yukon First Nations and local service providers.
- Next steps for all three programs are currently under review by the Government of Yukon, with outcomes expected to inform future operating agreements and service delivery improvements.
- Following the recommendations of the Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of four Indigenous women at 405 Alexander, the Government of Yukon has worked closely with Connective, Yukon First Nations, and community partners to strengthen shelter operations. Actions taken in response to the inquest include enhanced staff training, clearer policies for shelter operations, and stronger accountability measures to ensure the safety of shelter guests.
- The Government of Yukon acknowledges the deep loss experienced by the families, friends, and communities of those who have died at 405 Alexander. We remain committed to ongoing improvements in service quality and safety at 405 Alexander, ensuring that people

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experiencing homelessness can access dignified, culturally appropriate harm reduction support and trauma-informed care.

Coroner's inquest jury 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.
- In collaboration with Connective, all recommendations were completed by the end of October 2024. A procedure to independently review recent and future deaths at 405 Alexander is still being established through consultation with the Coroner's Service.
- Our aim 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.
- To ensure the work initiated in response to the recommendations of the coroner's jury is sustained in an effective and systematic way, the Department of Health and Social Services has established a third-party committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations.
 - The committee will review the work completed by Connective and Government of Yukon to date and provide a report on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the response.
- The Government of Yukon and Connective have implemented all eight recommendations:

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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.
 - Policies and procedures have been revised and staff are continuously trained as new policies are implemented.
 - 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.
 - 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.

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4. The Government of Yukon reviewed results of two audits completed by Connective over the past 10 months evaluating compliance with the provisions of the 405 Alexander TPA and the recommendations made by the jury.
 - 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 policy and procedure revisions.
 - The Government of Yukon has the responsibility to ensure an independent external review will take place if future deaths 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 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 trusting relationships while providing services to shelter guests, Connective engaged Council of Yukon First

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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, 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 is working to create a culture within shelter spaces that promote safety for 2SLGBTQIA+ and female-identifying individuals, guided by best practices in shelter management.
- 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.

Deaths at 405 Alexander:**Speaking notes:**

March 2025

- A guest of a Housing First tenant at 405 Alexander was found deceased on March 27, 2025.
- RCMP and Emergency Medical Services responded immediately.
- Further details, including confirmation of the cause of death, may become available following investigation by the Coroner's Office.

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- Connective has been and continues to provide supports to willing individuals known to use substances in the housing units. Staff are also and discussing and developing safety planning and offer additional harm reduction steps to prevent or respond to overdoses.
- Incident reporting policies for 405 Alexander include timely and comprehensive review of any incidents by staff and supervisors, an immediate review of all relevant video footage, collecting and documenting necessary and relevant information, and an additional review by senior management of incidents. This process was applied to the event on Thursday and all necessary information was turned over to the RCMP and Coroner's Office for their review and investigations.

December 2024, February 2025

- Two deaths occurred at 405 Alexander in December 2024. An additional death took place in February 2025.
- Shelter staff called EMS and responded to incidents appropriately, following emergency protocols including initiating CPR and administering Naloxone.
- Further details, including confirmation of the cause of the deaths, may become available following investigation by the Yukon Coroner's Service.
- A Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff member was brought onsite to provide counselling support to residents, service users and staff.
- 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

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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 this event and all necessary information was turned over to the RCMP and Coroner's Office for their review and investigations.

Background:

- We are aware Connective has filed a Statement of Defence in response to a lawsuit filed against the Government of Yukon and Connective Support Society related to a death at 405 Alexander.

EMS presence:

- Emergency Medical Services has expanded their Paramedic Specialist Unit 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.
 - When Paramedics are not stationed on site, Emergency Medical Services are still available by calling 911.
 - The Unit has a spectrometer to test samples of drugs on site. The spectrometer provides a more accurate detection of benzodiazepines, fentanyl and other contaminants.
- Emergency Medical Services supports the Mobile Paramedic Response Unit at 405 Alexander, 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.

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- 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 21 per cent of these result in patient transport to the Emergency Department in 2024. 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 2024, the Unit responded to 375 calls.
 - 17 per cent of the Paramedic Response Units transports were related to patient appointments.
- The Unit collaborates with Blood Ties Four Directions and the Council of Yukon First Nations to address the Substance Use Health Emergency. They distribute Fentanyl Testing Kits and offer follow-up care to clients who have received Naloxone.

Rally for Change:

- We are aware of the Rally for Change that took place outside 405 Alexander on April 30, 2025.
- We are continuing our work with Connective, the Council of Yukon First Nations and community partners to provide services, supports and guidance to vulnerable Yukoners.

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- This work is upheld by staff at 405 Alexander, who support guests with care, compassion and without judgement.
- We are meeting with Yukon First Nations in early May to continue the momentum from the Leadership Summit held April 11. These meetings include discussions on improvements and sheltering strategies.
- The Government of Yukon is addressing the complex challenges of homelessness, substance use and public safety to provide all Yukoners a healthy and safe place to thrive.

Shelter standards:

- To support the development of 405 Alexander's policies, training, and operations, we are developing shelter standards. The standards will provide a framework of consistent services and expectations for all shelters in the Yukon and housing first programs.
- This initiative will provide guidance to all organizations, including the Government of Yukon, who are operating shelters or supportive housing environments.
- The standards are being developed based on national best practices, in partnership with local NGOs and service providers.
- Once finalized, the standards will be embedded in transfer payment agreements and will inform operational requirements for Connective and other NGOs.

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Spring 2025

405 Alexander (Connective)

Health and Social
Services

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

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 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.
 - This is below the Northern average of \$23,510 per patient.
- In 2024 alone we saw an increase of 1,200 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 2025-26, we budgeted **\$682.9M** (\$682,902,000) for the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M expenditures.
 - This is an increase of **\$88.7M** (\$88,744,000) over the 2024-25 Main Estimates and represents an increase of 14.9%.
- In 2025-26, we budgeted **\$9.2M** (\$9,150,000) for Capital expenditures.
 - This is a decrease of **\$236K** (\$236,000) over the 2024-25 Main Estimates and represents a decrease of 2.5%.
- We are prioritizing health infrastructure planning and are investing more than \$1 million to begin work on planning for expansion at the Whitehorse General Hospital.
- Since 2018-19, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased from **\$400.7M** (\$400,705,000) to **\$682.9M** (\$682,902,000) in 2025-26.
 - The 2018-19 figure does not include the restatement of Emergency Medical Services, which was transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services in April 2023. Emergency Medical Services had an operations and maintenance budget of **\$9.8M** (\$9,797,000) in 2018-19.
- In 2025-26, a total of **\$62M** in funding is available through the Canada Health Transfer.
- We anticipate strong recoveries this year through federal transfers, including **\$589K** (\$589,000) for new group home costs and a **\$1M** (\$1,030,000) increase to the Aging with Dignity agreement. We are also seeing the removal of **\$3.4M** (\$3,401,000) in recoveries for the Proof of Vaccination Fund from Canada.

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FTE Summary:

	Health and Social Services FTEs					
Fiscal Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Total FTE Count	1,419.13	1,526.53	1,677.3	1,573.4	1,616.4	1,664.0
Change from Prior Fiscal Year	5.23	107.40	63.50	(103.90)	43.0	47.6

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

- In 2025-26, there are **1,664.0 FTEs** in the Department of Health and Social Services.
- This represents an overall increase of **47.6 FTEs** compared to the 2024-25 Main Estimates.
- 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.
 - In 2023-24, FTE increases were primarily related to the Substance Use Health Emergency response.
 - In 2025-26, FTE increases are driven by improvements to Emergency Medical Services and upstaffing of Continuing Care programs.
- The 19.5 FTE positions funded through the Territorial Health Investment Fund support critical work in health system transformation and the implementation of health human resource initiatives.
 - Of the 19.5 FTEs, 14.5 FTEs are dedicated to health system transformation efforts, including:
 - Three Directors guiding transformation initiatives.

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- Four project support positions and 1 policy position advancing system change.
- 1.5 classification positions in the Public Service Commission and 1 change management position.
- One senior communications position and 1 IT system support position.
- Two finance positions.
- The remaining 5 FTEs focus on health human resource priorities, including:
 - One Senior Policy Advisor to advance the implementation of the Health Human Resource Strategy and support key HHR initiatives
 - A modeller who provides population and healthcare forecasting.
 - A nursing manager supporting internationally educated nurses transition to practice.
 - One practicum coordinator (to be hired) coordinating student placements.
 - An HR project manager leading health workforce marketing efforts.
- These positions support the department's commitment to strengthening the Yukon's health workforce and improving service delivery through strategic investments in workforce planning, system modernization, and recruitment initiatives.

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Insured Health Services growth

- The main estimates provide an increase of **\$47.1M** (\$47,060,000) for Insured Health Services to meet the costs of providing health care to our growing and aging population:
 - \$5.2M in medical travel;
 - \$24.3M in hospital claims; and
 - \$17.5M in physician claims.
- This includes **\$1.2M** (\$1,200,000) to fund medical travel for fertility and surrogacy, to allow Yukoners to grow their families when and how they wish.
- In increase of **\$300K** (\$300,000) is supporting the first phase of new health care cards. These cards launched in February 2025 and provide more secure, inclusive, and convenient service for Yukoners.
- 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.
- The department is seeing increased pressures on Insured Health, including medical travel and offering new and modernized health care cards.

Yukon Hospital Corporation Funding:

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

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- During the 2025-26 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$135.3M** (\$135,341,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M, as well as **\$5.4M** (\$5,350,000) in Capital expenditures for a combined total of **\$140.7M** (\$140,691,000).
 - This budget responds to growth in hospital and surgical services costs and higher costs associated with responding to health human resource challenges.
 - We are continuing to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation on any additional impacts related to their current collective bargaining process.
- Since 2018-19, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Corporation's O&M funding from **\$68.2M** (\$68,198,000) to **\$135.3M** (\$135,340,000), which represents an overall increase of 98.4%.
- In 2024-25, in addition to core funding of **\$122.3M** (\$122,323,000) in core operational funding, we are forecasting to provide an additional **\$7.5M** (\$7,493,000) in contracts and agreements for a total of **\$129.8M** (\$129,816,000) in direct funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- While most funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon Hospital Services O&M and Capital budgets, additional funding is also provided through other channels, such as:
 - Physician payments including for the hospitalist program, specialists, visiting physicians and all other physician services. Total physician payments in 2024-25 are forecasted to total **\$73M**, including services provided in hospital.
 - In 2023-24, the Department of Health and Social Services provided \$16.1M in fee for service payments to physicians for hospital-based services.
 - Patient revenue flow-through payments, forecasted to total **\$5.4M**

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- Partnerships with EMS and other Health and Social Services programs; and
- In-kind administrative and corporate services supports.

Core Funding ('000s)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*	2025/26**
Core Agreement Funding	\$89,992	\$124,076	\$120,843	\$135,340
Supp. 2 2024-25			\$1,480	
TPA and other revenue outside core	\$15,861	\$12,182	\$7,493	TBD
Patient Revenue that flows through HSS	\$4,153	\$3,971	\$5,426	TBD
Total Funding and Revenue via HSS	110,006	140,229	135,242	135,340
YHC Revenue	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26**
Revenue Outside of HSS	2,495	4,167	3,837	TBD
Total YHC Revenue	112,501	144,396	139,079	135,340

*2024-25 based on forecast as of January 2025

**2025-26 ties to Main Estimates

- Since the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the Main and Supplementary budgetary exercises.
- We maintain an ongoing cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as we respond to new or emerging pressures and assess funding needs.
- Over the past year, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve our reporting processes, enabled by the review work completed by external parties in fall 2023.

Family and Children’s Services funding:

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- We are prioritizing the well-being of families and children and providing resources to support the increase in young people who need a safe place to stay when coming under the care of the Director.
- We are providing an increase of **\$1.6M** (\$1,584,000) to support the operation of new and existing group homes.
- There is an allocation of **\$1.2M** (\$1,176,000) to fund a 16.5 per cent increase in the monthly payments provided to caregivers.
- 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

March 28, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Downtown Safety**Health and Social
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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is collaborating with Yukon First Nations governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, City of Whitehorse, Yukon RCMP, local businesses and NGO partners like Connective, Blood Ties Four Directions, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and Safe at Home to advance our Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan.

Key messages:

- In December 2023, the Government of Yukon released the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan, and the document is continuously updated. 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 the approach between accountable partners.
- We continue to have conversations with downtown residents and businesses, non-governmental organizations, Yukon First Nation governments and people with lived experience to help inform current and future actions under the plan.

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Community engagement:

- Representatives from the Government of Yukon have met with residents, business owners, Yukon First Nations governments, NGOs and the 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.
 - 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 2024 with Whitehorse residents and business owners to

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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.
- Safe at Home held a public open house for 408 Alexander in December 2024.

Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan actions:

- As the weather warms, we recognize there may be an increase in the outdoor congregation of people, including in the area around Alexander Street.
- We are taking proactive steps to work across government and with key partners such as Connective and Safe at Home to ensure that we remain responsive to community safety and security needs as we enter the warmer months.
- 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.
 - We are working with NGOs to continue finding new locations for food services.
- We funded modifications to 408 Alexander to support Safe at Home in launching a supportive housing program after their selection through an Expression of Interest process.

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- 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.
- 408 Alexander is a 17-unit building that offers 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 is also provided at 408 Alexander.
- Residents are selected by the Coordinated Housing Access Team from the By Name List.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is providing all operations and maintenance funding.
- We are increasing oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure residents and businesses feel safe and supported.
 - We provided initial 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 essential in our collaborative efforts of enhancing community safety and wellbeing.

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Completed actions:

- Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are working with Safe at Home Society to operate a 17-unit supportive housing program at 408 Alexander Street.
 - The first tenants moved in on December 23, 2024.
 - As of March 2025, all 17 units are occupied.
- The Department of Justice launched a new program to fund crime prevention initiatives for businesses, NGOs and organizations that have been affected by crime.
- The Government of Yukon has signed a commitment letter with City of Whitehorse and the Government of Canada in support of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan for Whitehorse.
- 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 a new Canada Yukon Housing Benefit rent subsidy for people fleeing gender-based violence. (June 2024)
- Established the presence of two Outreach Workers at the Whitehorse Public Library. (April 2024)
- Developed a warming centre at the Jim Smith Building as a pilot. (March to May 2024)
 - The warming centre is now in its second year of service since opening on November 4, 2024.

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- 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 Society as part of the Winter Housing Strategy. (November 2023)
- Hired private security services to support local businesses in proximity to Alexander Street (November 2023 to March 2024) and have since transitioned to more outreach-focused efforts with the Council of Yukon First Nations leading the Moccasin Mobile initiative.
- 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).

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- To account for the initiatives to date and demonstrate our commitment to addressing homelessness, the Yukon government released its Rapid Response to Homelessness report.
 - This report focuses on programs and services deployed from March 2023 to September 2024 to intervene in pathways to homelessness, promote routes out of homelessness and address acute needs.

Upcoming actions:

- The Government of Yukon is partnering with Yukon organizations such as Safe at Home Society, 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 to identify alternate locations for additional culturally safe programming.
- The Department of Justice will be leading the action within the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan on developing a city-wide Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
 - 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 funding 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 hired a SCAN investigator in 2023 and is seeking legislative support for an additional investigator. This will

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increase the 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 departments of Economic Development and Justice.
 - This 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 in fall 2025.
 - 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.
 - 79 units are under construction and include a 45-unit residential building in Whitehorse and a 34-unit residential building in Dawson.
 - 30 rent-geared-to-income housing units are planned for development in Mayo, Teslin, Carcross, Ross River and Haines Junction and are expected to be available in 2029-30.

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407 Alexander

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the safety concerns raised by downtown businesses and residents, and we are committed to continuing the work of the Downtown Safety Response Plan in an inclusive and responsive manner.
- Ensuring the safety and security of residents remains a core priority.
- Along with community partners, First Nations governments, and NGOs, the Yukon government is working to address and improve poverty, homelessness, and services and supports for vulnerable Yukoners.
- In 2024, the Property Management Division at the Department of Highways and Public Works initiated a feasibility study to identify potential future planning options for 407 Alexander Street.
 - The study provides information on development options, concept designs and their estimated costs, demolition costs, zoning bylaws, an environmental site assessment, and existing site and neighbourhood conditions.
- Yukon Housing Corporation recently purchased the property at 407 Alexander, providing an opportunity to further improve community safety and service provision on Alexander Street. The property was purchased by the Yukon Housing Corporation on March 31, 2025, for \$650,000.
- The previous owner of the property stated that they approached Yukon government to discuss selling the property, primarily because they planned to retire.

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- This is an opportunity to help restore community safety and security on Alexander Street while continuing to support vulnerable people.
- The location was chosen based on:
 - Its location near service users,
 - Flexible development options due to CM2 zoning and access to street front and alley entrance and egress, and
 - Relatively low purchase price.
- Through discussions with the departments of Economic Development, Justice, Highways and Public Works, the Yukon Housing Corporation and RCMP and in consideration of the services offered by neighbouring businesses and organizations, the study has identified a mixed-use approach for the eventual development with a focus on housing.
- A Request for Proposal was used to hire a company to complete an appraisal on the property in August 2024. The appraisal was used to determine the purchase price.
- While we are working with an NGO to determine a service delivery plan for this property, we are committed to working with First Nations and all community partners to ensure the property's future use meets the needs of the community.
 - This will be done through targeted conversations with service providers and through planned summer engagements under the Whitehorse Safety and Wellbeing Plan.

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Decentralized services:

Speaking notes:

- Along with community partners, First Nations governments, and NGO's, the Yukon government is working to address and improve poverty, homelessness, and services and supports for vulnerable Yukoners.
- While we remain focused on long-term solutions to decentralizing our supports, we continue to be open to opportunities that address the goal of increased community safety and security for both vulnerable people and local businesses and residents.
- 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, Mary House, BGC Yukon and Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Sally & Sisters Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.
 - Blood Ties Four Directions and the Whitehorse Food Bank offers hampers for individuals and families.
- Yukon Housing Corporation recently purchased the property at 407 Alexander, providing an opportunity to further commit to improving community safety and security on Alexander Street.
 - The transfer of the property takes place March 31, 2025.
- While the Yukon Housing Corporation and Department of Health and Social Services are coordinating to determine options for this property,

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we are committed to working with First Nations governments and all community partners to ensure the property's future use meets the needs of the community.

- We look forward to working with various stakeholders to learn their perspectives on continued improvements to Alexander Street, including the eventual use of 407 Alexander.

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 Community Warming Space:**Speaking notes:**

- The Jim Smith Building Community Warming Space opened November 4, 2024.
 - The warming space has been well received with a range of 110 visits per week to upwards of 229.
- The Community Warming Space is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
- 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 and monthly bus tickets are available.

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- This meets the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement initiative to replace fare-generated revenue for public transit.
- Two onsite Outreach Workers, one being a Social Worker, are 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.

Moccasin Mobile Outreach:

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

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- 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, seven days a week.
- 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 King

April 22, 2025

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 downtown garbage cleanup and other beautification efforts
- Investigate and implement traffic calming measures in strategic locations (for example, controlling the crosswalk on 4th and Alexander St.)
- 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 addressing existing health workforce challenges and preparing for the future through the Health Human Resources strategy.

Key messages:

- Primary care physicians and nurses are the first point of contact for patients and play a critical role in delivering timely, accessible and preventive care. Ensuring they have the necessary resources and support is essential to maintaining a strong and effective health care system.
- By supporting primary care providers with adequate funding, training and team-based care models, we can improve patient outcomes, reduce strain on emergency services and enhance overall system efficiency.
- Sufficient and sustainable health human resources presents one of the greatest challenges facing Canadian health care systems today.
- Domestically and globally, we are responding to 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. The Yukon government and partners released and implemented a comprehensive Health Human Resource Strategy on December 13, 2023, that outlines a road map to address this challenge.

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- 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 Canada.

Key accomplishments at a glance:

- Bringing more professionals to the Yukon: The Yukon has attracted more people into health care positions within both the Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation. Increased success in recruitment efforts has also reduced reliance on agency staff.
- Improved physician coverage: Enhanced recruitment by the Yukon Medical Association has resulted in attracting more locum physicians into the territory to support multiple services such as general practice and in-patient care.
- New educational opportunities: Yukon University is actively developing a Yukon-focused Social Work degree program and a Medical Office Assistant program to address local workforce needs.
- Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse Pathway: The Government of Yukon is supporting two cohorts of students enrolled in the University of New Brunswick's "Learn Where You Live" LPN to RN Pathway program. The first graduates are expected to join the Yukon workforce in 2027.
- Regulatory improvements: New nursing regulations allow the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to register nurses locally, eliminating

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the previous requirement to register in another jurisdiction first. This makes it easier for nurses to come and work in the Yukon.

- Permanent nurse hiring: The Yukon Hospital Corporation has successfully hired several permanent nurses who were previously employed by nursing agencies.
- More Yukoners have a care provider: The Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic, the bilingual Centre de santé Constellation Health Centre and the overall increased workforce has given more Yukoners access to primary care providers in the past year.
- Primary Health Care Nurse vacancy rates dropped from 47 per cent in October 2022 to 19 per cent in 2024.
- The number of people attached to a primary care provider at the Constellation clinic was 2,049 as of December 2024.
- In 2023 and 2024, 24 internationally educated professionals in the Yukon have been recruited as nursing home attendants.
- In 2024, the Yukon Hospital Corporation added 11 internationally educated nurses to their staff. They came from the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and India.

Bursaries:

- A key action in addressing our health human resources challenge is to increase access to education for those seeking careers in health and social services.
- Our government provides funding for the Medical Education Bursary, the Nursing Education Bursary and the Health Professionals Education Bursary programs.

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- The Yukon Health Care and Social Services Bursaries aim to build capacity within the territory to help meet Yukon’s health care and social services human resource needs. The program prioritizes funding for positions that are currently hard to recruit for and that are expected to have shortages in future years.
- From April 1, 2024, to January 2025, a total of 32 Yukoners received bursaries for studies in health care fields:
 - \$75,000 went into 12 medical bursaries;
 - \$57,500 went to 14 students pursuing nursing education, and
 - \$22,500 went to 6 students pursuing other health care and social service professions.
- Options to transfer bursary administration from intake to disbursement to the Department of Education are being pursued to enhance the applicant experience and allow for a one-stop-shop through the Student Financial Services portal.
- A review is underway to modernize the bursary program. The review is expected to include:
 - consolidation of the three bursary policies into one,
 - clarification and general updating of committee and administrative procedures,
 - review of multi-year funding and individual funding categories,
 - options to enhance recipient commitment to work in Yukon, and
 - full consideration of administrative and funding implications to ensure a successful transfer of services to Education in 2026.
- Yukon residents studying medicine or intending to study medicine can apply to other funding programs administered by the Canadian

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Medical Foundation, the Dr. Frank Timmermans Scholarship and the Yukon Native Health Scholarship.

- The Department of Health and Social Services provides continuing education funding through a TPA with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to support RNs and NPs to further develop their careers and expertise. The funding is \$450K over three years.
- The Government of Canada offers a student loan forgiveness program for doctors and nurses who reside in a community with a population of 30,000 or less to entice more medical professionals to rural communities. This is expected to expand to other health professionals in the future.

CASA Commitment

- The Department of Health and Social Services allocated a budget of \$1.9M for human resource strategy in 2024/25, to implement initiatives.
- \$140,000 to the Yukon Medical Association, providing funding for a physician recruiter.
 - The Yukon Medical Association's enhanced physician recruitment for locum physicians has resulted in 32 locum hospitalists being secured since January 2024 and 153 locums being booked to cover leave for physicians in Whitehorse in 2024, a 75 per cent increase over the previous year.
- We have a transfer payment agreement of \$450,000 in place with Yukon University to support their development of a Social Work degree and Medical Office Assistant program. The medical office

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assistant program aims to reduce the administrative burden on physicians and nurses.

- \$134,000 has been allocated for University of New Brunswick LPN-RN bridging program tuition support
 - The University of New Brunswick will see two cohorts of a Yukon “Learn Where You Live” Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse Pathway, which started in September 2024. 17 Yukon LPNs have already started in the first cohort and up to 20 LPNs can be supported in the second cohort, starting in fall 2025.
 - All employers who have students in the program have committed to providing flexible schedules and supporting appropriate leave to the students to be able to attend classes and clinical placements.
- \$280,000 has been allocated for India recruitment and recruitment travel.
 - Officials from the department of Health and Social Services have been meeting regularly and directly with Apollo Hospitals to explore opportunities for recruitment of already educated health professionals and for possible technology support. A framework for these potential partnerships has been developed.
 - The recruitment of Apollo healthcare professionals requires both credential and immigration pathways to be finalized and mentorship and other supports to be in place to ensure successful integration of these recruits.

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- Our primary focus is piloting a recruitment pathway for nurses, initially for positions within the Yukon Hospital Corporation in 2025.
- This program did not spend its budget because the Yukon Nominee Program was unavailable in 2024 and no recruitment could take place.
- \$150,000 for marketing and website development.
 - The department of Health and Social Services partnered with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to develop a central health recruitment website. This new consolidated health and social recruitment website, yukonhealthcareers.ca went live in March 2025.
 - Health and Social Services is running a recruitment-specific marketing campaign with an enhanced look and feel, based on multi-jurisdictional research and beta-testing of various marketing approaches.
 - Testing has concluded that highlighting existing staff and showing what it is like to live and work in the Yukon (and why it is great) is the most effective approach. Engagement with recruitment posts has increased significantly.
 - Health and Social Services has attended many in-person and virtual recruitment events this year, some in combination with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with more planned for 2025. Our jurisdictional scan has shown that recruitment events continue to be a key point of focus.

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- Total spending for this year is forecasted to be approximately \$50K for marketing work, as the website was developed using in-house resources.
- \$94,000 for retention programming, including \$25K for the Tri-Territorial Health & Social Professionals Conference.
- \$84K has been allocated for contracts for retention, workforce engagement and overall planning.
- The remaining \$560K is budgeted for staffing to support the Health Human Resource programs.
 - This includes an implementation director, nursing manager, human resources project manager, policy advisor, modeller and practicum coordinator.

Department of National Defence health services:

- 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 maintain, 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.

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- 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.
- In addition, Yukon also welcomed its first Department of National Defence physician this winter who worked for several weeks providing inpatient care as part of the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Foreign Credential Recognition Program:

- The Government of Yukon has launched the Foreign Credential Recognition Navigation Service. The service is a pilot project that helps Yukon-based internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) by offering them tailored support into the Yukon's health workforce.
- This service includes providing guidance and information for obtaining health credentials, connecting people with service providers and in some cases, providing financial support so people can get the licensing they need.
- To access the Navigation Service, internationally educated health professionals must submit their information to the Department of Economic Development. This will help the navigator learn about the individual's unique situation so that they may provide effective support.

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- This program is a key part of the \$3.6M funding agreement Economic Development has with the Government of Canada on Foreign Credential Recognition for health workers.
- The Yukon Nominee Program will set aside ten nominations for positions in regulated health care profession in 2025. These are not specific to any employer.
- Regulated health care professionals including nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists and dentists as well as others.
- If by October 1, 2025, these nominations have not been utilized, additional invitations to apply will be issued from the Expression of Interest pool.
- These set aside will be for regulated health care professions only.
- The Government of Yukon continues to explore all options to recruit much needed health care professionals. While we do not currently use the Yukon Nominee Program to recruit for government positions, we are working to create a pathway for the government to expand its recruitment options through the program.

Health Human Resources Strategy and Oversight:

- The Yukon Health Human Resources Strategy was launched 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.

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- The strategy is built on five key pillars; Retain, Recruit, Plan, Innovate and Learn. These pillars aim to boost the delivery of quality care and services and attract more health professionals to live and work in the Yukon.
- Within these pillars there are 25 actions to be implemented jointly by the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and our partners on the Health Human Resources Steering Committee.
- The Health Human Resources Steering Committee comprises representatives from Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon University, First Nations, L'Association Franco-yukonnaise (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.
- Yukon Employee's Union and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada issued a press release on October 7, 2024, announcing their withdrawal from the Health Human Resources steering committee.
- We will continue to be in contact with the unions and find ways to contribute to improving the health and social services workforce.

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- The steering committee remains dedicated to finding long-term, sustainable solutions for Yukon's health care system. This work is essential for ensuring the future of health care services in our territory.
- 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.

India internationally educated health professional recruitment:

- Officials from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have been meeting regularly and directly with Apollo Hospitals to explore opportunities for recruitment of already educated health professionals and for possible technology support. A framework for these potential partnerships has been developed.
- The recruitment of Apollo health care professionals requires both credential and immigration pathways to be finalized and mentorship and other supports to be in place to ensure successful integration of these recruits.
- Our primary focus is piloting a recruitment pathway for nurses, initially for positions within the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Internationally educated health professionals:

- Internationally educated health professionals have historically played an important role in the delivery of health care in Canada. We recognize that leveraging their expertise is a priority for all governments across Canada.

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- We are working with regulators and our federal, provincial and territorial partners to discuss pathways to licensing physicians, including internationally educated physicians.
- We have established 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.
- Between January 1, 2023 and January 1, 2025, we have hired 24 internationally educated professionals into Nursing Home Attendant positions.

Letter of Intent with Nova Scotia:

- On July 26, 2023, our government signed a Letter of Intent with the Government of Nova Scotia to work collaboratively on Health Human Resources.
- Nova Scotia has adopted innovative strategies to create new opportunities to address recruitment and retention.

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- 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 developing 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.
- The Nova Scotia-Yukon pathway offers U.S. physicians a faster route to obtain medical licensure.
 - Nova Scotia is the only province that grants full, unrestricted licensure to American Board-Certified Physicians without requiring recognition from the College of Family Physicians Canada or Royal College.
 - There is no requirement for the physician to reside in Nova Scotia or to state an intention to practice there.
 - Physicians must demonstrate eligibility to work in Canada but are otherwise issued a full license without restrictions.
- Once licensed in Nova Scotia, physicians are eligible for licensure in Yukon through the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.
- An operational relationship with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia is established for collaboration, paving the

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way for US-trained physicians to register in NS and subsequently be licensed in the Yukon.

- Community Services works alongside regulators and government officials to manage the process, ensuring that physicians intending to practice in Yukon can navigate registration efficiently.
- 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:

- 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.
 - 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 amendments 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.

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- We recognize that nurses are fundamental to a high-functioning healthcare system.
- 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:

- The Government of Yukon has an agreement with the University of New Brunswick for two cohorts of a Yukon “Learn Where You Live” Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse Pathway who started in September 2024.
- Seventeen Yukon LPNs have started this pathway in the first cohort and up to 20 Licensed Practical Nurses could be supported in the second cohort starting fall 2025.
- Through this pathway the first set of Licensed Practical Nurses 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.
- This program supports existing Yukon Licensed Practical Nurses 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 Canada using technology to support virtual learning.

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- Yukon University is exploring options for a Yukon based nursing degree program while these classes commence.

Yukon University partnerships:

- 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.
- We are working with Yukon University to expand programming to support Yukoners to pursue health-related careers.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has a transfer payment agreement of \$450,000 in place with Yukon University to support their development of a Social Work degree and Medical Office Assistant program.
- Yukon University is exploring options and developing a proposed budget for a partnered Yukon-based nursing degree program.
- The Government of Yukon funds Yukon University to offer a Practical Nurse Diploma.
- Yukon University currently offers, in partnership with the University of Regina, a Bachelor of Social Work degree.
- 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 members are currently preparing for the National Council Licensure Examination this year.

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- 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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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 supported by engagement work to advance Community Health and Wellness Plans and the Yukon Health and Wellness plan, which together will provide an avenue for all Yukoners to have their voices reflected in health system transformation.

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.

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- With the passage of the *Health Authority Act*, we are continuing the process to develop Shāw Kwä'ą. This initiative will take significant engagement, consultation and collaborative effort over several years.
- A transition period is required for Shāw Kwä'ą to be established, including:
 - establishing an initial board,
 - the development of regulations and policies,
 - engagement with staff, unions, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders, and
 - integration of health and social programs and services.
- Both the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation will continue operating and delivering services during this period.
- Over time, the new health authority is envisioned to:
 - improve the health care and social services system with the goal of eliminating systemic racism;
 - 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; and
 - provide meaningful involvement for communities and people with lived experience to inform the development and operation of the health authority;

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- Setting up the health authority is a complex initiative. We are taking the time to do it right.
- In the interim, work to support the development of Community Health and Wellness plans, the Yukon Health and Wellness Plan, and design for Integrated Health Services is advancing.

Key Facts:

- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon First Nations has been working collaboratively to develop an implementation plan.
- Preparatory work will involve engagement with partners and participants across the health system, including First Nation governments, employees, unions, health care providers, non-governmental organizations, and the public.
- Further planning is taking place to recruit and establish an initial board for the summer of 2025 to ensure the orderly and effective transition to a health authority.
- As part of the 2025-26 budget, there are 19.5 FTEs allocated towards supporting Putting People first, health system transformation, the health authority as well as the implementation of the Health Human Resources Strategy.

Community Wellness Planning:**Speaking notes:**

- Community Health and Wellness Planning engagement launched in January 2025 and will proceed for a period of 12 months.

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- 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.
- We have partnered with the Council of Yukon First Nations to support cultural sensitivity and consistent communication with Yukon First Nations throughout this process.
- 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.
- 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.
 - Phase 1 of this initiative will focus on defining wellness and identifying priorities.
 - Phase 2 will involve presenting draft plans for community validation and feedback before finalization.
- 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

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wellness planning that takes into account all of the community assets and needs. They will also inform the Yukon Health and Wellness Plan.

- 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.
- We are developing Community Health and Wellness Plans through community engagement with health and social services providers, non-governmental organizations, First Nation governments, private sector providers, other government partners and members of the public.
- Community Health and Wellness Plans will be owned by the community once complete.

Background:

- In 2025-26, the budget allocation for Community Health and Wellness Plans is **\$766K**.
- 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 care 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:

- The Health Transformation Advisory Committee is working on a cultural safety vision that will inform future strategies and frameworks that will guide the department and the future health authority.
- This work includes engaging with Yukon First Nation governments to prioritize actions and initiatives outlined in Putting People First for implementation, including development of a Cultural Safety Framework.
- Health and Social Services has been investing in embedding cultural safety and humility. Our work to date includes:
 - Encouraging supervisors to support individual and team success in creating culturally safe and welcoming spaces for Yukon First Nation, First Nation, Inuit and Metis people, and people from diverse backgrounds by developing competence in self-awareness and valuing differences.
 - First Nations 101 is a mandatory training course.
 - All branches at Health and Social Services support staff to take other cultural safety training offered on YGLearn.

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- Elder knowledge sharing occurs weekly at the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' Sarah Steele building.
- A Cultural Wellness Consultant position is embedded in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- Continuing Care has a First Nations Services and Relations branch that:
 - offers weekly traditional programming, which could include Traditional Feasts, visits from the Yukon Native Learning Centre, Tea & Bannock Socials, smudging and more.
 - chairs a First Nations advisory committee to seek input on policy, programming and priorities.
- Continuing Care holds Sharing Circles on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.
- 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.
- Community Nursing Staff are required to;
 - Complete FN 101 as part of their professional licensing with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association.
 - San'yas Cultural Safety training is mandatory and covers topics including Colonization in Canada, racism,

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discrimination and taking action to strengthen Indigenous Cultural Safety in relationships, practices and services.

- o Community Nursing also added a Manager of Clinical Infrastructure and First Nations Policy position in 2022. This position works with branch leadership to provide advice and recommendations related to First Nation engagement, reconciliation and relations through service delivery.

Health System Mapping

- As we explore visions for better care and work towards shaping a future integrated health and wellness system for Yukon, we are committed to capturing a wide range of voices and experiences.
- This includes, but is not limited to, gathering the perspectives of the public, Yukon First Nations communities and their governments, rural and urban residents, frontline health care providers and teams.
- By understanding what health and wellness services are provided and needed, we can build a more integrated, fair, and culturally safe health system for everyone in the territory.
- This project supports these recommendations by ensuring decisions about service integration are based on a clear understanding of the current system and the goals for health system transformation.
- Health Innovation Group , an independent consultant, has been hired to support the Health and Wellness Services Mapping and Design project.
- The Health System Design Committee, formed of members from Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon government, and Yukon First

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Nations (current member represents Kwanlin Dün First Nation) is overseeing this project with HTAC to conduct a functional alignment and integration assessment of the health and wellness system across the territory to inform an integrated health care system for the future.

- Through the first half of 2025, the Health Innovation Group will:
 - engage health and wellness providers
 - map and analyze current health and wellness services, and
 - develop draft options and recommendations for service integration, including which services might be offered by Shāw Kwä'ą / Health and Wellness Yukon / Santé et mieux-être Yukon. versus those best provided by the Department of Health and Social Services, private sector, Yukon First Nation governments, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- The Health Innovation Group team brings deep expertise in planning for the future of health care, ensuring that systems are designed to meet population needs, workforce demands, and infrastructure requirements.

Health Transformation Advisory Committee:**Speaking notes:**

- 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

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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.
- 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 prioritizing 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 Chiefs 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*.

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Legislation and Financial Controls:

- 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,
 - The establishment of a competency-based Board of Directors that will also consider diversity, linguistics and residency as assets.
 - 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.
- 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.

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- 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 49.01A(b) of the *Financial Administration Act*.
- This power will also be subject to regulations which will be drafted through the lens of fiscal responsibility and accountability.
- Finally, with regard 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.

Pensions:**Speaking notes:**

- Standing up Shāw Kwä'ą is a long process. We are taking the time to get it right. At this moment we are still developing a health authority work plan, and we do not expect staff transfer to start for several years.
- The transition to a new health authority is not a cost savings or workforce reduction exercise. Our intention is to improve the care

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experience for patients without sacrificing employee working conditions, pay, or benefits.

- Under the Canada Labour Code, successorship rights are in place for all bargaining unit employees. This means that employees who are represented by a union will continue to be represented by a union, and the employees' rights under the collective agreements in force at the time of transfer will continue under the new employer.
- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that all Shāw Kwä'ą employees, whether unionized or non-unionized, have comprehensive benefit plans and pension plans comparable to those in place prior to any transfer to the new employer.
- We are dedicated to preserving a similar level of pension benefits for all employees affected by this transition.
- The Yukon government continues to engage with the affected unions on a pension solution. We are in the early stages of that engagement now.
- The transition will impact two current employers: the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as Shāw Kwä'ą as a future third employer.
- Public servants who do not transfer will continue to be protected by the applicable collective agreement or terms and conditions of employment.
- The Government of Yukon engaged legal and financial consultants to review options. During this review, the Government of Canada informed the Government of Yukon that the Public Service Pension Plan cannot be utilized for Shāw Kwä'ą.

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- We are seeking to further explore the Yukon Hospital Corporation's pension plan as an option for Shāw Kwä'ą.
- The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation use comparable job classification systems, which will help ensure fairness in how positions are evaluated and aligned in the new authority.
- Although a final decision on the pension plan for Shāw Kwä'ą has not yet been made, it will offer a similar level of pension benefit and stability.
- We are working with experts 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 a review of the current pension plans that employees currently participate in.
- Once our analysis is finished, we will share relevant details with key stakeholders to facilitate discussions.
- We will ensure staff are engaged throughout this process and communication will occur as details are worked out. Transparency with employees is a top priority.

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 agreement entitlements, comparable pension benefits, and comparable benefits package. If this results in inequities such

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as different pay for similar work, then those inequities will be addressed at bargaining with the unions representing the employees

- The Hospital pension plan is sponsored by the Hospital and supported by 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.

Staff Transition:

- We understand that staff across the health system 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.
- The transition to the health authority is not a cost savings or workforce reduction exercise. Our commitment is to improve the care experience for patients without sacrificing employee working conditions, pay, or benefits.
- Preserving and matching pay, benefits, and pensions are essential to our transformation goals and this commitment has been communicated to staff.
- This work is in its early stages. We are committed to working with staff and their unions, the health and social services workforce, our health system partners, Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and other professional associations. Engagement has and will continue to 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

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importance of building awareness amongst the workforce and supporting employees through the planning and eventual transition.

Union Engagement:

- 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 have maintained regular communication with the Yukon Employees' Union and will increase the frequency of engagement as necessary.
- 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.
- 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
- We are also committed to 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

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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.

Approved by:

_____ Matt King _____

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

_____ May 1, 2025 _____

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Health System Infrastructure**Health and Social
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Key messages:

- Our health care system is facing challenges, including increased demand for services, the territory's growing and aging population, and the needs of our workforce, all of which are underscored by infrastructure that has had a hard time keeping up.
- The Yukon's population has grown by 25 per cent in the past ten years, far outstripping previous modelling.
- Health and Social Services operates at least 36 specialized buildings and facilities, such as long-term care homes, group homes, clinics, immunization clinics, and health centres.

Bed capacity:

- 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.
- The Department has allocated **\$12.9M** in O&M funding in the 2025-26 main estimates to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address bed capacity pressures.
- Additionally, support has been provided to provide staffing for long-term care optimization at Whistle Bend Place in a two-phased approach with **\$2.3M** (\$2,256,000).

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Completed Projects:

- 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, which opened on November 6, 2024, and the creation of 10 new acute care beds accessible to the Whitehorse General Hospital, 12 long-term care beds this past July 2024 and an additional 6 beds this January 2025 for a net total of 8 new beds.
- We have achieved significant progress thanks to the staff and teams in the health system who provide exceptional care to Yukoners.
- 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.
- In September, we announced an extension of operating room hours to help improve timely access to surgeries.

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- Yukon Hospital Corporation hired a cohort of internationally educated nurses to fill remaining vacancies in Operating Room nursing staff.
- Through the Long-Term Care room optimization project, we were able to 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 in summer 2024.
- In January 2025, six new long-term care rooms at Whistle Bend Place were opened. Staff were hired to accommodate this increase and admission planning is ongoing.
- 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.

Comprehensive Health System Review

- In consultation with the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon Hospital Corporation, we released a Request for Proposal for a comprehensive health infrastructure review. The competition was completed and the contract awarded.
- At present the review is being undertaken by a third party with the intent of completing a preliminary report in May 2025.

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- We are currently in an information gathering and sharing stage.
- 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.
- This review will provide the Government of Yukon with confidence that any decisions taken on health system infrastructure will be based on all available evidence to better meet the needs of Yukoners.

Surgical Services:

- Planning for a new surgical facility has begun with the first budget allocations anticipated with this 2025-26 main estimate.
- 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 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Substance Use Health Emergency**Health and Social
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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with community partners, First Nations and other governments to 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.
- This is a territory-wide challenge that requires a collaborative approach. 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:

- 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 status of these initial actions is listed in Appendix A: Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy table.

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Current data:

- From April 2016 through September 2024, 106 Yukoners have died due to opioids.
- From January 1 to December 31, 2024, there were 16 confirmed drug toxicity deaths.
 - In 2023, there were 23 confirmed substance use related deaths in the Yukon. 20 of these involved opioids.
 - In 2022, there were 25 confirmed substance use related deaths in the Yukon. 20 of these involved opioids.
- From January 1 to September 30, 2024, there were 47 Emergency Department visits to Yukon hospitals for drug poisoning and 1,651 alcohol-related visits.
 - For the same period in 2023, there were 77 drug poisoning visits and 1,569 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 December 31, 2024, Emergency Medical Services responded to 286 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 1,042 alcohol-related calls.
 - In 2023, Emergency Medical Services responded to 327 calls related to suspected drug poisoning and 813 alcohol-related calls.

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Progress on actions:

- 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.
 - The First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, working with both Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation will both implement Planet Youth's evidence-based Icelandic Prevention Model to address various issues affecting youth in their communities including substance use, mental health, social integration and resilience building.
 - In 2025, the pilot project is starting with both groups beginning planning and completing educational modules in collaboration with the Planet Youth team.
- 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.

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- As of December 31, 2024, staff at the Supervised Consumption Site have reversed 109 onsite overdoses 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: an Outreach Support 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'l (Thigh-KEY- anna-tay) and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services created a partnership to promote cultural healing journeys specializing in recovery after care.
 - Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services space is used for Thay K'i Anint'l programming, and their program has grown significantly.
 - Thay K'i Anint'l also provides programming within the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Intensive Treatment Services Program.
- In 2024, 38 of the 44 applications received for the first intake of the Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund were approved by the Council of Yukon First Nations. A total of \$3,740,000 has been allocated to support these projects.
 - Launched in November 2023, the Yukon First Nations Land-based Healing Fund Initiative provides funding to Yukon First

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Nations and Yukon First Nation-led organizations over three years to March 31, 2026.

- In 2025–26, the Department of Justice is funding two permanent 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.
 - We launched Car 867 in October 2022. This Mobile Crisis Response Team pairs trained RMCP officers with nurses to provide real-time assessments of individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems.
- The Department of Justice hired an additional SCAN investigator in 2023 and secured funding for an additional permanent investigator in 2024–25. This will increase the ability to investigate and respond to illicit activity, such as drug trafficking in downtown Whitehorse.
- In January 2022, we increased access to Opioid Treatment Services at 405 Alexander by expanding prescriber coverage to two days per week.
 - We 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. An anti-stigma campaign developed by the Council of First Nations is expected to be launched in early 2025.
- 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 Emergency Medical 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 are supporting 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.
 - 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.

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- Starting January 6, 2025, the outreach van expanded service to seven days a week, from 8pm to 2am.
- 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 to communities outside of Whitehorse is an element of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
 - Work has begun on expanding access to Opioid Agonist Therapy through the Carcross Health Centre. Learnings from this initiative will inform expansion to other rural communities.

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.

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Services

- 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 seeks consensus and viable alternative options on actions but does not have formal decision-making authority.
- Membership of 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; and
 - other community partners, as needed.
- Population and Public Health Evidence and Evaluation has developed a performance measurement framework that will be used to assess implementation.

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- The committee will hold 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.

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

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- The committee also ensures the strategy is coordinated with the federal Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy and several other commitments:
 - Putting People First
 - Territorial Youth Strategy
 - Creating Home: Yukon Housing Corporation Strategic Plan 2023–24 to 2027–28
 - Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan
 - 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 jury recommendations April 2024
 - LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan

Managed Alcohol Program:**Speaking notes:**

- The Managed Alcohol Program is a long-term program geared toward supporting individuals who live with severe and treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder.
- A residential Managed Alcohol Program has been developed and opened in Whitehorse on November 6, 2024.
 - This initiative will help protect one of the Yukon’s most vulnerable populations and will support public health and resource allocation.

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- 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 to the facility included an area for alcohol service that allows participants to approach the service area and be provided with predetermined and measured amounts of alcohol based on individualized care plans.
- The Government of Yukon held an open house on October 15, 2024, for community members and businesses to tour the Managed Alcohol Program space, meet the program team and learn about the program's goals and operations before its official launch.
- Managed alcohol programs typically dispense wine, beer or spirits. Participants of the program will have access to medically approved volumes of alcohol, served under staff supervision.
- A participant has a treatment care plan which includes medically assessed dosage and frequency for alcohol consumption.
- Participant care plans are supported by a Social Worker, Registered Nurses and Prescriber based out of the Referred Care Clinic. Individual autonomy is highly encouraged in the program and participants will be expected to participate in doing their own laundry and make their own breakfast and lunch.
 - Assistance and prompts can and will be provided if required.
- A referral package is being developed that is similar to other Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services programs.

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- The Managed Alcohol Program is supported by an interdisciplinary team. While the structure and composition of the teams may change as we evaluate the program, the current team is dedicated to:
 - intake and assessment;
 - support workers; and
 - medical oversight.
- The program is staffed with trained Support Workers, Nurses, Social Workers and a Supervisor.
- 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 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.

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

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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.

Approved by:

Matt King

March 6, 2025

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 February 25, 2025)
Prevention			
1	Implement Planet Youth in Yukon communities.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, working with both Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation and Selkirk First Nation, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation will each implement Planet Youth’s evidence-based Icelandic Prevention Model. In 2025, the pilot project will start with planning and developing educational modules in collaboration with the Planet Youth team.
2	Continue to support Yukon communities in creating and implementing community health and wellness plans.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with CYFN established. Approval to engage has been provided. Planning underway to initiate pre-engagement meetings in communities starting January 2025.
3	Continue to launch communication and educational campaigns addressing substance use and mental wellness issues.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness and educational campaigns have included Opioid Treatment Services awareness, alcohol medications, 988 outreach support and Rapid Access Counselling. An anti-stigma campaign is expected in early 2025.
Harm reduction			
4	Implement a Managed Alcohol Program.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program launched in November 2024. The Managed Alcohol Program is being offered through a 10-bed residential facility located at 509 Hoge Street in Whitehorse.

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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"> 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.	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Wellness Substance Use and Social Services have 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. In spring 2025 and in collaboration with the Referred Care Clinic, Carcross Health Centre will be supporting clients either through self-referral, opportunistic screening, or referral with suboxone induction and maintenance in community. This program will be assessed and evaluated prior to onboarding further communities.
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 Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund provided \$3,740,000 in funding to Yukon First Nations

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			<p>and Yukon First Nation-led organizations so far in 2024–25.</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"> • Engagement for the expansion of the Sexualized Assault Response Team was completed in December of 2023. An implementation plan is anticipated for 2025. • The Department of Justice has allocated funds from the Canada-Yukon agreement on the National Action Plan to end gender-based violence to: improve transportation for emergency and urgent travel for victims of gender-based violence; establish a coordinated process for addressing high risk intimate partner violence cases; and improve services for child and youth victims of gender-based violence. • 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, which is considered to be a contributing factor in substance use. • The program is administered through Yukon Housing Corporation and will provide more than \$2 million annually to help survivors of gender-

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			<p>based violence to obtain and maintain safe housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<p>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.</p>	<p>a) Complete b) Ongoing</p>	<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: an Outreach Support 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	<p>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.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Senior Community Engagement Specialist will help identify Yukon First Nations who are interested in developing or expanding therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches. The position is currently filled via a Justice staff member and recruitment is ongoing. Existing restorative justice and therapeutic courts' initiatives include addressing impaired driving, substance use treatment, trauma recovery, intimate partner violence prevention programs for men, healing camps at Jackson Lake, the Community Wellness and Domestic

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			<p>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"> • Funding for a Senior Negotiator and a Strategic Policy Advisor has been secured through Community Tripartite Agreements and recruitment is ongoing. These positions will support engagement with First Nations regarding First Nation jurisdiction and authority for enforcement of First Nations laws and related interests. A draft engagement plan and submission are in progress. • Discussions regarding enforcement are occurring with First Nations at Administration of Justice Agreement tables, and a joint Cabinet and Management Board submission is in development.
13	Expand the capacity of the Mobile Crisis Response Team (Car 867).	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car 867 pairs trained RMCP officers with Mental Health Nurses to provide real-time assessment of individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems. Car 867 follows up with calls occurring outside their operational hours if the client provides a phone number or can be located. • 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.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	Complete	<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 Nations 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. • 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:

- As of January 24, 2025, a total of 2,167 individuals have been matched to a **primary care provider** through the find a primary care provider program. There are 4,154 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 11 per cent of the Whitehorse population.
- **Midwifery** has a waitlist of approximately four people per month. As of February 5, 2025, approximately 21 people are on the waitlist with due dates from March to September 2025.

Audiology:

- All clients referred for hearing assessments are triaged and prioritized based on clinical need. As of February 2025, 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.

Continuing Care:

- 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.

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- As of May 1, average wait time for long-term care, after assessment and confirmation of eligibility, is between 20 and 25 days across all levels of care.
- As of May 1, the waitlist has four people awaiting admission to long-term care.

Hospital services:

- 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 eight months with a goal to reduce this to six months.
- The Territory's **Orthopedic program** aims 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 December 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.
- As of March 2025, Annual and High –Risk Screening **Mammograms** are being completed within 12 months with a goal of 12 months. Routine Screening Mammograms are completed within 26 months with the goal of completion every 24 months.
- **MRI** wait times are as follows:

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- Urgent MRI cases aim to be supported within seven days and are completed within one day this target as of March 2025.
 - Semi-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 30 days as possible. As of March 2025, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 45 days.
 - Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 180 days as possible, these are being completed within 105 days as of March 2025.
 - 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:

- **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.
- Withdrawal Management has an average of eight calls per day that result in delayed admissions. When a bed is not immediately available,

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Wait times to access health and social services

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Health and Social Services

individuals are encouraged to call back and are typically admitted within 24 to 48 hours. These calls are often from one individual calling multiple times for a bed until one becomes available.

- There is no wait list for bed availability as Withdrawal Management is a drop-in service. Beds are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, allowing us to keep more beds occupied.
- Once admitted, clients have a seven day stay. This allows some ability to anticipate when beds become available. Because clients can choose to leave at anytime during their stay, people are encouraged to call often as the bed availability can shift very quickly.
- Clients requesting a bed when one is unavailable are provided with support to access appropriate immediate health or social needs.
- Individuals wishing to access Withdrawal Management Services who live outside of Whitehorse can call to reserve a bed before travelling from their home community.
- Youth bed requests or requests from pregnant individuals are never delayed.
- To access **Psychiatric Outreach Program** and **Early Psychosis Intervention Program** services through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services there is approximately a one- to three-week wait time depending on urgency.
- **Community hubs:** As of February 14, 2025;
 - There is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro and Ross River.
 - There is no waitlist for adult referrals in Dawson City, and there is a two-week waitlist for child and youth referrals. Urgent child

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and youth referrals are offered services virtually or provided by Community Counsellors.

- There is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Mayo or Old Crow.
- There is no waitlist for services through the Haines Junction/Carcross Hub for adult, child and youth referrals.
- There is a two-week waitlist for services through the Watson Lake Hub for adult referrals.
- There is a two-week waitlist for child and youth clients in Watson Lake. Urgent child and youth referrals are offered services virtually or provided by Community Counsellors.
- **Rapid Access Counselling** services are available within 72 hours and are accessible in person, online or by phone.

Approved by:

_____ Matt King

_____ May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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 1Health) 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.

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- The department has weekly, quarterly, and sometimes daily, updates to our systems and contracts in place with cybersecurity partners.

Background

- A security system called DriveLock has been implemented to safeguard and manage USB storage devices.
- 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 Shāw Kwä'ą/Santé et mieux-être Yukon/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.
- The department engaged further with physicians in fall of 2023. We are also speaking to Community Nursing, NGOs and First Nations governments.

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Health and Social Services

Incident Reporting:

- The Department of Health and Social Services is working towards the implementation of a client and patient feedback system.
- As of February 2025, we are updating our policy and underlying systems to allow RLDatix to function as an incident reporting and feedback system for the entirety of the department of Health and Social Services.
- We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to align policies and processes wherever possible in anticipation of the implementation of the new Health Authority.
- Ultimately the feedback module of 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 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.

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Digital Health Strategy and Software

Health and Social Services

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- Registration clerks can amend patient information at any time and the data will be maintained on the patient record.
 - 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 print with the patient's legal gender information. 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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Health and Social Services

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 in use 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.

Background:

- Most air ambulance services in Canada operate using similar centralized coordinated dispatch systems.

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- 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 offers virtual health services through telehealth across Yukon communities.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is currently 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.

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:

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Matt King

March 5, 2025

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Emergency Preparedness**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:

- The Department of Health and Social Services released its Emergency Management Plan on January 21, 2025. The plan provides a high-level comprehensive framework for guiding our emergency response, enhancing preparedness, and increasing overall capacity.
- 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:

- 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 one property impacted by this event.
- Old Crow Flooding

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Emergency Preparedness**Health and Social
Services

- 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.
- 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 needing more time to evacuate, 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.

2025 Emergency Events:

- Emergency Support Services is working closely with the Emergency Measures Organization to prepare for the upcoming fire and flood response season.

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- All Yukoners should make plans to be ready for emergencies or disasters. They can learn more information by visiting the emergency preparedness page on Yukon.ca

After Action Reviews:

- After a major Government of Yukon response, an after-action review takes place to review the response and highlight lessons learned.
- We are working to incorporate the lessons learned from these after-action reviews into our program.

Red Cross:

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

Service Outages Response:**Speaking notes:**

- We are aware that the Yukon sometimes experiences network service disruptions and are working to improve our redundancy by progressively installing satellite internet at Health Centres in communities.

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- We have 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 2025.
- 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.

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.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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:

- Our government is committed to improving public health outcomes for all Yukoners by enhancing access to preventative care, addressing health equity, and investing in innovative solutions to meet community needs.
- Recognizing the critical role of health professionals, we are implementing strategic partnerships and recruitment programs, such as the Yukon Health Human Resources Strategy, to ensure a sustainable and skilled workforce to meet the evolving needs of our territory.
- We are actively monitoring and addressing emerging public health concerns, including vaccine-preventable diseases, mental health challenges, and chronic disease management, with data-driven policies and evidence-based solutions.
- Our public health programs are designed in consultation with Yukoners, ensuring that community voices shape policies, programs, and services. We are committed to transparency, accountability, and fostering trust in public health initiatives.

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

Commercial tobacco smoking and vaping cessation programs:**Speaking notes:**

- Quitpath is an evidence-based smoking, vaping (nicotine) and commercial tobacco cessation program that offers free coaching and nicotine replacement therapy

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- The coaching is provided by a Whitehorse-based coach and is personalized, client-centred, strengths-based and culturally relevant
- The nicotine replacement products include up to 24 weeks of nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, spray and inhalers.
- The program also 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 telephone-based 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 short- and medium-term impacts of vaping as well as 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 2022, about one in five 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

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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.

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 have conducted thorough re-testing of drinking water fixtures in every school in the territory, as well as in early learning and childcare centres in Yukon government-owned buildings.
- For the start of the 2024-2025 year, each school had at least one clearly identified potable water source that meets Health Canada's *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*.
- Health Canada's *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* set out the maximum acceptable concentrations of substances in drinking water that may pose a risk to human health.
- Water samples collected from some fixtures in Yukon schools were found to have lead levels that were above the maximum acceptable concentrations. Drinking water fixtures that tested above the lead

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MAC have been identified for mitigation or removal, and this work is already underway

- Drinking water at Yukon schools was tested for lead in 2018 and 2019. These results are available on Yukon.ca. Current and ongoing test results will be shared publicly before the end of February 2025.
- 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, including schools, to ensure it continues to meet Canadian guidelines now and in the future.

Eagle Gold:**Speaking notes:**

- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working with external technical experts 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 was completed in November 2024 and concluded that there were no contaminants of concern detected at 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 focused on surface water that could come into direct contact with humans.

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- 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.
- 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.
- Health and Social Services officials and technical experts are developing a human health-based adaptive management plan that will guide actions to protect human health downstream of the mine site.
- While levels of cyanide, copper and some metals in Haggart Creek are above the water quality threshold, they do not currently pose a significant risk to the 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.
- The Government of Yukon continues to work closely with the Receiver's and the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun's technical teams

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to assess the ongoing and potential impacts to the environment from the heap leach failure.

- Recently, a suspected leak in a pond storing contaminated water on the mine site has led to enhanced monitoring of groundwater and surface water to track environmental impacts.
- Planned discharge of treated water that is not fully compliant with the mine's amended water licence is underway, and is expected to continue until a settling pond is constructed.
- HSS continues to evaluate information as it becomes available to assess potential human health risks.

Background:

- A heap leach failure and slide were reported on June 24, 2024, at the Eagle Gold Mine near 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 in summer 2024.
 - Water samples indicated no concerns for drinking water quality in the regulated system. All tested parameters, including cyanide, met the Guidelines for the Canadian Drinking Water Quality.

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Food and drink safety:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring the health and safety of Yukoners by maintaining high standards of food safety, drinking water safety, and protection of public health. Environmental Health Officers conduct regular inspections of eating establishments to uphold these standards.
- Health inspections are a critical tool in our mandate to prevent foodborne illnesses and ensure that all food service operations comply with the Eating or Drinking Places 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 strives to work 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,

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Environmental Health Officers are empowered to issue closure orders to protect public safety until the issues are fully resolved.

- 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.

Nutrition 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 access to food literacy initiatives in rural communities and support on-going local efforts within the Yukon.
 - This fiscal year, 18 projects have been funded by food literacy grants
 - 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.

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- The Health Promotion Unit also supports school food programs across the territory. \$208,000 was provided during 2024-25 fiscal year for the Yukon Food for Learning Association.

Approved by:

Matt King
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

March 5, 2025
[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Infectious Disease**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, promote healthier decision-making and lifestyles and create environments that support healthier choices.

Key messages:

- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to safeguarding Yukoners by actively monitoring, preventing, and managing infectious diseases. This includes comprehensive surveillance systems, public awareness campaigns and proactive measures to protect public health.
- We work closely with federal, territorial and Indigenous partners, as well as local health care providers, to ensure a coordinated response to infectious disease outbreaks. This includes maintaining a state of readiness with emergency response plans and resources.
- Yukoners have access to essential vaccines and evidence-based treatments to reduce the burden of infectious diseases. We continually adapt our approach based on the latest public health guidance to stay ahead of emerging threats.
- Public health strategies will continue to adapt and improve based on the latest evidence and expert advice to protect and support Yukoners' health.

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Gonorrhoea:

- Gonorrhoea cases have seen a significant increase in the Yukon, with reported infections in 2024 being over six times higher than in 2023.
 - In 2024, there were 128 confirmed cases in Yukon.
- 51 per cent of reported cases in 2024 occurred in men and 49 per cent in women.
- Yukoners have access to free, confidential testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, including gonorrhoea, through community health centres and clinics across the territory.
- The Government of Yukon is enhancing public awareness campaigns to promote safe sexual practices, regular testing, and early treatment. Health professionals are also working to provide tailored support and resources to reduce the spread of gonorrhoea and other STIs.
- A sexually transmitted and blood borne infections response group is being organized through Yukon Communicable Disease Control to address gonorrhoea, syphilis and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections.

Measles:

- On February 23, 2024, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada published a statement on the global increase in Measles.
- 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

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- People with a weakened immune system
- Pregnant people who are not adequately vaccinated against measles.
- Overall, Yukon children have good vaccine coverage.
- As of December 31, 2024, 86 per cent of Yukon children aged two to six years have received their first dose of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Among children aged seven to 11 years, 80 per cent received two doses of the MMR vaccine.
- To have the best protection against measles, two doses of measles containing vaccine (MMVR or MMR) 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 already 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 April 1, 2025, there have been no known cases of measles in Yukon in the last 20 years. While outbreaks have occurred in other parts of Canada, strong vaccination coverage helps protect our communities from this highly contagious disease.
- On February 17, 2025, the Yukon government issued an Information Bulletin regarding possible public exposure to measles at the Vancouver International Airport on February 11, 2025 and on Air Canada Flight 66.

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- Anyone who might be affected by this notice and fits a high-risk group or is unsure of their immunization status should contact their health care provider or YCDC at 867-667-8323 for guidance.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health, Yukon Communicable Disease Control, Yukon Immunization Program, Community Nursing and other partners within the Yukon are working on preparedness activities to ensure we can respond promptly should there be a case of measles in Yukon.

Rapid Antigen tests for COVID-19:**Speaking notes:**

- The Government of Yukon's free distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests for COVID-19 ended on October 27, 2024, as the existing stockpile expired and no new federal supplies are available.
- Self-testing for COVID-19 is no longer recommended. We are now managing COVID-19 like other respiratory illnesses such as Flu or RSV due to high availability of effective vaccines.
 - We recommend that anyone feeling sick, regardless of whether they self-test, stay home until they are no longer symptomatic.
- 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.
- Diagnostic testing for COVID-19 will remain available through the health care system for people who require it for clinical care.
- Yukoners are able to purchase rapid antigen tests at participating pharmacies, though availability may vary by location. Pharmacies may

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determine their stock based on demand and availability from suppliers.

- The decision to discontinue the free distribution of rapid antigen tests 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.

Background:

- The free distribution of rapid antigen tests was part of a federal program that ended on December 31, 2023. The Yukon government distributed the remaining federally provided product, which expired 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.
- Between the beginning of the program and its sunsetting, over 501,042 test kits were 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 rapid antigen tests are not effective as a widespread tool in mitigating community transmission.

Syphilis:**Speaking notes:**

- The Yukon saw increasing rates of syphilis across the territory that peaked in 2022.

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- The infectious syphilis rate has since decreased by about six per cent in 2023, and by over 50 per cent in 2024; however, it remains elevated and above the national rate.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has released 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. There has also been one congenital syphilis case 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;
 - alerting health care providers to treatment guidelines and screening recommendations; and
 - Yukon Communicable Disease Control collaborating with OneYukon and Kwanlin Dün First Nation to launch a Syphilis/HIV Point of Care Test pilot as well as examining other new testing options.
- 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.

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- 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:**Speaking notes:**

- Pertussis, or whooping cough, is on the rise across the country, with cases confirmed in the Yukon in the past two months.
- As of February 12, 2025, Yukon Communicable Disease Control has reported eight lab-confirmed cases in the last 12 months, with the last case detected in November 2024.
 - While most cases have been linked to travel, some have not been connected to a known source, indicating the possibility of community transmission.
- Whooping cough symptoms can range from mild, cold-like symptoms to severe coughing fits, which may require medical attention.
- Yukon has consistently maintained high vaccination rates among school-aged children
- We are closely monitoring the situation and working with communities across the territory.
- 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

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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 spread 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

May 1, 2025

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note

Inter-Community Transportation for Victims of Gender-based Violence

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Recommended response

- The Government of Yukon recognizes that victims of gender-based violence in rural communities may need to travel away from their community to access services or to seek safety from a perpetrator.
- The Government of Yukon has lowered barriers for inter-community transportation for rural victims of sexualized assault, intimate partner violence and anti-2SLGBTQI+ violence, with funding through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.
- Travel assistance for victims of gender-based violence includes support to leave a violent situation or to access time-sensitive clinical, legal or supportive services in another community.

Additional response:

- In addition to offering support through the Victim of Crime Emergency Fund for immediate needs, Victim Services is funding five non-governmental organizations to provide victims with low-barrier travel assistance to seek safety from a perpetrator, access services, and return to their community when they are ready.
- A campaign to increase awareness of these new transportation supports is in progress. Information on how to access support is available on yukon.ca.
- An inventory of transportation services for each community has been shared with service providers. We are also building a roster of on-demand transportation providers for use by agencies delivering travel assistance programs to victims who do not have access to a private vehicle or appropriate public transportation.

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Inter-Community Transportation for Victims of Gender-based Violence

Context:

- Providing safe, reliable and affordable transportation between communities in the Yukon has been recommended in several recent reports, including the What We Heard report on Expansion of SART Services in Rural Communities and the Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ Strategy.
- The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA) also includes a commitment to work with Yukon First Nations, communities and local businesses to develop low-cost transportation options for people travelling throughout the Yukon.

Background:

- Private sector transportation services between Yukon communities are limited. Larger communities outside of Whitehorse have some regular service, but smaller communities have sporadic or no service at all.
- Trauma-informed transportation options for victims of gender-based violence in Yukon communities are even more limited. There are fewer options for confidential, 24/7 support to leave a violent or unsafe situation quickly, or to access important services in a timely way.
- Each victim has access to varying levels of resources. Some may have access to a private vehicle or public transportation, while others do not have access to any means of transportation.
- Each victim also has unique needs. For example, some need access to consistent travel options to attend scheduled meetings with lawyers or medical appointments, while others require immediate transportation to escape the threat of violence and seek safety at a women's shelter or access a Sexualized Assault Evidence Kit at a hospital.
- The department is funding five non-governmental organizations to provide low-barrier travel assistance for victims of gender-based violence: the Council of Yukon First Nations, Queer Yukon, Yukon Women's Transition Home, Dawson Women's Shelter, and Help and Hope for Families.
- In addition to making travel assistance available through non-governmental organizations, the Department of Justice has increased the Victims of Crime

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Inter-Community Transportation for Victims of Gender-based Violence

Emergency Fund by \$10,000 per year until 2027 for emergency travel assistance for victims of crime, through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

- Funding for the Yukon of about \$270,000 per year (until 2026-27) from the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence will be used to address transportation barriers for rural victims of gender-based violence.
- Several recent reports and agreements have recommended providing safe and affordable transportation between Yukon communities, including:
 - The Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, action item three in the Fourth Area of Growth - Community Safety and Wellbeing: Invest in preventing gender-based violence and improving services for victims of crime by expanding services to rural Yukon communities, including transportation to and from communities.
 - Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy action item 2.8: Create safe and affordable transportation and communication options to and between Yukon communities.
 - Putting People First Recommendation 2.9: Working in partnership with First Nations and municipal governments, provide safe and alternative driving services between rural communities and Whitehorse.
 - Aging in Place Action Plan recommended action 3.5: Develop partnerships with First Nations governments and the private sector to increase transportation options within and between communities.
 - CASA 2023 Commitment: Continue to work with Yukon First Nations, communities, and local businesses to develop low-cost transportation options for people travelling throughout the Yukon.

Approved by:

Jeff Simons
A/Deputy Minister, Justice

2025-02-03
Date approved

 Matt King
Deputy Minister, HSS

 February 6, 2025
Date approved

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Vaccinations**Health and Social
Services

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 protect public health.
- Through continued investments in vaccines and preventative treatments we are supporting the health and wellbeing of Yukoners.
- By expanding the role of pharmacists to administer vaccines, we are making immunization more convenient and accessible for Yukoners across the territory.
- Vaccines are easily accessible at various locations, including pharmacies and health centres across the territory.
- Recommendations and information about all publicly funded vaccines can be found online at Yukon Immunization dot ca (yukonimmunization.ca).

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.
 - The clinic offers walk-in vaccination for flu and COVID-19 and appointments for publicly funded vaccines for people aged five and older.

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- 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 health care 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.

Avian Influenza:

- On February 19, 2025, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced the purchase of 500,000 doses of a vaccine to help protect people at higher risk of exposure to the virus.
- This is a precautionary step to safeguard those who may come into contact with infected animals.
- Canada confirmed its first locally acquired human case of avian influenza on November 9, 2024, in a BC teenager. The patient has now recovered.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization has provided initial guidance to help provinces and territories decide if, when and

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how to use the vaccine in a non-pandemic situation as part of Canada's preparedness for avian influenza.

- So far, there is no evidence that the virus spreads easily from person to person in any reported cases worldwide.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization will continue to monitor new information about H5N1 in animals and humans and will update its recommendations as needed.

COVID-19 vaccines:**Speaking notes:**

- 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.
- In September 2024, 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 Vaccination Campaign for Fall 2024 was rolled on October 1.
- Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) no longer recommends a preferential COVID-19 vaccine type, allowing

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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 six 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 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.

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- 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 health care providers about alternative treatments, such as Paxlovid, which helps reduce the severity and duration of COVID-19 illness.

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 January 31, 2025, approximately 15 per cent of the Yukon population has had KP.2 COVID-19 vaccination as the most recent dose and 8 per cent has had an XBB COVID-19 vaccination as their most recent dose. For both KP.2 and XBB, highest coverage is in the 70+ age group
- Between January 1, 2021 and January 31, 2025 a total of 122,714 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the Yukon.

Flu vaccines:**Speaking notes:**

- 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,
 - 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.

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- 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, 2024 and January 31, 2025 a total of 9,491 flu vaccines were administered in the Yukon.
- Between October 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024, a total of 11,454 flu vaccines were administered in the Yukon.
- As of January 31, 2025, the proportion of Yukoners who received a dose of influenza vaccine was 21 per cent in the 2024-2025 respiratory season. This is a drop from 24 per cent during the 2023–2024 respiratory season and 36 per cent during the 2020–2021 respiratory season.

HPV vaccines:**Speaking notes:**

- The Human Papillomavirus (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 December 31, 2024, a total of 44 doses of Imvamune have been administered in the Yukon.
- Imvamune has been used as a pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccine to reduce transmission and prevent serious illness from MPOX.

Vaccine online booking

- The Yukon's online vaccine booking system is run through the Panorama public health information system. Panorama is an integrated public health information system designed for public health professionals.
- The system has been adopted in other Canadian jurisdictions including Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.
- The online vaccine booking system will be unavailable from March 28 to May 25, 2025, due to technical upgrades being undertaken by British Columbia, which manages the system in partnership with Yukon.
- The downtime is necessary to address connectivity issues between the Panorama public health system and the Cambian Online Scheduler. These upgrades will improve the long-term reliability and functionality of the booking system.
- During this period, Whitehorse residents can book flu and COVID-19 vaccine appointments by phone at:
 - Whitehorse Health Centre (NVD Place, Suite 204-4201 4th Ave): 867-332-6754
 - Whitehorse Health Centre (9010 Quartz Road): 867-667-8865

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- Residents in Yukon communities can contact their local health centre.
- Additional immunization information is available at yukonimmunize.ca.
- The government is committed to ensuring continued access to vaccinations and is working closely with partners in British Columbia to resolve these technical challenges as quickly as possible.
- Once completed, these system improvements will ensure a more seamless and efficient booking process for Yukoners in the future.
- Despite this temporary disruption, the government encourages all Yukoners to stay up to date on their vaccinations to protect themselves and their communities.

RSV Immunization:

- 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.
- Between November 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, a total of 711 RSV vaccines were administered in the Yukon.
- This year, the Yukon will transition to a broader RSV program for infants.
 - Under the previous program, only high-risk infants were eligible for RSV antibody treatment.

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- 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.

RSV vaccine for pregnant people

- The Yukon government is committed to protecting the health of our most vulnerable populations.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization provides expert, evidence-based guidance to provinces and territories on how best to deliver vaccines, including recommendations on who should receive them.
- Based on that guidance, the Yukon Immunization Program introduced an RSV vaccine for adults 75+ and those 60+ in long-term care last fall.
- We also transitioned to a broader RSV program for infants.
- 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 purpose of RSV immunization in pregnancy is primarily the protection of the baby. This is essentially achieved by offering this immunization product at birth.
- Our product offering is consistent with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization guidance on the topic.

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- We continue to monitor national guidance closely. Our immunization program will review the data and current recommendations for the immunization of pregnant women for RSV and make changes as necessary.
- Our priority is to ensure a safe, effective and evidence-informed vaccine rollout that protects Yukoners most at risk.

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

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

Approved by:

_____ Matt King _____

_____ May 1, 2025 _____

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Home Care Program**Health and Social
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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 Government of Yukon departments, First Nations governments, health care providers and 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.

Current Data:

- The number of home care clients by community as of January 31, 2025, is as follows:
 - Beaver Creek: 11 clients
 - Burwash Landing: 5 clients
 - Carcross: 19 clients
 - Carmacks: 24 clients
 - Dawson City: 30 clients
 - Destruction Bay: fewer than five clients
 - Faro: 12 clients
 - Haines Junction: 32 clients

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- Keno: fewer than five clients
- Mayo: 26 clients
- Old Crow: 24 clients
- Pelly Crossing: 28 clients
- Ross River: 13 clients
- Teslin: 29 clients
- Watson Lake: 16 clients
- Whitehorse (and surrounding area): 375 clients
- The Yukon Home Care Program has experienced the impacts of the local, national and global shortage of health care providers and unplanned seasonal illness.
- As of February 19, 2025, the total staffing vacancies across the Home Care Program amount to 3.8 FTEs.
 - 3.0 FTE vacancies are in Whitehorse.
 - 0.8 FTE which are vacancies in the regional communities. The 0.8 are two vacant 0.4 permanent home support worker positions which are currently covered by AOC or casual home support workers.
- This is an improvement from July 2024, when the program had a total of 9.7 FTEs vacancies.

Health System Transformation:

- 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

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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 have been reviewed and are informing planning, and implementation, of changes within the Home Care Program. The changes are expected to positively impact client and staff experience by ensuring delivery of efficient and person-centred home care services.

Home Care Services:

- The Yukon Home Care Program provides acute, chronic, palliative, rehabilitation services and respite care through a range of supports including care coordination, home support services, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and social work.
- 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.
 - In Whitehorse, Home Care services include care coordination, social work, home support, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing and access to speech-language pathology.
 - In communities, Home Care services include care coordination, regional home support workers, community-based nursing and regional therapy services (physiotherapy and occupational therapy).
- Home Care services are based on an individual's assessed needs that are determined through an initial intake assessment.

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- Referrals for Home Care services are triaged, prioritizing individuals with the most urgent and complex needs.
- The Yukon Home Care Program aims 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 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 own care and hire providers who can meet their unique cultural and language needs.

National care standards and accreditation:

- The Yukon Home Care Program is an accredited program through Accreditation Canada (2021–2025), having met 100% of national care standards.
- In October 2024, Continuing Care received accreditation with commendation by Accreditation Canada.
 - Accreditation Canada surveyors visited Continuing Care from October 7 to 11, 2024, to assess programs and services.
- Continuing Care programs include Home Care, Community Health Services (Community Day Program), Long-term Care and Palliative Care.

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- This recognition reflects the division’s excellence in exceeding fundamental standards in quality improvement, care delivery and organizational performance.
- Accreditation Canada’s review process evaluates care quality, safety practices, staff training, resident engagement and organizational governance. The Continuing Care Division met over 85 per cent of all high priority criteria and exceeded 90 per cent in required organizational priorities.
- Accreditation Canada’s findings commended the Yukon’s dedication to enhancing the wellbeing of all service recipients through safe and high-standard care. It highlights the division’s dedication to providing Yukoners with care in a way that prioritizes safety, collaboration and meaningful quality of life.
- 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

March 5, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Long-term care**Health and Social
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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:

- We are committed to fulfilling the recommendations in the Aging in Place Action Plan, which was developed to support the Yukon's aging population.
- 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.
- By optimizing existing spaces, the Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation are addressing the growing needs of the Yukon's health care system, enhancing long-term and acute care services.

Key facts:

- In 2025–26, we have budgeted **\$79.4M** towards the ongoing operations of long-term care homes in the Yukon.
- Long-term care homes offer various levels of care and assistance to residents as part of our territory's continuum of care.
- In an ongoing effort to increase and optimize long-term care and acute care capacity in the Yukon, we opened 18 long-term care rooms (eight net new) in Whistle Bend Place and vacated 10 rooms at Thomson Centre, enabling an expansion of 10 additional acute care beds at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

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- Continuing Care has a robust Quality and Safety team that conducts ongoing assessments of all Continuing Care programs to ensure residents' needs are being met.

Accreditation:

- Continuing Care is accredited through Accreditation Canada.
- Long-term care homes, along with Home Care and Quality and Safety offices, were evaluated by surveyors during an Accreditation Canada site visit in October 2024. This resulted in the Continuing Care Division receiving accreditation with commendation.
- The commendation highlights Continuing Care's commitment to quality improvement and its success in meeting the accreditation program's requirements. It reflects Yukon's leadership in long-term care and the territory's commitment to providing meaningful quality of life while delivering high-quality, person-centered, safe care.
- Thanks to the dedication of staff, partners, residents and families, Continuing Care has maintained continuous accreditation and high standards of care since 2008.

Long-term care capacity:

- In the first phase of the Long-Term Care Room Optimization Plan, we were able to simultaneously provide 10 new acute care beds for Whitehorse General Hospital and 12 (net two new) 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.

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- In January 2025, six new long-term care rooms at Whistle Bend Place were opened.
- By optimizing existing spaces, the Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation are addressing the growing needs of the Yukon's health care system, enhancing long-term and acute care services.
- With the growth of an aging population, we are working with Highways and Public Works to explore options for increasing Long-term Care capacity and are actively preparing by developing functional programs and assessing sites for any potential new build.

Long-term care food:**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 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. These include but are not limited to Family and Children's Services group homes, Long-term care homes, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Yukon Hospital programs and through agreements to operate services such as 405 Alexander and the Supervised Consumption Site.
- We will be increasing efforts in the department to purchase locally produced foods for government-run facilities to support local farms and other Yukon food producers and keep money in the territory.

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- From April 1, 2024, to January 6, 2025, long-term care has spent \$5,967.00 on local food procurement.
 - In 2023–24, \$12,968.10 was spent on local food procurement.
 - In 2022–23, \$31,047.92 was spent on local food procurement.
- We are committed to increasing purchases of local foods, and the department is working internally to overcome barriers and integrate this into practice in the future. This requires changes and considerations in food services to better incorporate local supply chains.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working with Highways and Public Works' Supply Services Branch to participate in their Market Place pilot.
- A trial of the feasibility of the pilot to supply the long-term care homes was evaluated based on product cost, texture, nutritional value, convenience and safety of the foods procured.
- With the increase in food prices over the past two years, staying within the budget to feed long-term care residents has been difficult even without the increased costs of buying local.

Traditional foods

- 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

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caribou, moose and bison. These wild game meats are used to make bone broths, soups, chilies, meatballs, shepherd's pies, pasta sauces and many other meals.

- From 2022 to 2024, over 4,000 pounds of wild game was donated.
- The First Nation Services and Relations team caters 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.

Long-term care homes:

- The four long-term care homes in the Yukon are Copper Ridge Place, Thomson Centre and Whistle Bend Place in Whitehorse, and Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson City.
- There are two rooms in Watson Lake Community Hospital that are being used as Alternate Level of Care such as respite care, palliative care, and for those eligible for and awaiting admission to a long-term care home.
 - This has been in support of gathering essential data that forms part of identifying the community's need for long term care services.
- There are 264 permanent long-term care rooms, 24 respite rooms, 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.

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- As of February 17, 2025, there are five Yukoners on the long-term care home wait list, with an additional three clients who have deferred admissions and remain on the wait list.
- As of February 17, 2025, the average wait time for admission to a long-term care home is 30 days from the time the client is advised they are eligible for permanent placement to their admission date.
 - Admissions are prioritized based on pre-determined criteria.
- Long-term care homes accept several methods of rent payment, including cash, cheque, debit and credit card.
 - Credit and debit card pre-authorization forms, and post-dated cheques are options for residents and their families who prefer payments to be withdrawn automatically.

Outbreak and infectious disease management:

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Continuing Care Division and Yukon Communicable Disease Control work closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to respond to any outbreaks in long-term care homes using jointly developed 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 exceptions 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.
- Implementing enhanced cleaning and infection prevention and control measures at initial signs of gastrointestinal or respiratory illness is effective at reducing the incidence of outbreaks.

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.
- An assessment was conducted by Associated Engineering Ltd. for the Department of Highways and Public Works' Property Management

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Division to evaluate the propane system and identify risks and gaps for areas of improvement at Whistle Bend Place.

- Highways and Public Works accepted all the recommendations of the report and is tendering the required work for completion in 2025.
- 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.
- The Department of Highways and Public works has contracted the development of the required environmental emergency plan.
- There has been ongoing support and communication with Whistle Bend Place staff and residents.

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.
- The high standards of care are made possible through an enhanced staffing model, which allows the long-term care homes to maintain

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

- When unfilled nursing shifts bring the staffing levels below 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.
- Recruitment and retention efforts are ongoing with signing bonuses available to long-term care nurses.

Water damage:

- All long-term care homes follow the Canadian Standards Association Z317 standards for assessing and addressing water damage and risk management in a health care facility.
- When required, a local Occupational Hygienist is contracted to provide assessment and analysis in areas of concern.
- To address emergent situations, Continuing Care staff are working with the Department of Highways and Public Works' Facility Management Branch to develop a joint plan to improve responses to future incidents in long-term care homes to ensure the required safety and infection prevention and control standards are met each time.

Copper Ridge Place leak

- On October 4, 2024, an estimated 3,000 litres of water leaked into the ceiling and walls of Copper Ridge Place when a water main connection failed during plumbing work in the upstairs service corridor.

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- The assessment by the Department of Highways and Public Works' Property Management Division and Sifton Range Environmental Consulting found elevated moisture levels and no immediate risks to residents and staff. Resident rooms and common areas were not directly affected.
- Significant planning, including development of an Exposure Control Plan for Remediation of Moisture Impacted Building Materials, and an alternate fire plan approved by the Whitehorse Fire Department have been completed, and a project manager has been retained.
- Remediation work began on January 16, 2025. Two of the five phases are complete. No mould has been identified, and the remediation is progressing quickly.
- While the work is ongoing, services will continue to be provided to residents by staff in a safe living and working environment.
- The Government of Yukon's Risk Management Office has been engaged and is working with the contracted plumber's insurance company.
- Letters were sent to residents and their families on October 4 to inform them of the leak and again on October 11 and January 10 to provide updates.

Thomson Centre roof leak

- In December 2024, water leaks were identified in two rooms and in the dining area.
 - The two resident rooms have been closed, including one that was occupied. The resident has been moved to a different long-term care home.

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- Moisture remediation efforts were initiated, and the two affected rooms were sealed off in accordance with a safety plan that complies with the national CSA standards.
- The Infection Prevention and Control plan developed with Yukon Hospital Corporation was finalized January 24, 2025.
- Continuing Care Occupational Health and Safety and Infection Prevention and Control leadership continues to work closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation Facility Management team to ensure that the common living spaces of Thomson Centre remain safe and accessible to residents, visitors and staff.
- Leaks in these areas occur regularly and are related to the roof design and snow accumulation on the roof combined with temperatures above zero degrees Celsius. Discussions with the Yukon Hospital Corporation may result in the rooms being repurposed to office or storage space to the ongoing occupancy disruptions.

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 the residents of Watson Lake providing 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

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work between Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation.

- The steering committee will provide 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. A Community Wellness Coordinator from the Health Systems Strategy and Implementation team has recently joined to ensure efforts are streamlined as Community Wellness Plans' engagement work begins.
 - 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.
- On March 12, 2025 the Aging in Community Working Group met with the Aging in Community Steering Committee to provide ideas for some next steps that can be taken in the community to better document the community's needs along with community resources and gaps in resources to meet the needs.
- Some local activities have already begun as a result of the working group meeting including a local walking group that has been started.
- Current action item – the Watson Lake physicians and Home Care program in Watson Lake will consider using the Canadian Frailty Scale as a standardized tool to document the number of Seniors and Elders who are living with mild, moderate, or severe frailty.

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- Classifying overall needs with the Canadian Frailty Scale can assist in knowing the types of supports needed for people to age well and longer in their home community.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation supports patients who require an Alternative Level of Care such as respite care, palliative care, or those eligible for and awaiting admission to a long-term care home. These patients may be cared for in the hospital environment for an extended period of time.
- Since April 2024, up to two rooms at the Watson Lake Community Hospital have been designated to support patients who require an Alternative Level of Care.
 - Between April 2024 and February 3, 2025, the rooms have been occupied for 141 patient days.
 - 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 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

April 22, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Palliative Care**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners life-limiting illness, those who are approaching end-of-life, family members and caregivers.

Key messages:

- The Palliative Care Program's approach is to provide comfort and dignity, aiming to improve quality of life for individuals and their loved ones.
- Our government is committed to providing palliative care and services where Yukoners feel supported, such as in their own home, hospitals, long-term care homes and the Wind River Hospice House in Whitehorse.
- The Palliative Care Resource Team helps with navigating the health system, and supports care providers with education, evidence-based information, assessment tools, and clinical advice.
- Our government is committed to culturally safe and responsive programming that recognizes cultural and traditional practices and supports spiritual wellbeing for Indigenous clients.

Palliative Care at Home:

- The Palliative Care Resource Team is located 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;

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- 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.

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD):

- The Yukon has had an active Yukon MAiD Advisory Committee since March 2020.
- On March 17, 2021, changes to Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying law eliminated the requirement of a reasonably foreseeable natural death.
- On February 1, 2024, the federal government announced that they will be delaying the expansion of MAiD to people experiencing mental illness as a sole underlying condition until March 17, 2027.
- The delay was in response to concerns about whether Canada has enough trained practitioners, including psychiatrists, to assess patients and about the capacity in providing mental health and other supports for those with mental illnesses.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, through its MAiD Advisory Committee, is ensuring that assisted dying services are available in the Yukon by having updated policies, practices, training and safeguards in place.
- Our government is working with providers, regulatory bodies and the federal government to ensure we can continue to meet our legal responsibility to provide access to these services.

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- As MAiD continues to evolve, we remain committed to keeping all Yukoners informed on the implementation, safeguards and alternatives to assisted dying.
- The MAiD Advisory Committee has included Yukoners with lived experience, representatives from Health and Social Services, Justice, Community Services, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Medical Council, Yukon Registered Nurses' Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, Palliative Care Physicians, Physicians who provide MAiD and a Psychiatrist.

Wind River Hospice House:

- The Wind River Hospice House provides 24/7 end-of-life care to Yukoners in a home-like setting.
- 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.
- Palliative care is provided across all levels of care in the long-term care homes, which supports people to die surrounded by the co-residents they have come to know and the familiar staff who care for them. The 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.
- The Wind River Hospice House community hospice program is designed and staffed to support up to six rooms for stays

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approximately three months or less and two rooms for short respite stays of two to four weeks.

- Wind River Hospice House fees are \$40 per day.
- The Wind River Hospice House offers the same dignified farewell for deceased clients as it does for residents of long-term care:
 - A procession to the main entrance, utilizing the dignity quilt or honouring blanket, allows clients, families, and staff to pay their respects and bid a respectful farewell as the deceased departs the care home for the final time.
- In July 2024, Wind River Hospice House was moved within Whistle Bend Place from a physical space of 18 rooms in House 3 to a smaller space in House 1. This occurred as part of a system-wide plan to increase acute and long-term care capacity by optimizing use of existing infrastructure that created space for 10 acute care beds at the Whitehorse General Hospital and 8 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 they became available.
 - Clients and residents who were directly impacted by the relocations were provided with more details during individual discussions with staff.

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- 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.
 - Two portable overhead track lifts have been purchased to be installed in two rooms. Floor lifts are also available as needed.
- 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.
- Renovations and upgrades in progress:
 - Privacy curtains have been installed in the tub room.
 - Privacy curtains and the ceiling tracks have been purchased. They will be installed in collaboration with clients based on their wishes for additional privacy.
 - Ordered one new portable ceiling track lift and transferred an additional portable ceiling track lift from the Thomson Centre to the Wind River Hospice House.
 - Health care setting-appropriate noise reduction tiles have been installed to further reduce noise from offices and common spaces.

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- Some of the art collection from House 3 has been transferred to House 1.
- The courtyard fence has been shortened to create a more home-like outdoor space.
- Vent covers for client rooms have been changed to support client comfort by diffusing the air flowing from the building's air handling unit.
- Planning is underway for increasing accessibility to the courtyard by adding an automatic door opener.
- The department anticipates that most of these upgrades can be completed through capital funding associated with the initiative to increase health system capacity.
- Accreditation Canada visited Wind River Hospice House in October 2024. 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.

Approved by:

Matt King

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

February 27, 2025

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Services for Seniors**Health and Social
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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 serve as a primary source of our commitment.
- We are dedicated to making sure every Yukoner—no matter their age, income, or ability—has the support they need to live safely, independently, and comfortably in their home and community for as long as possible.
 - This includes working with others and their loved ones to offer person-centred care and find appropriate solutions so Yukoners are supported to remain in their homes and communities.
- As we move forward, we are strengthening the programs and services that support Yukoners—working alongside our partners and ensuring our efforts align with key recommendations, including 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 the implementation of the Aging in Place Action Plan.
 - The committee will be chaired by the Department of Health and Social Services' Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Services.
- 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 to include representatives from Yukon First Nations governments, Association of Yukon Communities, Government of Yukon, non-governmental organizations, Seniors and Elders, members with rural Yukon experience and members from the French-speaking community.

Aging with Dignity Funding Agreement:

- The Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement between Canada and provinces/territories was finalized in 2023–24 to support the shared priority of helping people in Canada age with dignity close to home, with access to home care or care in a safe long-term care facility.
- This agreement advances shared priorities, applies standards of care in long-term care facilities, and supports workforce stability, including workplace condition improvements.

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-
- Proposed amendments in 2024–25 account for additional federal funding to support other recruitment and retention measures for Personal Support Workers.
 - The Canada-Yukon Aging with Dignity funding agreement for fiscal years 2023–2024 to 2028–2029 provides an estimated total of \$12M (\$11,970,000) in financial support over five years, from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2029.
 - The agreement will support Home 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 within the territory.
 - The Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement between Canada and Yukon is meant to:
 - improve access to Home Care through the remaining 2017 federal budget commitment;
 - apply standards of care in Long-term Care facilities and help support workforce stability, including wage top-ups and improvements to workplace conditions with funds from the federal 2021 budget; and
 - continue to build and enhance health care systems to improve access to home and community care services, and to support workforce improvements for long-term care to keep clients and residents safe and to improve their quality of life.

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- 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; and
 - the importance of supporting health data infrastructure, data collection and public reporting, and commits to continued collaboration 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 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.
- 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;

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- 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. This committee developed the National Dementia Strategy.
- We work with partners, such as the Alzheimer Society of Canada, to support dementia awareness, stigma reduction and prevention.
- We partner with the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia to offer phone and online resources.
 - This includes the First Link Yukon Dementia Helpline to support people and their caregivers on their journey with dementia.
- The Alzheimer Society of British Columbia offered four in-person dementia education sessions in Whitehorse in August 2024. Additional in-person sessions were held in January 2025, one in Whitehorse and one in Teslin. They also promoted public awareness of dementia at the Haines Junction Health Fair.
- We received funding in 2023–24 from the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop Yukon-specific online dementia care resources with one-year term funding for a dedicated staff position, engagement activities and advertising.

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- 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 include:
 - the Behavioural Care Resource Team, which is a mobile interdisciplinary team composed of nursing and allied health professionals. It supports Yukoners living with dementia, their caregivers and health care providers;
 - 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
 - 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 an existing courtyard at Whistle Bend Place to make the outdoor space more accessible with handrails, accessible pathways and materials, raised garden beds and functional seating areas that support high quality care and improved quality of life for residents living with dementia.

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- 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:

- The projected population for Yukoners aged 65 and over is expected to nearly double over the next 20 years – from 6,671 in 2023 to 12,240 in 2040.
- Seniors are projected to account for 49 per cent of the Yukon's population growth by 2040.
- By 2045, the population ages 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 require access to long-term care services in the coming years.
- Generally, older adults require more frequent and complex medical services, resulting in higher healthcare costs per capita.
- According to the Canadian Institute of Health Information, the average health care cost per person in Canada is \$9,054, while the Yukon's is \$17,760. When looking at the average healthcare cost in Canada for people aged 65+, this increases to \$14,042. Applying the same increase in variance to the Yukon's population aged 65+ would be \$27,544.

Meals on Wheels:

- The Meals on Wheels program provides food to individuals to ensure their nutritional needs are met. The program provides regular

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connection with individuals who may be experiencing social isolation, cognitive changes, or physical and health limitations that affect their access to nutritious food.

- Frozen meals are available to clients living in Whitehorse, or within a two-hour travel time from Whitehorse, as well as in Dawson City and those living within a two-hour travel time from Dawson City.
- Meals on Wheels provides clients with up to seven 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 Alexander McDonald Lodge food services budgets.

Background:

- Meals can be delivered to clients or picked up at either Whistle Bend Place in Whitehorse or Alexander McDonald Lodge in Dawson City.
- In Whitehorse and the surrounding area, clients pay \$3.00 per meal (actual per meal costs are over \$7.00). In Dawson City and the surrounding area, clients pay \$2.50 per meal.

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- To receive Meals on Wheels, referrals may come from health care professionals including Physicians, Home Care staff, Community Nurse Practitioners, Social Workers, or the Assessment and Admission Coordinator at Home Care.
- 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 Alexander 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 providing 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 ages 55 and over in Haines Junction.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$38.6K** (\$38,646) to provide handywork services, recreational and health activities and

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transportation such as monthly lunches/dinners with some partnered with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Elder Care, exercise classes, educational classes (e.g. computer basics), art classes, foot care, and monthly bus trip to Whitehorse to pick up prescriptions and other errands.

- Signpost Seniors Association:
 - Offers a drop-in centre for Yukoners ages 55 and over 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, foot care and exercise classes.
- The Association franco-yukonnaise (L'AFY) :
 - Supports and promotes independence of Seniors and Elders 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 wellbeing, quality of life and involvement in our community.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$72.8K** (\$72,750) for a Volunteer Coordinator to oversee a French language Nav-CARE program that helps Yukoners with declining health live at home longer. It pairs people with trained volunteers who provide support. Additionally, funding is supporting the SERVIS network, a Mutual Assistance Network for Francophone Seniors in Yukon

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that will forge links within the Franco-Yukon community, promote French and support people in situations of vulnerability.

- Golden Age Society:
 - For Yukoners ages 55 and over.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$16.3K** (\$16,330) specifically to provide a foot care clinic that includes individualized assessment and treatment by a foot care professional, diabetic foot care, and education and advice on foot health.
- Yukon Council on Aging:
 - For Yukoners ages 55 and over to thrive as they age in place.
 - Funding for 2024–25 is **\$76.3K** (\$76,289) to operate the Seniors Information Centre, provide up-to-date information to 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... The Yukon Seniors’ Guide to Programs and Services” and update/maintain website information.
 - Yukon Council on Aging also provides the Learning for Life program which makes relevant information and educational sessions available throughout the year on topics relevant or of interest to older adults.

Approved by:

Matt King

March 28, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**Health and Social
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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services provides 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 and increased sign-up from current active responders.
- EMS works in collaboration with Community Health Centres to ensure seamless services for rural Yukoners.
- Yukon EMS is a data driven organization that is constantly seeking avenues for improved service delivery beyond what is already provided.
- Yukon's Emergency Medical Services is facing increasing pressure as our population grows and ages. Call volumes have risen significantly and we are seeing more demand for emergency services than ever before.
 - Emergency Medical Services call volumes have increased from 8,434 in 2019 to 14,907 in the 2024 calendar year. This is a 77 per cent increase in call volume over the last five years.
 - Labour hours have also increased by 11 per cent between 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, reflecting the additional demand for emergency services.

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- Until now, we've been managing these pressures through overtime and auxiliary on-call staffing, but that is not a sustainable long-term solution.
- The additional Emergency Medical Services positions in the second Supplementary Estimates were necessary to address these increasing demands.
- These positions help stabilize the system and ensure timely emergency response for Yukoners and support Community Health Centers during times of reduced nursing staff.
- We have built \$1.975M into EMS's 2025-26 Main Estimates for EMS upstaffing and to address increasing services demands.
 - This includes 24-hour ground ambulance coverage and 12-hour air ambulance service. This reflects an estimated 11 per cent increase in EMS hours worked year over year, ensuring enhanced emergency response capacity.
- In the 2025-26 Main estimates we have requested an additional **\$420K** to support the increase to community responder honoraria rate of pay announced in January 2024.
 - In 2024-25 we also provided **\$420K** (\$420,000) in increased honoraria.
- The Mains Estimates reflect year-over-year changes from the previous Main Estimates, while Supplementary Estimates address in-year needs.

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- The difference in numbers between the two is due to AOC staffing, which fluctuates based on operational requirements.
- In the 2025-26 budget, we are investing \$1.975 million to support EMS upstaffing and meet growing service demands, including upstaffing of 24-hour ground ambulance coverage and 12-hour air ambulance service.
- We have introduced a float team to provide flexible support where needed, helping to maintain safe staffing levels, especially in rural and remote communities.
- This team also supports Community Nursing to ensure consistent and reliable care.

Air Ambulance Contract:

- 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 was publicly tendered in February 2025, 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 to ensure the space could be used for air ambulance service. The functional program confirmed the ability of the space to meet operational requirements for air ambulance services.

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Ambulances:

- In 2025-26, we have budgeted **\$706K** to procure new ambulances.
- These new ambulances will be introduced into the fleet and deployed based on clinical and operational requirements.
- All EMS ambulances are fully operational.
- EMS maintains a fleet of 30 ground ambulances and one mobile training unit. The fleet is in a state of readiness at all times.
- Ambulances are deployed throughout Emergency Medical Services stations territory wide. They are moved routinely throughout the territory, based on capacity and need.

Backcountry Emergency Response:

- 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 and the provision of medical assistance.
- To access emergency services in the backcountry, call 911 or 867-668-9911 by satellite phone.

Coverage and Staffing

- There are 80.8 FTEs and 128 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 ground and air transport for patients in communities who require care in a hospital.

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- Emergency Medical Services continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all communities.
- Yukon EMS has been supporting services with a Float Medics program out of Whitehorse since the start of 2024 to augment local community gaps.
- Community Responders are provided non-operational pay of \$19.08/hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area. This includes an offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books and accommodation.
- Emergency Medical Services provides operational pay ranging from \$21.20 to \$30.74 and \$35.02 to \$55.14 depending on scope of service.
- Community Responders receive honoraria for their commitment to deliver emergency medical services, provide on-call services, training, and all operational deployment.
- We have increased the on-call honorarium from \$3.71 to \$7.70 per hour.
- In addition to this funding, Community Responders, on acquiring a training level certification, receive a retention bonus of between \$288 up to \$1,000 based on the scope and 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. For 2024, coverage was on average 70 per cent across the communities with the exception of Marsh Lake and Eagle Plains.

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- Marsh Lake is supported by two EMS Stations: in-community and Whitehorse operations.
- Tagish is supported by Carcross and Whitehorse operations
- Dawson and Watson Lake are not included in this percentage calculation as they have a hybrid model with both full-time employees and community responders enabling 98-99 per cent coverage.

Community	November	December	January
Beaver Creek	90%	93%	100%
Carcross	15%	25%	49%
Carmacks	100%	90%	99%
Destruction Bay	100%	100%	100%
Faro	78%	100%	100%
Haines Junction	91%	99%	99%
Mayo	82%	100%	95%
Pelly Crossing	81%	98%	100%
Ross River	84%	100%	100%
Tagish	43%	70%	39%
Teslin	75%	99%	100%
Dawson City	13%	99%	97%

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Community	November	December	January
Watson lake	18%	98%	99%

- As of January 2025, EMS coverage is supported by the following number of responders in each community:
 - Beaver Creek – six community responders,
 - Carcross – 12 community responders,
 - Carmacks – 17 community responders,
 - Dawson City – eight community responders, two full-time and four AOC employees,
 - Destruction Bay – 10 community responders,
 - Faro – eight community responders,
 - Haines Junction – 16 community responders,
 - Marsh Lake – 10 community responders, 1 on-boarding (Supported by Whitehorse).
 - Mayo – seven community responders and one on-boarding.
 - Pelly Crossing – eight community responders.
 - Ross River – seven community responders
 - Tagish – four community responders (Supported by Carcross, Whitehorse and Marsh Lake),
 - Teslin – 11 community responders
 - Watson Lake – five community responders, three full-time plus one full-time term three AOC employees, one on-boarding
 - Whitehorse – 22 full-time, three part-time, 14 AOC and six casual employees.

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- There are 4.5 FTE Paramedics, including two mobile Paramedic specialists at 405 Alexander.
- As of January 2025, there are 25 staff supporting the air ambulance program. This includes 12 FTEs, eight term positions, one FTE float and six AOC personnel.

EMS Community Coverage

- Yukon Emergency Medical Services is committed to delivering timely, high-quality care to residents in every corner of the territory.
- Emergency Medical Services continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all communities.
- As of January 2025, Haines Junction is supported by 16 community responders.
- Primary Care Paramedic coverage is scheduled for Haines Junction for the weekend of May 9 through 12.
- Yukon EMS has been supporting services with a Float Medics program out of Whitehorse since the start of 2024 to augment local community gaps.
- In cases where Community Health Centres are not fully staffed, Primary Care Paramedics work alongside local volunteer community responders to provide emergency care.
 - In communities with health centres, Registered Nurses also work with community responders to support patient care.

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- Anyone organizing an event in a community is encouraged to notify Community Nursing and Yukon EMS ahead of time to ensure coverage is available during the event.
- Ambulances are deployed strategically from EMS stations across the Yukon and may be repositioned as needed to respond to capacity demands and emergency needs in communities.
- Paramedics enhance the level of care available and help ensure patients are transported safely to the nearest available health care facility when a nurse is not available in the community.
- The department continues to monitor service volumes and community needs across the territory to ensure Yukoners receive consistent and reliable emergency medical support.
- Emergency Medical Services works with Alkan Air to safely provide Air Ambulance coverage when there is a request for service.
- The Yukon EMS Deployment Plan guides decisions by the Emergency Response Communication Officers and their decisions are supported by Commander Technical Operations or a Duty Chief.

EMS in Ross River:

- Ross River currently has one dedicated ambulance to respond to emergency service requests.
- In 2024, Ross River recorded a total of 110 emergency calls.
 - 60 of those calls were initiated by ground Registered Nurse.

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- 18 were dispatched directly through the Emergency Response Communications Centre.
- 32 involved Air Ambulance support for more urgent or complex medical needs.
- As of January 2025, EMS coverage in Ross River is supported by a team of seven trained community responders.
- The department continues to monitor service volumes and community needs in Ross River and across the territory to ensure Yukoners receive consistent and reliable emergency medical support.
- Emergency Medical Services works with Alkan Air to safely provide Air Ambulance coverage when there is a request for service.
- The decision rests with the Pilot in Command if the call is safe to accept. This might mean that EMS will land at another aerodrome and be transported by Land Ambulance to the health centre to facilitate patient care and transport back to the aerodrome where the aircraft is located.

EMS in Old Crow:

- EMS does not have full-time operations in Old Crow. Residents are encouraged to seek medical support from the Health Centre as needed. In case of emergency, call 911.
- EMS responds in Old Crow via Air Ambulance request.
 - Response time is approximately 2 hours.

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Health and Social Services

- As of February 10, 2025, EMS has had zero calls requiring response from the community in the 2025 calendar year.

Ground Ambulance

- Emergency Medical Services maintains a fleet of 30 ground ambulances and one mobile training unit. The fleet is in a state of readiness at all times.
- Ambulances are deployed throughout Emergency Medical Services stations territory wide. They are moved routinely throughout the territory, based on capacity and need.
- In Whitehorse, EMS operates:
 - Six ground ambulances available 24/7
 - One air ambulance available 24/7
 - Two additional air ambulances available during peak times
- In Watson Lake, Haines Junction, and Dawson City:
 - Each community has one ambulance in service, with an additional spare ambulance available when needed.
- The fifteen communities in the table below, except Old Crow, each have one ambulance to respond to emergency requests.
- There are an additional four ground ambulances used for training and during rush hours.
- This distribution ensures that communities across the Yukon have access to emergency medical transportation when needed.
- Community operation call volumes in 2024 were:

Community	Total
Ross River	78
Faro	43

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Teslin	15
Marsh Lake	31
Carmacks	91
Carcross	94
Destruction Bay	10
Pelly Crossing	32
Mayo	52
Beaver Creek	5
Haines Junction	67
Watson Lake	578
Dawson City	253
Old Crow	NA
Tagish	20

Quality Improvement and Innovation:

- The Paramedic Response Unit works in collaboration with Paramedic Specialists at 405 Alexander Street.
- In 2024, the Paramedic Response Unit attended 375 requests for service and mitigated 79 percent of instances of possible transport to the emergency department.
- 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, allowing resources to be used more effectively.

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- 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 (MTPS) platform, which allows for a systems-based approach and standardized, consistent and trackable response providing avenues for data-driven service delivery.

Training:

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

Approved by:	
_____ Matt King	_____ May 1, 2025
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Health Professionals**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Department of Health and Social Services is accelerating efforts to recruit and retain health care professionals through our Health Human Resources strategy.

Key messages:

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

Allied Health Professionals

- Allied health professionals are essential members of our health care 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 implementing the 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.
- Audiologists receive a \$3,000 annual retention allowance.

Nursing Home Attendants Pay

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the important work done by all health care providers, including but not limited to, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Nursing Home Attendants.
- The wages for Nursing Home Attendants in the Yukon are among the highest in the country. The Government of Yukon deeply values the critical role Nursing Home Attendants play in providing high-quality, person-centred care and this higher pay reflects that.
- Nursing Home Attendants contribute significantly to infection prevention and control, as well as resident safety, satisfaction and overall well-being. Their work is fundamental to the success of Yukon's Long-Term Care homes, and we are committed to supporting them.

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- As of February 2025, 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 all staff play and boost workplace morale by fostering a culture of appreciation and respect.
 - 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 health care system are heard and respected.

Dental Hygienists:

- Yukon dental hygienists are regulated under the *Dental Professions Act*.
- The *Dental Professions Act* was updated in fall 2017 to expand the scope for dental hygienists, allowing them to more fully utilize their training and qualifications within dental offices and in providing services to Yukon's Children's Dental Program.
- Under the amended Act, dental hygienists 'may provide basic services with a view to the examination of the patient by a dentist prior to a

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patient being examined by a dentist and may deliver additional services as directed by a dentist.’ This enables hygienists to play a more active role in supporting dental care in Yukon.

- The Government of Yukon is currently working on updates to the *Health Professions Act*. As part of this modernization, we will evaluate the scope of practice for dental hygienists, considering current educational standards, training, licensing classes, qualifications and practice standards.
- Dental hygienists will be actively consulted during the review process to ensure the updated Act aligns with the needs of both practitioners and the public.

Health Professions Act:

- The Yukon’s *Health Professions Act* regulates health care service professionals. This helps protect Yukoners by ensuring health professionals are competent and safe to practice, as well as providing clear processes for dealing with complaints and disciplinary issues.
- The intent of the Yukon *Health Professions Act* is to ensure that the regulation of health professions remains current and adaptable, aligning with best practices across Canada to protect public safety and promote high standards of care.
- The current *Health Professions Act* was written in 2003 as umbrella legislation with only four professions regulated under it. The current legislation has not kept pace with evolving standards across Canada.
- The Government of Yukon is s working on reviewing and modernizing the *Health Professions Act* to be consistent with practices across

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Canada, which may include bringing all regulated health professions under this Act.

- The Government of Yukon is conducting engagement with key stakeholders to revise the *Health Professions Act* and enhance the regulation of health care professions.
- The engagement is an opportunity to gather input from the public and health professionals in the Yukon on how the government can create consistent, efficient and flexible legislation that will make it possible for the territory to stay current with regulatory standards across Canada.
- Once the act is updated, the government will develop regulations under this legislation to support different professions including those that are currently regulated and others that are not regulated.

Psychologist Regulation:

- Our government is committed to ensuring Yukoners have better access to high-quality mental health care. The new regulation for psychologists under the *Health Professions Act* is an important step in strengthening mental wellness supports in the territory.
- Psychologists play a vital role in our health care system by providing essential mental health services. This regulation ensures they meet professional standards, enhancing the quality and reliability of psychological care available to Yukoners.
- By aligning psychologists with other regulated health professions, the regulation provides clear qualification standards, a formal registration

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process and a transparent complaint mechanism, ensuring Yukoners receive safe, effective and accountable care.

- The Registrar does not expect services to stop. Individuals expecting to practice psychology in the Yukon should contact the branch as soon as possible to be put on the potential applicant list. Once on the potential applicant list, the branch will work with the individual to support their application process.
- For those not pursuing registration, the Registrar has asked for a wind down plan which includes the timeline and alternative care plan for their clients.

Recruiting Health Professionals from the United States

- The Yukon government is committed to strengthening health workforce recruitment and retention. We recognize the importance of expanding pathways for qualified health professionals, including those trained in the United States.
- Yukon government has done the upfront work to establish an agreement with Nova Scotia that allows U.S. trained physicians who obtain credentials in Nova Scotia to be recognized for licensure in the Yukon.
- Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction in Canada that fully recognizes U.S. trained physicians as equivalent to Canadian-trained doctors. This means that American-trained physicians who obtain licensure in Nova Scotia and want to practice in the Yukon will be recognized.
- We will focus marketing efforts both in Canada and expand this to include US, as we are seeing in British Columbia.

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- The Yukon Registered Nurses Association has a process in place to license U.S. trained nurses without requiring a competency assessment. The timeline for licensure varies by case but generally takes weeks not months.
- The government of Yukon is actively supporting internationally educated health professionals.
 - The Foreign Credential Recognition Navigation Service, launched in January 2025, has engaged 72 individuals, providing pathway information, assessments, referrals and financial assistance where appropriate.
 - So far, 14 internationally educated Yukoners have been assisted in obtaining credential recognition in their regulated fields, including 12 registered nurses, one licensed practical nurse and one physiotherapist.
 - One of the first clients has recently passed her Registered Nurse licensure exam.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association, is developing a strategy focusing on recruitment, onboarding, retention, regulations and education.

Yukon Nominee Program

- The recruitment of health care professionals to meet the needs of Yukoners is a top priority of this government.
- The YNP will set aside ten nominations for positions in regulated health care professions in 2025. These are not specific to any one employer.

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- Regulated health care professions include nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists and dentists as well as others.
- If by October 1, 2025 these nominations have not been utilized, additional invitations to apply will be issued from the Expression of Interest pool.
- This set aside will be available for regulated health care professions only.
- The Government of Yukon continues to explore all options to recruit much needed health care professionals. While we do not currently use the YNP to recruit for government positions, we are working to create a pathway for the government to expand its recruitment options through the program.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

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

Agency Nurse Usage:

- The main reasons agency nurses are contracted 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 Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation recognizes this action to prevent burnout as an important workforce retention strategy.

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- 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 and integration of internationally educated health care providers.
 - Community Nursing has used 748 agency nursing days between April 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025. This is a decrease from the 1171 agency nursing days in the same period in 2023.
 - While the department has used fewer agency nursing days, the total cost for agency nursing was higher in 2024 than in 2023.
 - The total cost of agency nursing from April 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, was **\$1.2M (\$1,189,933.52)**. The cost in the same period in 2023-24 was **\$1.6M (\$1,636,795.97)**
 - In addition to regular pay, agency nurses receive similar financial benefits as provided to Government of Yukon Nurses including:
 - standby pay,
 - overtime pay,
 - travel per diem, including travel expenses at cost,
 - reimbursement for Yukon Registered Nurses Association (YRNA) fees.
 - Yukon Hospital Corporation uses 12 nursing agencies to address gaps in nursing coverage.
 - The main triggers to bring in an agency nurse are shortages in an area that cannot be filled locally, especially at short notice; to facilitate staff vacation time which is an important retention issue; to support

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learning programs such as new grad and internationally educated nurse program

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen a steady year-over-year increase in spending on agency nurses since the 2019-2020 fiscal year.
 - Projected agency nursing costs for 2024-25, as of March 2025, are \$12M (\$12,025,000). This is a 15 per cent increase over the previous year.
 - 12 per cent of agency costs are related to travel and per diems.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen a steady year-over-year increase in spending on agency nurses since the 2019-2020 fiscal year.
 - In 2023-24, YHC spent \$10.6M on agency nursing staffing support. YHC spent \$11.5M in total on all agency staffing including nursing and non-nursing.
- As of January in the 2024-25 fiscal year, YHC has allocated \$10M to agency nursing staffing. YHC spent \$11.7M for all agency staffing including nursing and non-nursing.

Nurse Practitioners:

- The Government of Yukon recognizes the essential role of Nurse Practitioners in delivering high-quality health care across the territory.
- The Government of Yukon has introduced more Nurse Practitioner roles within the Department of Health and Social Services within the past year, as part of our commitment to expanding primary care

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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, at the Referred Care Clinic, at Withdrawal Management Services and contractors at the Sexual Health Clinic and Midlife Clinic.
 - The Whitehorse Walk-In Clinic has two full-time Nurse Practitioners and one AOC.
 - The centre de santé Constellation Health Clinic is fully staffed with five Nurse Practitioners.
 - The Referred Care Clinic is fully staffed with four Nurse Practitioners, including one Nurse Practitioner for Withdrawal Management Services.
 - We have one AOC Nurse Practitioner who provides itinerant services to Pelly Crossing.
 - 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

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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 Nurse Practitioners registered with the Yukon Registered Nurse Association may be higher than the number of Nurse Practitioners hired by the Yukon government.
- The Government of Yukon acknowledges that 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
 - Pay Range: Level NU19 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 Practitioner's 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.

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- 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.
 - Annual registration fee coverage.
 - An annual market adjustment of up to \$12,000 for full time Nurse Practitioners.
- The Government of Yukon also remunerates Nurse Practitioners who work in private clinics via a contract model.
- The Government of Yukon 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 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.
- Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner bonuses:
 - \$7,500 signing bonus for newly hired Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners. This expires on March 31, 2025. An annual retention allowance of \$3,000.
- Licensed Practical Nurses:

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- \$4,500 signing bonus for newly hired LPNs under Letter of Agreement “O-1” until March 31, 2025.
- Registered Nurses in rural health centres:
 - A \$7,500 signing bonus until March 31, 2025.
 - 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.
- These bonuses were introduced to address recruitment and retention challenges, improve competitiveness, and reduce reliance on agency staff in the 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.
- The Letter of Agreement for signing bonuses and exam fee reimbursement for Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Licensed 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:

- As of February 2025, the Department of Health and Social Services has a total of 52 nursing positions filled in rural communities.
- Nurses work in Communities through three groups of programs - Community Nursing, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Community Hubs, and Regional Home Care.

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- Community Nursing currently has 20 filled Primary Health Care Nurse (PHCN) positions, 14 additional filled on-call (Float) positions and 15 Primary Health Care Nurse-in-Charge (PHCNIC) positions across 11 communities.
- We have 25 Community Health Nurse FTEs. Of the 25 FTEs, four FTE are vacant. These positions are within Whitehorse, 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.
 - Four Community Health Nurses FTE positions. These positions are shared among various communities excluding Watson Lake and Dawson City.
- There are Home Care Nurses in Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City.
- There are currently 35 staff with the MWSU hubs.
 - Four Mental Health Nurses are dedicated to community hubs, providing direct support to Yukoners.
 - 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.

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Community nursing scope of practice

- Our priority is to continue improving health care across the territory in a way that acknowledges the unique needs and contributions of every health care professional.
- The Government of Yukon is taking steps to recruit and retain nursing staff and ensure Yukoners have access to quality essential health care services across the territory.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has undertaken a number of actions to attract and retain Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Health Care Aids in all Yukon communities.
- Community Nursing has a 26.9 per cent vacancy rate for Primary Health Care Nurse positions between September 1 and March 17, 2025. This is reduced from 30 per cent reported in August 2024.
- The Yukon government is committed to maintaining high standards of care across the territory. Ensuring that Registered Nurses working in Community Health Centres have the appropriate expanded scope essential to patient safety and quality of care.
- Community Nursing is a highly specialized area of practice that requires additional training and experience beyond standard Registered Nursing qualifications.
- While there are Registered Nurses available in the territory, not all Registered Nurses are trained or qualified to work in a Community Health Centre setting. Community Registered Nurses require an expanded scope of practice to deliver the full range of services needed in rural and remote communities.

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- Expanded scope training equips community Registered Nurses to provide a broader range of services, including advanced assessment, diagnosis and treatment — often in settings where they are the only health care provider on site.
- Recruiting and retaining community Registered Nurses with expanded scope has been an ongoing challenge in the Yukon and across Canada, contributing to the staffing issues in some Community Health Centres.
- Guided by our Health Human Resources Strategy, we are working to ensure every Yukoner has access to care by intensifying recruitment, retention and education efforts for health care professionals across the territory.
- Our government has undertaken several actions to recruit nurses to the Community Nursing Branch, including:
 - Widespread job advertisements across websites and social media platforms and targeted outreach to organizations and individuals.
 - Developed a dedicated recruitment webpage to attract and retain health care providers by addressing common inquiries related to the job application process and showcasing what the Yukon has to offer.
- The government recognizes how vital Community Health Centres are to residents and we are working urgently to restore services while maintaining the high standards of care Yukoners deserve.

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Staff Numbers and Vacancy Rates:

- As of February 2025, there are a total of 362 active nursing positions within the Department of Health and Social Services. This includes Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioners Psychiatric Nurse, Primary Health Care Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse positions.
 - Out of this number, 228 are permanent positions, 41 term positions and 95 on call /OAC positions
- As of February 2025, the Care and Community Branch has a total of 274 nursing positions. This includes 14 LPN Supervisors, 19 RNs, nine RN supervisors and 66 LPNs. There are currently nine vacant permanent positions, which equate to a current vacancy rate of six per cent.
- The Home Care Branch has a total of 11 LPN FTEs with 3 vacancies and 19 RN FTEs with three vacancies. 2.5 RN FTEs provide services in rural Communities.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has a total of 48 35 nursing positions. These include Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Nurse Practitioners. There are currently 37 positions filled and 11 vacant positions.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Social Workers**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is dedicated to improving the well-being of all Yukoners.

Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon deeply values Social Workers for their dedication, compassion and efforts to enhance the lives of those they serve.
- Social Workers are crucial to the Yukon's health and social services, offering specialized support that addresses overall well-being, mental health and access to resources.
- Social Workers provide essential services to vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- Social Workers connect with Yukoners at all stages of life, assisting individuals and families in managing complex challenges, from disability support and income assistance to family care and protection services. They offer prevention education, counseling, support, care coordination, and various other services tailored to individual programs and personal goals.

Key facts:

- As of January 25, 2025, the Department of Health and Social Services employs 99 Social Workers throughout our branches and programs.
- Staff trained as Social Workers are employed throughout the Department of Health and Social Services, both in roles where the

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designation is required and in various roles and in positions occupied by trained social workers that do not formally require an education in social work.

- Social Supports:
 - The Jim Smith Building Warming Centre has a Social Worker on site to help clients.
 - Disability Services has 10 Social Worker positions, two of which are vacant.
 - Community Outreach Services has three Social Workers, one of which is vacant.
 - Adult Protection Services has four Social Workers. All positions are filled.
 - Income Support has 15 Social Worker positions, three of which are vacant.
- Family and Children Services:
 - There are 32 Child Protection Social Worker positions that support Whitehorse and rural communities. Child Protection Services are operating at a 34 per cent vacancy rate with 11 positions being vacant.
 - The Family and Children Services' Placement Unit has three Social Worker positions, one of which is vacant.
- Family and Children Services Social Workers in communities:
 - There are 11 Family and Children's Services offices in rural Yukon and all communities are covered by Regional Social Workers.
 - The 14 Regional Social Worker positions throughout the Yukon include 12 community positions and two mobile positions. Of these, 10 are filled (71 per cent) as of April 1, 2025.

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- There are permanent Regional Social Worker positions in each of the following communities:
 - Carcross
 - Carmacks
 - Dawson City
 - Faro
 - Haines Junction
 - Mayo
 - Pelly Crossing
 - Ross River
 - Old Crow
 - Teslin
 - Watson Lake (two positions)
- Both Mobile Social Worker positions are filled, while current vacant community positions are in Dawson City, Faro, Ross River, and Watson Lake.
- Several Regional Social Workers are covering two communities during vacancies.
 - A Mobile Regional Social Worker provides coverage to Faro and Ross River.
 - A community Regional Social Worker provides coverage to Dawson City.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has continuous, rolling competitions for Regional Social Worker vacancies.
- The Continuing Care Division has 16 Social Worker positions for a total of 13.7 FTEs. All positions are currently filled.

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- Most Social Workers in Continuing Care are employed as Care Coordinators. Registered Nurses can also work as Care Coordinators but are not included in this count.
- Long-term Care provides direct support to residents with seven Social Worker/Care Coordinator positions.
- Home Care provides direct support to clients with six Social Worker/Care Coordinator positions.
- The Wind River Hospice House has one Social Worker who provides direct support to clients.
- The Palliative Care Resource Team has one Social Worker who provides support and education to staff, clients and families about death and dying.
- The Behavioural Care Resource Team has one Social Worker who provides support and education to staff and families for non-pharmacological management of Behavioural and Psychiatric Symptoms of Dementia.
- Integrated Health Services has two Social Workers supporting team-based care. There is one Social Worker is at the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre and one at the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic. Both positions are filled.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has 12 Clinical Social Workers throughout their programs and services.

Recruitment:

- We are actively recruiting to fill all vacant positions.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services has advertised available Social Worker positions through social media, job sites and in-person events.
- This year our recruitment website site, yukoncareerpaths.ca, has been updated with new profiles and interviews relating to social work.
- The department has also allocated resources to career fairs to meet people in person with new printed material.
- Yukon University partners with the University of Regina to offer a Bachelor of Social Work degree.

Regulations:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to aligning Social Worker practices with national standards to strengthen accountability, ensuring Yukoners receive consistent, high-quality services.
- The Government of Yukon is working on updating the *Health Professions Act*. The update includes an evaluation of professions that are currently not regulated in the Yukon, such as Social Workers.
- The Government of Yukon has met with the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada to initiate discussions, including the need to update the *Health Professions Act* prior to adding new professions.
 - The Department of Community Services is working to determine options that address gaps and improve regulations for health professionals in the Yukon.
- Developing regulations for Social Workers aligns with broader efforts to modernize health care and social services in the Yukon, ensuring these systems are prepared to meet the needs of a growing and changing population. By taking these steps, the government is

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advancing professional accountability and improving outcomes for Yukoners.

Approved by:

Matt King

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

April 4, 2025

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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:

- We are proud that the midwifery program provides comprehensive maternity care, assisting in safe deliveries and offering essential prenatal and postnatal care in Whitehorse and virtually to rural Yukon communities.
- The Yukon's approach to midwifery care is aligned with national standards and best practices, including for client safety.
- Interprofessional collaboration and consultation with Solstice Maternity, obstetricians and gynecologists and Whitehorse General Hospital nursing staff are a priority for the program.
- As of February 5, 2025, approximately 50 clients are receiving full scope midwifery care, covering pre-natal, birth and postpartum services. Their due dates range from mid-February to mid-October 2025. There are two people who are receiving post-partum care only. Intake occurs on a bi-weekly basis and is ongoing.
- For most months the program has a waitlist of around four people.
- As of February 2025, the Midwifery Program has supported 37 births since re-launching services, including three planned home births. Total midwifery births are 51 since the program launched.
- The program also offers Infant Feeding Mondays to any Yukoners who requires support with infant feeding. Infant Feeding Mondays has excellent uptake and positive feedback from both clients and other

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health care providers. The program provides feeding and lactation support for up to 10 clients in a day. People can access both booked appointments and drop-in support.

Baby Baskets:**Speaking notes:**

- The Yukon Baby Basket Project is a one-time initiative designed to provide parents of newborns with essential baby supplies, helping to support families during the early days of parenthood.
- Launched on September 13, 2024, the program offers baby baskets to expecting new parents across the Yukon.
- The initiative provides parents with approximately 20 essential new baby and parent items and educational resources, to support the transition from hospital to home and to promote safe sleep practices.
- This initiative was 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. Any Yukon health or social service provider can provide a referral to the program, including those working at Solstice Maternity, Whitehorse Health Centre, the Yukon Midwifery Program, Kwanlin Dün Health Centre and Whitehorse General Hospital.
- As of February 2025, there have been 230 Yukoners referred for a baby basket.

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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 baby baskets available 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 program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implements adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program participates via committees and teams and attends regular meetings with providers, partners and stakeholders from across the health system to ensure effective integration into the Yukon's healthcare system.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program 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 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 pregnant people and their families. This initiative represents a significant advancement in fostering a collaborative, interprofessional approach to maternity care in the Yukon.

Staffing:**Speaking notes:**

- Ensuring the health and safety of clients relies on a team of Registered Midwives who provide the full scope of midwifery care.

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- 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 – a Registered Midwife and a Second Birth Attendant, or two Registered Midwives - 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 February 2025, the program continues to be staffed with three Registered Midwives, one Clinical Manager and seven AOC Second Birth Attendants.
- Second Birth Attendants work 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.
- 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.

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.
- 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.

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Services

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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 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 January 2025, there are 75 licensed pharmacists in the Yukon.
- In 2024, Yukon pharmacists administered 3,914 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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Dawson Pharmacy

- We are aware that the pharmacy in Dawson is experiencing closures and delays due to staffing issues.
- We will continue to work closely with the Dawson City Community Hospital to ensure service and quality of care are maintained.
- The pharmacy space is leased from the hospital by the Department of Health and Social Services and offered for use by the pharmacy at no cost.
- Residents may choose to receive medication via mail order. This is common practice in other communities.

Expanded Scope of Practice:

Speaking notes:

- 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*.

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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.

Initial Prescribing Program and Vaccines:**Speaking notes:**

- 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.

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- 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:

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Community Health Centres receive, store and dispense patients' medications in defined circumstances and when they are involved with direct medical care.
- For Yukoners living in communities without a local pharmacy, prescriptions can be accessed through mail-order services.
- Patients can have their prescriptions filled at a pharmacy in Whitehorse and the medication is then shipped directly to their community via mail.
- 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

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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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 Memorandum of Understanding includes the Attachment and Attraction program, which provides financial support to Yukon physicians by subsidizing clinic overhead costs.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association are preparing for the next round of negotiations on a new Memorandum of Understanding.
- 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 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.

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- 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.
- As part of the Health Human Resource Strategy, we have provided funding to the Yukon Medical Association to explore the development of a family medicine residency program to help grow the number of physicians learning and working in the territory.
- 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 have also identified stabilizing primary care as a key priority in their workplan.
- In 2025-26, we budgeted **\$5.6M** (\$5,613,000) to support physician benefit programs, the majority of which are administered by the Yukon Medical Association. The amount may be adjusted once MOU negotiations are completed.

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- In 2023-24, the Yukon was supported by 248 physicians, which includes resident General Practitioners, Specialists, locums and visiting physicians.
- In 2023, there were 33,830 unique patients seen and 477,733 unique patient encounters at care settings in the Yukon.

Claims and billing:

- Physician claims are 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 burden 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 make the system more efficient. We are working with the Physician Payment Advisory Committee to identify and determine additional opportunities to decrease processing times.

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Contracts:

Speaking notes:

- 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 many physicians and specialists.
- Alternative payment models are being used with some resident specialists, community health and wellness centers, the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Population Epidemiology, some Hospital service providers and at the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
- As recommended by physicians, we have also implemented an alternative payment contract 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.
- The Department of Health and Social Services paid \$16.5M in 2023-24 for physician services through contracts.

Fee-for-Service:

- Putting People First 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.”

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- 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.
- In 2023-24, the Department of Health and Social Services provided \$33.7M in fee for service payments to physicians, including \$16.1M for hospital-based services.

Find a Primary Care Provider Program:

- In spring 2023, we expanded the Find a Primary Care Provider Program to include Nurse Practitioners.
- As of January 24, 2025, a total of 2,167 individuals have been matched to a primary care provider through the program. There are 4,154 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 11 percent of the Whitehorse population.
- The Yukon government has established primary health care clinics to improve access to health care providers for Yukoners, including:
 - The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, which as of August 26, 2024, has received 2,837 eligible applications since its opening in August 2022.
 - The Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic, which opened in December 2023, offers care to Yukoners without a primary care provider. It is staffed by an interdisciplinary team, including two permanent nurse practitioners and two physicians. As of July 31, 2024, the clinic has provided care to over 3,362 patients who would not

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have received care or needed to visit the emergency department at the hospital.

- The Referred Care Clinic, which provides primary care services by referral to vulnerable adults living with mental health and/or substance use issues who do not have a primary care provider.
- Recruitment and retention of health care workers are ongoing challenges, not only in the Yukon but across Canada, particularly in rural and remote areas. We are working with our partners in health and social services to recruit qualified professionals. This is a key part of our Health and Human Resources Strategy to ensure safe and reliable care for Yukoners.
- 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.

Medical Director:

- 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:

- The current three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association covers the period from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2025.

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- We expect to begin MOU negotiations with the Yukon Medical Association this spring 2025.
 - Out of respect for the negotiation table we will not respond to any inquiries about ongoing discussions.
- The 2022 Memorandum of Understanding will be in place until a new agreement can be reached.
- The Yukon government acknowledges the significant challenges physicians are facing at Whitehorse General Hospital and the strain on the health care system, particularly for those providing acute and emergency care.
- We recognize the urgency of the situation and are committed to working collaboratively with health care providers to find solutions that ensure a sustainable and effective health care system.
- Primary health care providers are the foundation of our health care system, and their ability to deliver care in hospitals, clinics, and the community is essential to maintaining access to quality health care for all Yukoners.
- Leaders from the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Department of Health and Social Services have already met to discuss the current pressures and will continue to meet regularly to explore all potential options.
- We are actively listening to physicians' concerns, including the impact of staffing shortages on hospital-based care, and we will provide updates following our scheduled meetings to ensure transparency and ongoing collaboration.

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- We appreciate the dedication and commitment of health care providers and remain focused on ensuring that both acute and primary care services remain accessible and sustainable for all Yukoners.

Physician benefits and Attachment and Attraction program budget

- The budget for Physician Recruitment and Retention is lower in that particular section of the budget lines in 2025-26 as the expense was moved to the Insured Health Services section of Health and Social Services budget given that much of the allocation is grant payments to the YMA and forms part of physician compensation through the Attachment & Attraction program, negotiated during the last MOU.
- There is no reduction in spending on physician recruitment. In fact we are doing more and developing marketing campaigns to target out of territory and out of country, including US based physicians. We can connect them to the pathway developed with Nova Scotia through our regulator, and we will be focusing on these efforts to attract new physicians to work here in the Yukon.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation has expanded its efforts to recruit for hospital based physician services and we are supporting these efforts, along with those of the Yukon Medical Association.
- The department continues to prioritize physician and Health & Human Resource recruitment and retention, with funding remaining in place to support these efforts.

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- The department remains committed to addressing health human resource challenges and ensuring Yukoners have access to the care they need.

Physician Count

- The most recent available physician statistics are available from the Canadian Centre for Health Information (CIHI) and from the Yukon Medical Association (YMA), both providing 2023 statistics.
- According to CIHI's analysis, the Yukon had 168 family medicine physicians per 100,000 population in 2023, placing us first in Canada for supply of family medicine physicians.
 - CIHI reports show the Yukon consistently ranking first in the country for per-capita family medicine physicians between 2010 and 2023.
 - However, only 77 per cent of Yukoners reported having access to a regular health care provider, placing the territory 9 of 12 for access.
- The Yukon Medical Association reported having 101 full members in 2023, including 75 family doctors.
- Of these, 38 carry a panel of patients to whom they provide longitudinal primary care. The remainder of the YMA members provide a variety of essential health care services throughout the system.
- YMA data also shows that a high proportion (26 per cent) of its 2023 membership roster was over the age of 55 and nearing retirement.
- The Yukon is also supported by locum physicians who provide periodic or occasional primary and specialized services.

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Physician Incentives

- In order to support acute care during a time of high pressure in February and March 2025, we introduced the following measures:
 - A pressure period premium of \$1,000 per day on which physicians provide a shift of hospitalist care, from February 26 to April 1. This is similar to a premium that was introduced over the December holidays to mitigate staffing shortfalls.
 - A travel day stipend for locum physicians visiting the Yukon to provide acute care. This is in addition to typical coverage for their accommodations and travel expenses.
 - A commitment to revise the requirements of the Attachment and Attraction program, to allow physicians to more easily provide both acute and primary care.
- We also committed to new physician recruitment measures, including:
 - Allowing Hospitalists to opt into additional hours of work during periods of short-staffing. Implementing this will take some time.
 - Providing an additional investment for the Yukon Hospital Corporation to expand hospital-based physician recruitment activities to boost efforts to attract additional physicians to the acute care services at Whitehorse General Hospital.
 - In partnership with the Yukon Medical Association, we are committed to revising the MOU to help support recruiting new graduates into both primary and acute care.
- The leadership of the department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association have jointly been working to formalize the Hospitalist program. This work

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has included participation of physicians to provide the expertise and perspective of those directly involved in the service.

- This work and attention led to the current Hospitalist remuneration, introduction of a 4th and then a 5th line to support patient care, specified hours, considerations for on call, and much consideration and thought on how the Hospitalist program would best support the needs of the Emergency Department, while remaining focused on patient care and physician wellness.

Physician Recruiter:

- In 2025-26 the Department of Health and Social Services has allocated \$170K in support of the Yukon Medical Association's physician recruiter position.
 - The same level of support was provided in 2024-25.
- The Physician Recruiter position has been crucial in supporting the hospitalist program through the recruitment of locum physicians.
- Additional funding was also made available to Yukon Hospital Corporation in 2024/25.

Recruiting Health Professionals from the United States

- The Yukon government is committed to strengthening health workforce recruitment and retention. We recognize the importance of expanding pathways for qualified health professionals, including those trained in the United States.

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- Yukon government has done the upfront work to establish an agreement with Nova Scotia that allows U.S. trained physicians who obtain credentials in Nova Scotia to be recognized for licensure in the Yukon.
- Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction in Canada that fully recognizes U.S. trained physicians as equivalent to Canadian-trained doctors. This means that American-trained physicians who obtain licensure in Nova Scotia and want to practice in the Yukon will be recognized.
- We will focus marketing efforts both in Canada and expand this to include USA, as we are seeing in British Columbia.
- The Yukon Registered Nurses Association has a process in place to license U.S. trained nurses without requiring a competency assessment. The timeline for licensure varies by case but generally takes weeks not months.
- The government of Yukon is actively supporting internationally educated health professionals.
 - The Foreign Credential Recognition Navigation Service, launched in January 2025, has engaged 72 individuals, providing pathway information, assessments, referrals, and financial assistance where appropriate.
 - So far, 14 internationally educated Yukoners have been assisted in obtaining credential recognition in their regulated fields, including 12 registered nurses, one licensed practical nurse, and one physiotherapist.
 - One of the first clients has recently passed her Registered Nurse licensure exam.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association, is developing a strategy focusing on recruitment, onboarding, retention, regulations, and education.

Reducing Administrative Burdens

- Our government recognizes the challenges that administrative burdens place on physicians, and we remain committed to working collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association and other stakeholders to address these concerns.
- Our government is also preparing for the next round of negotiations with the YMA. We remain open to further discussions with them on reducing administrative burdens for physicians.
- The Joint Management Committee, which includes representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Medical Association, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, has identified stabilizing primary care as one of the priorities. Addressing administrative burden are actions that will support family physicians.
- The Joint Management Committee has identified physician retention as a priority. They are committed to taking the concerns of physicians seriously and are addressing them through negotiations.
- Our Health Human Resources Strategy identifies reducing administrative burden as a priority. Through this strategy, we are streamlining processes to ensure that health professionals can focus on patient care rather than paperwork.

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- We continue to support the Yukon Medical Association through targeted funding for initiatives that reduce administrative barriers, such as better payment systems and advancing software solutions.
- The department has taken concrete steps to modernize physician billing and payment systems, reducing inefficiencies and delays:
 - In Fall 2023, we modified 20 fee codes to allow for auto-payments, decreasing the number of manually assessed claims from 30 per cent to 20 per cent. This means approximately 600 fewer claims per week require manual review.
 - The Physician Payment Advisory Committee is actively identifying additional opportunities to streamline payment processing.
 - As part of the Health Human Resources Strategy, we have finalized a \$450,000 transfer payment agreement with Yukon University to support the development of a Social Work and a Medical Office Assistant program. This program will start its first intake in September 2025, will help produce local human resources to take up medical administrative roles and reduce administrative tasks for physicians and other healthcare providers.
- In addition, we have streamlined health professional licensing to remove unnecessary barriers while maintaining high standards of patient safety. As of November 3, 2024, newly graduated Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and student nurses can register directly to practice in Yukon.

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- A Digital Health Strategy Steering Committee has been established to modernize health records and administrative processes, reducing inefficiencies in healthcare delivery.
- Additionally, our partnership with Nova Scotia supports our efforts in this area. The Yukon Medical Association has already engaged with experts from Nova Scotia, which has made significant progress in addressing administrative barriers for health professionals.
- Instead of creating a new task force, we will continue working through our upcoming negotiations, existing partnerships, committees and initiatives to improve efficiency and support our health care providers in delivering high-quality care to Yukoners.

Rural Family Medicine Residency Program:

- 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.

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

Whitehorse Medical Clinic Closure

- As of April 2025, Whitehorse Medical Clinic made the choice among its practitioners to close its doors.
- All but two of the family practitioners will be moving to new or existing clinics and will continue to provide primary care services to their panel of patients.
 - Two of the physicians have opted to close their practice at their own discretion; we continue to have an open dialogue with these primary care providers.
- Yukoners without a primary care provider are encouraged to pursue available applications processes this includes the Constellation Health Centre Website and the Find a Primary Care Provider program.
- For arising care needs please do not hesitate to visit the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.
 - Yukoners are encouraged to visit their local Emergency Department or Community Health Centre as needed.

Approved by:

_____ Matt King _____

_____ March 25, 2025 _____

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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:

- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Hubs are available in Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction/Carcross and Watson Lake. Staff from these hubs travel to surrounding communities.
- Community Hubs can offer:
 - individual and group counselling services for children over the age of six, youth, families and adults;
 - assessment for and referrals to specialty services such as substance use treatment;
 - counselling support in community after treatment;
 - outreach services; and
 - harm reduction training and supplies.
- Services are provided in schools, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' offices, or in the community
- We work with communities and Yukon First Nations to ensure Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services reflect the unique needs of each community.
 - We are working with Yukon First Nations to support land-based healing and culture camps across the Yukon.

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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.
- This support network can help Yukoners return to their home community after accessing mental health and substance use treatment in Whitehorse or outside the territory.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services 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.
- As of February 26, 2025, the Carmacks Hub has:
 - two Community Counsellor positions (one position unfilled);
 - one Clinical Counsellor position (unfilled);

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- one Child and Youth Counsellor position;
- three Mental Health Support Worker positions; and
- one Mental Health Nurse position (unfilled).
- Currently, all counsellor positions are provided by staff who travel to the community weekly or biweekly for 3-5 days at a time. This shift was due to recruitment challenges and the decision was made in consultation with Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation.
- The Mental Health Nurse position for the Carmacks Hub is currently served out of Dawson City. The Nurse can facilitate psychiatric assessments and supports for individuals living with severe and persistent mental health concerns.
- Services are provided virtually with travel to Carmacks, Pelly, Ross River and Faro as needed.

Dawson City Hub:

- The Dawson City Hub provides services to Dawson City, Mayo and Old Crow.
- As of February 26, 2025, the Dawson City Hub has:
 - four Community Counsellor positions (two positions unfilled);
 - three Clinical Counsellor positions (one position unfilled);
 - one Child, Youth and Family Clinical Counsellor position;
 - two Mental Health Support Worker positions; and
 - one Mental Health Nurse position.
- The Child, Youth and Family Clinical Counsellor and Mental Health Nurse travel to Mayo from Dawson City monthly.
 - Child and youth clients in Mayo are also supported by a full-time school Counsellor.

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- A Clinical Counsellor travels to Old Crow bi-weekly and a Clinical Child and Youth Counsellor travels to Old Crow monthly. Virtual or in-person Whitehorse sessions with the Clinical Counsellor are available when the Counsellor is not in the community.

Haines Junction/Carcross Hub:

- The Haines Junction/Carcross Hub provides services to Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Carcross.
- As of February 26, 2025, Haines Junction has:
 - one Community Counsellor position;
 - one Clinical Counsellor position;
 - one Mental Health Support Worker position; and
 - one Child, Youth and Family Counsellor position.
- These positions provide support to Burwash Landing and Beaver Creek bi-weekly.
- As of February 26, 2025, Carcross has:
 - one Community Counsellor position;
 - one Child, Youth and Family Counsellor position (unfilled); and
 - one Mental Health Support Worker position.
- A Mental Health Nurse position (currently unfilled) is also allocated to the Haines Junction Hub and provides services to Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek and Carcross.
- The Whitehorse Psychiatric Outreach Program currently provides coverage for the Haines Junction Hub. The Nurse can facilitate psychiatric assessment and support for individuals living with severe

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and persistent mental health concerns. Services are provided virtually, with travel to the community as needed.

Watson Lake Hub:

- As of February 26, 2025, the Watson Lake Hub has:
 - two Community Counsellor positions;
 - one Child, Youth and Family Counsellor position (unfilled);
 - two Mental Health Support Worker positions (one position unfilled); and
 - one Mental Health Nurse position (unfilled).
- The Mental Health Nurse position is currently covered by Whitehorse Psychiatric Outreach Program and provides services in Watson Lake.
- Services are provided virtually with travel to Watson Lake and Teslin as needed. An additional Community Counsellor is dedicated to Teslin.
- A Child and Youth Clinical Counsellor provides services to Teslin, two full days per week. The department works closely with Teslin Tlingit Council and community partners to integrate this position into the school and community.

Wait times:

- As of February 14, 2025, there is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro and Ross River.
- There is no waitlist for adult referrals in Dawson City, and there is a two-week waitlist for child and youth referrals. Urgent child and youth referrals are offered services virtually or provided by Community Counsellors.

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- There is no waitlist for services for either adult or child and youth clients in Mayo or Old Crow.
- There is no waitlist for services through the Haines Junction/Carcross Hub for adult, child and youth referrals.
- There is a two-week waitlist for services through the Watson Lake Hub for adult referrals.
- There is a two-week waitlist for child and youth clients in Watson Lake. Urgent child and youth referrals are offered services virtually or provided by Community Counsellors.
- Regardless of staffing level in communities, clients have access to virtual Rapid Access Counselling.

Approved by:

Matt King

March 5, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting culturally appropriate and safe options for mental wellness and substance use care in the Yukon.
- Land-based infrastructure and programming have been identified as one of the 12 most pressing priorities in the Priority Action Items released by the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit+ People's, as part of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy*.

Key messages:

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

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- 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 Healing Fund:**Speaking notes:**

- 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 administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations in partnership with the Government of Yukon, who also provides the funding.
- The initiative aims to enhance 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 was conducted by the Council of Yukon First Nations in 2024.
- During the first round of applications, 44 proposals were submitted. The Council of Yukon First Nations approved 38 of these proposals (86 per cent approval rate) and has allocated \$3,740,000 to support these projects. \$1.8M has been disbursed as of January 31, 2025.

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- The 38 approved applications include projects from 11 First Nations governments, 21 First Nations businesses/non-profit organizations and six Yukon First Nations individuals.
 - 11 Yukon First Nations governments who applied for the Land-Based Healing Fund have received their first installment of funding (\$1.1M).
 - Three Yukon First Nations businesses or organizations have received the entirety of their funds (\$185K).
 - 13 Yukon First Nations businesses or organizations have received the first installment of their funds (\$438K).
 - One Yukon First Nations individual has received the entirety of their funds (\$25K).
 - Three Yukon First Nations individuals have begun receiving funds (\$62K).
- This funding has allowed applicants to organize and deliver land-based programs and camps for youth, adults, and families, grounded in Yukon First Nations culture.
 - All programs and camps are offered at no cost to Yukon First Nations participants.
- 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.

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- 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.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations 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 applicants' 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.
- This funding opportunity fulfils one of the 14 initial actions of the 43 overall recommended actions in the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy and aims to address trauma, grief and loss experienced by Yukon First Nations.
- The Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund initiative aligns with other key Government of Yukon strategies, including Putting People First and the Yukon's Strategy on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People+. The initiative is part of a culturally responsive approach to support diverse land-based activities, including cultural camps and traditional environmental knowledge programs.
- To qualify for funding, land-based healing initiatives should be within the following guiding principles:

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- Foster connections within communities and promote traditional values for land-based programming.
- Focus on culturally safe programming.
- Incorporate community-based programming that fosters collaborations.
- Improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.
- Build from the strengths and resources of the community to create local expertise.
- Focus on improvement within various determinants of health such as self-determination, cultural values, life skills, connection with land and fostering healthy relationships.
- Contribute to a quality health continuum of care, including prevention, treatment and recovery.
- Eligible recipients include individuals, organizations, Yukon First Nations-led businesses and Yukon First Nations governments, groups, associations and non-profit organizations.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations is working closely with seven additional approved applicants to support land-based healing fund initiative planning, with the intention to distribute funds to them this fiscal year.

Background:

- The Council of Yukon First Nations is staffing two positions to support Yukon First Nations in successfully accessing funding and implementing projects.
- Overall, the Yukon First Nations Land-Based Healing Fund has followed a structured payment schedule, with most business and organization applicants

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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.

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.
- 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.

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- 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.
 - 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

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

March 5, 2025

[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.
- Mental wellness and substance use services are provided with a person-centered approach and through a trauma-informed lens.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is committed to on-going input from clients and people with lived experience, including incorporating client advisory boards, patient journey mapping and other client feedback processes to continually adapt and improve service delivery.

Adult Counselling Services:

- Individual and group counselling services are offered through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.
- 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.

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- Older Adults Connection and Wellness Group: open to anyone age 55 and older who has an interest in connecting with others in the community and discussing topics related to health and wellness.
- Recovery Group: a peer support and education drop-in group for individuals at any stage of change with their substance use.
- Alumni Group: a co-lead group by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff and a participant of the program to support individuals who have recently completed a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' treatment program to continue to maintain their goals.
- Clinicians offer group programs to meet a variety of mental health and community needs.
 - Dialectical Behaviour Therapy.
 - Thriving with Anxiety and Changeways are skills groups to facilitate building skills for people affected by anxiety and depression.
 - Trauma Information Group is for those affected by trauma.
 - A new group is under development and will be piloted this winter for those who identify as neurodivergent and could benefit from learning skills to support executive functioning.
- Rapid Access Counselling services are available within 72 hours and are accessible in person, online or by phone.
- Longer-term individual, goal-focused counselling is available both in-person and virtually throughout the territory.

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Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon Division

- The Department of Health and Social Services continues to fund the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon Division for 24/7 mental health services outlined under the 2021 CASA agreement.
 - \$579K (\$579,000) is provided annually.
- From 2021 to 2024, client hours increased by approximately 28 per cent from 1,874 client hours to 2,150.5 client hours.
- To ensure Yukoners were being effectively reached and to understand how services were being used, we committed to conducting a review in 2024–25.
- The review found that funding was being used to increase services to seven days a week. The Canadian Mental Health Association expressed that services offered on Sundays were not well-attended and staffing was challenging.
- Based on the findings and in discussions with the Canadian Mental Health Association, the organization recommended that to better serve client needs that it would expand hours Monday-Saturday and offer services on Sundays by appointment when staffing is available or there is an urgent need.
 - The department was informed by CMHA-Y of their adjusted Monday to Saturday hours approach in May 2024 after CMHA-Y had begun trialing this model.
 - Prior to these extended hours. CMHA-Y previously would schedule their last appointment for 4pm. Currently the last evening appointment to book is at 6pm.

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- In 2024, this shift in hours allowed for an additional 722 appointments that were outside the typical Monday to Saturday core hours.
- Adjustments to the service delivery to best reach Yukoners and create additional appointment opportunities Monday to Saturday have been done through ongoing, collaborative discussions between Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon and the department including through scheduled quarterly meetings.
- Per Yukon’s funding agreement, the Canadian Mental Health Association has the flexibility to offer the extended hours and to continue to offer Sunday services by appointment, when staffing is available and if need is identified.
- The department connected with the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Executive Director to confirm common understanding of how services are being offered, as well as communicating how to access Sunday appointments, if needed.

Car 867 (Mobile Crisis Unit):

- Car 867 pairs trained RMCP officers with Mental Health Nurses to provide real-time assessment of individuals in crisis and connect clients to support systems. Car 867 follows up with calls occurring outside their operational hours if referrals are received.
- Staffed with two RCMP officers and two Mental Health Nurses from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, the Unit responds to calls for services related to mental health issues and suicide risks.

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- The presence of the Mental Health Nurse within the team has led to comprehensive onsite assessments for individuals and has supported RCMP members in their duties in assessing when a hospital intervention is needed.
 - Mental Health Nurses can either manage calls on site, make effective referrals to connect individuals to the resources they need, or assess when more intensive services such as the hospital emergency department are needed.
- Car 867 is available seven days a week, operating 10 hours daily.
- Currently, this program is being implemented in Whitehorse.
 - From November 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, the Unit responded to 138 calls.
 - From November 1, 2023, to October 31, 2024, the Unit responded to 550 calls.

Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team:

- Whitehorse has 11 Clinical Counsellor positions, one Registered Nurse and two Clinical Supervisors who carry caseloads.
- Clinical Counsellors provide individual, group and family therapy services.
- Group programming is offered to support children, youth and families. Programs include topics like understanding ADHD, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for adolescents, parenting support, emotional and behaviour regulation, substance use and anxiety and depression.
 - A support group for youth who have a loved one living with substance use issues is being developed.

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- Rapid Access Counselling sessions are available within 72 hours and are designed to provide timely access support for youth over the age of 13 and for caregivers looking for support or for families in crisis.
- Counsellors, via Clinical Outreach Counselling, are regularly scheduled in high schools and other agencies throughout Whitehorse.
- The Youth Outreach Clinic provides minimal barrier access to health and wellness services for youth aged 12 and over. The clinic provides youth-friendly, non-urgent primary care services by a Registered Nurse. Services 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.
 - The services are available at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' locations and through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' secondary school programming.
 - The Registered Nurse and an Outreach Counsellor attend monthly groups at the Boys and Girls Club.
- 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

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pediatrics, the Whitehorse General Hospital, a dietician and Child Psychiatry.

- An on-the-land family camp that integrates the two-eyed seeing approach has been running for the past two years.
 - Planning is underway to facilitate family programming and camps this coming summer 2025.
- Further integration of both Family Systems Pathways and on-the-land programming is under development.

Managed Alcohol Program:**Speaking notes:**

- The Managed Alcohol Program is a long-term program geared toward supporting individuals who live with severe and treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder.
- A residential Managed Alcohol Program opened in Whitehorse on November 6, 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 to the facility included an area for alcohol service that allows participants to approach the service area and be provided with predetermined and measured amounts of alcohol based on individualized care plans.

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- The Government of Yukon held an open house on October 15, 2024, for community members and businesses to tour the Managed Alcohol Program space, meet the program team and learn about the program's goals and operations before its official launch.
- Managed alcohol programs typically dispense wine, beer or spirits. Participants of the program have access to medically approved volumes of alcohol, served under staff supervision.
- A participant has a treatment care plan which includes medically assessed dosage and frequency for alcohol consumption.
- Participant care plans are supported by a Social Worker, Nursing and a Prescriber based out of the Referred Care Clinic. Individual autonomy is highly encouraged in the program and participants will be expected to participate in doing their own laundry and making their own breakfast and lunch.
 - Assistance and prompts can and will be provided if required.
- A referral package has been developed for health care providers to use in referring clients to the program.
- The Managed Alcohol Program is supported by an interdisciplinary team. While the structure and composition of the teams may change as we evaluate the program, the current team is dedicated to:
 - intake and assessment;
 - support workers; and
 - medical oversight.
- The program is staffed with trained Support Workers, Nurses, Social Workers and a Supervisor.

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- 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.

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.

Opioid Treatment Services:

- Mental Wellness Substance Use and Social Services has expanded Opioid Treatment Services' delivery and access through Outreach

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Workers, Social Workers and Nurses at the Referred Care Clinic and an outreach clinic at 405 Alexander.

- An opioid-focused community needs assessment by an external consultant was completed in fall 2022. The assessment provided 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.
- Expanding access to Opioid Agonist Therapy and providing all Yukoners, including in communities, an alternative to the illegal and unregulated drug supply, known as safer supply, are elements of the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy.
 - The strategy includes providing safer supply medications as a harm reduction intervention.
 - Currently, Community Nursing is working on developing a policy framework that will provide Opioid Treatment Services through health centres in rural communities.
- Safer supply is a harm reduction intervention that helps individuals with severe opioid use disorder manage or reduce their opioid use and decrease their reliance on the unregulated and unpredictable illicit drug supply.
- Safer supply can improve health outcomes by reducing overdose risk, preventing withdrawal symptoms, and offering a safer, medical-grade alternative to the illicit street drugs.
- Additionally, safer supply programs can connect individuals to healthcare, social services and long-term treatment options, fostering stability and overall well-being.

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Safer Supply 2025–26 budget		
	\$	FTE
Personnel		
Registered Nurse Supervisor	125,000	1
Registered Nurse	225,000	2
Social Worker	225,000	2
Outreach LPN	195,000	2
Peer Outreach Worker	94,000	1
Admin Assistant	84,000	1
Subtotal	948,000	9
Other O&M		
Training	30,000	
Medications	37,000	
Medical Supplies	10,000	
Vehicles	43,000	
Office space	56,000	
Office Supplies	8,000	
Communication	2,000	
Subtotal	187,000	
Total	1,135,000	

- Between January 1 and December 31, 2024, there were 242 clients registered with Opioid Treatment Services with an average of 270 appointments per month.

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- In 2024, there were 659 clients supported through the Referred Care Clinic with an average of 855 appointments per month
 - In 2023, there were 698 clients supported through the Referred Care Clinic with an average of 848 appointments per month.
- Clients do not need a referral and can book an appointment if they feel they have an issue with opioids or are living with an opioid use disorder. Clients 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Opioid Treatment Services prescribers currently prescribe hydromorphone tablets and fentanyl patches as a safer supply for opioids.
- 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.
- Expansion of safer supply is not limited to the safe supply of opioids.

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- The department is also exploring options to provide safer supply for other illicit substances, such as stimulants.

Outpatient Psychiatry - Adult Services:

- In November 2024, the Department of Health and Social Services integrated Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Summit Health psychiatry services to improve Yukoners' options for mental health, substance use care and psychiatric services. This new service is called Outpatient Psychiatry - Adult Services.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides 24-hour on-call psychiatric services at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- A central intake team provides triage for psychiatric referrals.
- Referrals to psychiatry from primary care providers continue with minimal disruptions to patient flow, as the same phone and fax numbers and referral processes remain in place.
- 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 are working to improve patient access, wait times and flow between general practitioners, emergency departments, psychiatric care and outpatient care.
- The new Mental Wellness Unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital is expected to open in June 2025. This work is the result of a partnership between the Government of Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Government of Canada and community partners.
- Other psychiatry programs within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services include services for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness that are part of the Early Psychosis

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Intervention Program, Psychiatric Outreach Program or Referred Care Clinic.

Prescribing authorities (opioid agonist and safer supply):

- 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 safer supply medications in the Yukon.
- 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 safer supply medications.
 - Nurse Practitioners currently provide both opioid agonist therapy and safer 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 outreach 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.
- An Early Psychosis Intervention Program is available for people under the age of 30 who have received a new diagnosis of bipolar, schizophrenia or another primary psychotic disorder.
- 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 living with a mental health and/or substance use issue that do not have a primary care provider.
- 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 has 15 funded positions including one Registered Nurse Team Lead, four Licensed Practical Nurses, three Nurse Practitioners, three Community Mental Health Registered Nurses, two Social Workers, two Outreach Support Workers, and two Medical Office Assistants.
 - Actual staffing levels vary based on human resources.

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- On November 24, 2024, the Referred Care Clinic began operating off-site due to ongoing building repairs. The Clinic re-opened March 3, 2025 once repairs were complete.
 - Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Nurses saw Referred Care Clinic and Opioid Treatment Services clients on the main floor at the Sarah Steele Building.
 - The satellite clinic at 405 Alexander increased their hours to offer services on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Supervised Consumption Site:**Speaking notes:**

- Clients at the Supervised Consumption Site can access a range of harm reduction and social services including drug testing, counselling, access to Naloxone, drug use equipment exchange, medical care, and training in safer use practices. Clients can also receive referrals to social, medical and mental wellness and substance use supports.
- From their opening in September 2021 to December 31, 2024, staff at the Supervised Consumption Site have reversed 133 onsite overdoses and have had no fatalities.
- Overall, the Supervised Consumption Site provided services to 768 unique Yukoners and saw a significant increase in site visits.
 - From April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, there were 36,160 visits to the site.
 - From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, there were 10,823 visits to the site.
- In January 2025, the Department of Health and Social Services renewed the Yukon's exemption of Subsection 56(1) of the *Controlled*

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Drugs and Substance Act. This exemption authorizes designated persons and staff members drug checking activities involving illegal substances.

- The exemption expires the earliest of the following:
 - September 30, 2026;
 - the date the exemption is replaced by another exemption; or
 - the date on which the exemption is revoked.
- The Government of Yukon is committed to continue funding the Supervised Consumption Site.
- Beginning in June 2024, the program began preparing and serving meals. As of February 2025, free lunches are available daily from 1 to 2 pm and free dinners are available daily from 4:30 to 5:30 pm.

Background:

- The Supervised Consumption Site opened September 30, 2021, and in May 2022 we completed renovations to support inhalation as a consumption method.
- 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.
- The Supervised Consumption Site supports injection, inhalation, oral and intranasal consumption methods.
 - 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.

Supervised Consumption Site Incident

- We are aware that an incident involving a firearm occurred on the evening of April 30, 2025.

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- We have spoken to Blood Ties Four Directions and will be offering critical incident support and counselling to staff.
- Rapid Access Counselling will be prioritized for any affected by this incident.
- The RCMP led the immediate response to the incident.

Toxic Drug Supply

- Blood Ties Four Directions has detected an increasing presence of an unknown sedative and higher concentrations of fentanyl in recent drug testing of opioid samples at the Supervised Consumption Site.
- 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.
- Drug-checking occurs at the Supervised Consumption Site with Blood Ties Four Directions and 405 Alexander with EMS.
- Drug-checking and harm reduction 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, 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.

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Intensive Treatment Services:

- Intensive Treatment Services offer bed-based treatment programs in which clients live in the program from between two and 12 weeks to focus on changing their relationship with substances.
- Programming includes therapeutic group activities, community-based programs, culturally focused programs and individual counselling.
- Intensive Treatment Services are available at the Sarah Steele Building in Whitehorse.
- From January 1 to December 31, 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.
- The Treatment Program consists of:
 - The Spruce Program is a continuous intake, group-based treatment program focusing on skills to help meet client goals for addressing their substance use, including harm reduction or long-term recovery goals. The first stage of the Spruce Program relies heavily on counselling and treatment supports from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff.
 - The second phase of the treatment program, for those clients wishing to extend their treatment stay, incorporates more peer support and people with lived experience driven supports, alongside Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' supports, to help clients transfer their learned skills to daily living.

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- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides ongoing substance use group treatment programming for inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.
- An Alumni Program offers aftercare treatment programming to continue the client's recovery and wellness journey. Alumni groups run twice weekly.
 - The Alumni Program is run in partnership with people with lived experience who support each other and the community in recovery-based activities.
 - Since 2023, the program has increased from two individuals regularly attending to 20 participants in 2024.
- 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 served over 700 people. This effort has been led by Alumni members.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services currently partners with the Council of Yukon First Nations' Moccasin Mobile to provide snacks and supplies for people who need them.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is developing and implementing a lived-experience program to ensure all client voices are heard.

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Withdrawal Management Services:

Speaking notes:

- Withdrawal Management Services is a 24/7 medically and psychosocially supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use.
- Our government has increased funding for Withdrawal Management Services 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.
- There are 14 beds available for adults and four beds available for youth.
- In 2023, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services began hiring additional Nursing staff to increase the number of bed nights in Withdrawal Management Services. Although bed night data can vary, the percentage increase in bed nights is considered to be an accurate reflection of the increase in bed usage at Withdrawal Management Services. Between 2022 and 2024, bed night usage increased by 42 per cent.
 - In 2024, the program had approximately 3,830 bed nights.
 - In 2023, the program had approximately 3,130 bed nights.
 - In 2022, the program had approximately 2,700 bed nights.
- There were 1,123 total admissions in 2024, compared to 1,017 admissions in 2023 and 953 admissions in 2022.
 - In 2024, the program averaged 93 admissions per month.

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- In 2023, the program averaged 84 admissions per month.
- In 2022, the program averaged 76 admissions per month.
- Withdrawal Management has an average of eight calls per day that result in delayed admissions. When a bed is not immediately available, individuals are encouraged to call back and are typically admitted within 24 to 48 hours. These calls are often from one individual calling multiple times for a bed until one becomes available.
 - The number of bed requests does not represent unique individuals.
- There is no wait list for bed availability as Withdrawal Management is a drop-in service. Beds are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, allowing us to keep more beds occupied.
- Once admitted, clients have a seven day stay. This allows some ability to anticipate when beds become available. Because clients can choose to leave at anytime during their stay, people are encouraged to call often as the bed availability can shift very quickly.
- Clients requesting a bed when one is unavailable are provided with support to access appropriate immediate health or social needs.
- Individuals wishing to access Withdrawal Management Services who live outside of Whitehorse can call to reserve a bed before travelling from their home community.
- Youth bed requests or requests from pregnant individuals are never delayed.
- Services include medical assistance with withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming, referral to ongoing treatment, counselling and social work supports, therapeutic groups and other support services.

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- Withdrawal Management staff can also refer individuals to the Referred Care Clinic and Opioid Treatment Services.
- In 2024, Withdrawal Management Services trained staff in phlebotomy and IV therapy, which has reduced hospital transfers and improved patient care.
- Withdrawal Management Services offers aftercare programs, including Foundations, Recovery Group and Art Therapy for clients needing post-withdrawal supports.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has partnered with a local Indigenous-led recovery program, Thay K'I Ainint'I (Thigh-KEY-anna-tay), to offer programming for clients wishing to continue a recovery path.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services provides a traditional foods program, for bed-based participants as part of our efforts to develop a more culturally accessible program. This started in 2024 and has expanded to include supporting community and First Nations events by providing traditional foods.

Background:

- As of January 2025, 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.

Forensic Complex Care Team:

- The Forensic Complex Care Team was established in 2019 in partnership with the Department of Justice and provides therapeutic services at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, Community Corrections and in the communities.

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- The team works with clients in the criminal justice system and clients found Not Criminally Responsible by providing trauma-informed forensic assessments and counseling interventions.
- For clients under a Yukon Review Board disposition order, a Forensic Complex Care Team Social Worker acts as the Yukon Review Board Coordinator and delivers Case Management Services.
 - Yukon Review Board clients are individuals found Not Criminally Responsible or unfit to stand trial for criminal offences.
- Case Management 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 provides individual and group outpatient clinical counselling tailored to the needs of Yukoners involved in the criminal justice system and Yukon Review Board clients, as well as providing case management support for clients receiving services out of territory.
- Out-of-territory services include:
 - tracking process and collaboration with out-of-territory clients;
 - 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;

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- providing arrangements for clients to travel to and from the territory as ordered by the Review Board;
- 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; and
- on-site check-ins are arranged for cases where clients must attend hearings in the Yukon.

Approved by:

_____ Matt King _____

_____ May 1, 2025 _____

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:

- The Government of Yukon is working to expand access to primary care services across the Yukon.
- The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre accepts approximately 100 new clients per month from the waitlist and provides same-day services to clients.
- We remain committed to connecting every Yukoner with a primary care provider, as outlined in recommendation 2.2 of Putting People First. Efforts include hiring more health care professionals and supporting innovative service delivery models.

Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre:**Speaking notes:**

- The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre first opened its doors on November 7, 2022. The clinic is located at 9010 Quartz Road.
- Registered clients can access primary health care services by booking an appointment in advance, or using same-day appointments reserved for urgent or emerging primary health care needs.
- The application process for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre is designed to ensure that all Yukoners who want the

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opportunity to obtain primary health care services have the chance to provide relevant information and give their informed consent.

- Applications are reviewed and prioritized by a team of health care professionals at the clinic. Acceptance or waitlist status is 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 need for services in French or interpretation support, among others.
- The current and target staff complements, based on operational need, 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	2 + 2 AOC	6
Social Worker	1	1
Contract Physician	3 part time (0.9 FTE)	1 full time

Background:

- As of February 2025, there have been a total of 3,710 eligible applications for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
- As of January 2025, a total of 2,357 clients had received their first appointment and have been connected with a primary care provider.
- If someone is not initially accepted, they will be added to the waitlist and notified when the opportunity for an intake is available.
- The clinic’s current roster of primary care providers would be able to support up to 5,000 clients, provided that sufficient support staff are available.

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- Intakes are ongoing and Constellation is taking a triaged approach to ensure that those requiring immediate access receive it.
 - In 2025 –26, we budgeted **\$2.66M** (\$2,655,935) for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre.
 - The clinic is supported by three part-time contract physicians including one French speaking physician who provides consultation services and patient care.
 - There are currently eight bilingual staff members.

Collaborative care:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to expanding collaborative care and integrating allied health professionals in primary health care settings. The aim is to create teams that work together to support community health and wellness.
- We continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association and other stakeholders via a number of pathways, including the Joint Management Committee Work Plan, 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.
- This work aligns with the broader goals of Putting People First and supports our objective to provide Yukoners with high-quality, timely care from the most appropriate provider.

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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.
- Our government recognizes the essential role that health centres play in communities and the impact that service reduction and closure place on communities.
- It is important to note that health centres are not emergency rooms. They are not open 24/7 and do not provide all types of urgent acute care.
- During service reductions, the health centres typically remain open during their regular daytime hours.
 - No community is left without access to urgent care. A nurse remains on-site and paramedics are in place for after-hours and emergency response.
- In the case of full closures, emergency medical services paramedics are stationed in the community to ensure continuity of emergency services and patient transport.
- Like many other jurisdictions, the Yukon is facing a health human resource challenge, particularly in rural areas. These challenges are resulting in difficult decisions, including temporary service reductions and closures at some of our community health centres.
- We are proactively notifying impacted communities of service reductions as per our standard practice. These forecasts are dynamic and may change daily as staffing is confirmed or adjusted.
 - We notify RCMP, EMS and local First Nations as soon as we become aware of anticipated changes to services.

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- A float team is in place to provide dynamic coverage to community health centres and reduce closures.
- Community Nursing health centres do not fill patient prescriptions.
- Community Nursing Primary Health Care nurses administer and dispense medications in emergency situations and for short-term episodic care needs.
- All prescription medications for ongoing care needs are filled by pharmacies and not by the local health centre. Patients in Pelly Crossing can have their prescriptions filled at a pharmacy in Whitehorse and the medication is then shipped directly to them via mail by the pharmacy.
- Pelly Crossing residents will still have access to prescriptions through mail order services. Pharmacies also provide customers an option to pick up medications from Whitehorse.

Pelly Crossing Service Reduction

- Our government recognizes the essential role that health centres play in communities and the impact that service reduction and closure place on communities.
- The Pelly Crossing Health Centre had been forecasted to experience service reductions from April 30 to May 20 due to staffing shortages. This is as a result of the ongoing national health human resource shortage, which continues to impact our ability to consistently staff remote and rural community health centres.
- Since that time, the department has secured nursing coverage for the period of April 30 to May 5 and is working to confirm additional coverage from May 9 to 21.

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- The health centre will be closed from May 6 to 8 with EMS in the community for emergency response.
 - We will be communicating with all of our partners as new information and shifts confirmation becomes available.
 - We understand that staffing shortage at our community health centres causes concern to residents and the department will continue to make best efforts to fill gaps.
 - When health centres experience service disruptions or a nurse is not available to cover for periods of time, Emergency Medical Services steps in to be present in the community to ensure continued access to emergency care.
 - We are grateful to Emergency Medical Services responders for their service across the Yukon, and the team is working to ensure a critical care paramedic is stationed in the community to provide services at times of disruption.
 - Residents can call 911 or use the phone outside the health centre to reach emergency services.
 - For non-urgent health concerns, Yukoners can call 811, the 24/7 HealthLine for support.
 - We encourage anyone with additional questions about service reductions to reach out to Community Nursing at 867-667-8331.
 - Our government will continue to prioritize the health and safety of Yukoners and is working to minimize disruptions to care.

Service reductions:

- **Teslin:** Anticipated reduced services from April 25 to 30.
 - One Primary Health Care Nurse will remain in community to offer urgent and emergent care.

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- Full services are expected to resume on May 1.
 - We are working with EMS to provide after-hours emergency coverage.
- **Carcross:** Anticipated reduced services from April 25 to 30.
 - One Primary Health Care Nurse will provide urgent and emergent care.
 - This gap may shorten as we work to confirm additional staff hours.
 - Full services expected to resume May 1.
- **Faro:** currently experiencing reduced services from April 16 to April 30.
 - One Primary Health Care Nurse is providing urgent care.
 - Full services expected to resume May 1.
 - We are working with EMS provide emergency coverage during this period.
- **Ross River:** We are anticipating a services reduction from April 24 to April 29.
 - One Primary Health Care Nurse will remain on site to deliver urgent and emergent care.
 - EMS has confirmed a paramedic will be stationed in Ross River to provide after-hours emergency care and transport.
 - Full services are expected to return April 30.
- On the evening of April 22, the phones at the Ross River health centre were temporarily forwarded to 911 emergency response due to staff illness. This was not anticipated.
- Residents can still call 911 or use the phone outside the health centre to reach emergency services

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- We know this can be difficult and concerning for affected residents. We are doing everything we can to close these staffing gaps including continued recruitment efforts.

Community Health Centres:

Community	Staff on site	Vacancies	Closures
Dawson	1 Community Health Nurse in Charge 1 Community Health Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0	No closures in December
Watson Lake	1 Community Health Nurse in Charge 1 Community Health Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0	No closure in December 2024
Old Crow	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	.5 FTE PHCN Nurse in charge	No closure in December 2024
Ross River	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0.5 FTE Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 0.5 FTE Primary Health Care Nurse 1 FTE Admin Assistant	Reduction of Services 1 Primary Health Care Nurse in community April 24 to 29

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			Yukon EMS Primary Care Paramedic in community
Faro	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0	Reduction of Services from April 16 to 30
Beaver Creek	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Admin Assistant	.5 FTE Nurse in Charge PHCN	No closure in December 2024
Carcross	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 2 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	1 PHCN	Reduction of Services from April 25- 30
Mayo	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1.5 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0.5 Primary Health Care Nurse	No closure in December 2024
Haines Junction	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 3 Primary Health Care Nurses 1 Admin Assistant	0	No closure in December 2024

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Destruction Bay	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Admin Assistant	0.5 FTE Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge	No closure in December 2024
Carmacks	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 3 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0	No closure in December 2024
Teslin	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	0	Reduction of Services from April 25- 30
Pelly Crossing	1 Primary Health Care Nurse in Charge 1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	1 Primary Health Care Nurse 1 Admin Assistant	Closure April 30- May 20 Yukon EMS Primary Care Paramedic in community

Hearing Services:

- Hearing Services has been experiencing prolonged wait times for hearing assessments due to ongoing audiologist vacancies since September 2022.
- Effective mid-November 2024, there is limited capacity to conduct hearing aid consultations and fittings due to a recent retirement. The vacancy has been advertised since November 2024.

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- 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 – 24 to 30 months; and
 - low priority – three 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 assessments;
 - adults with sudden hearing loss; and
 - individuals experiencing debilitating tinnitus due to exceptional auditory complications.
- There is a waitlist for clients needing hearing aid consultations who do not fall into the priority groups.
- 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.

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- For the 2024-25 fiscal year, Hearing Services contracted four licensed audiologists who travelled to Whitehorse to provide direct client care for Hearing Services clients on our urgent, priority one and priority two waitlists for both pediatrics and adults.
- Currently, to support the 2025/26 fiscal year, a Request for Standing Offer for audiology services is posted on Bids and Tenders. This will create a list of licensed and experienced audiologists the Hearing Services Program can draw from for clinical service provision as needed.
- The program continues to recruit for audiologists and an audiometric technician. We are recruiting across Canada and internationally.

Whitehorse Vaccination Clinic:

- The clinic is a satellite location for the Whitehorse Health Centre and is operating as the Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place.
 - The Whitehorse Health Centre – NVD Place 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 Health Centre offered services to clients during the temporary closure in September.

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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,
 - The Whitehorse Health Centre primarily operates by appointment 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.
- As of the beginning of 2025, 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.

Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic:

- The Department of Health and Social Services opened the Walk-in Clinic on December 18, 2023.
- On April 29, 2024, the Walk-in Clinic opened at its permanent location at 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 operating hours.

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- The clinic is staffed by a multidisciplinary team including two permanent Nurse Practitioners and physicians contracted to provide regular clinic hours.
- The Walk-in Clinic has no Government of Yukon staff vacancies and is staffed by one clinic manager, two nurse practitioners, two licensed practical nurses, three medical office assistants and one social worker.
- As of February 2025, the clinic has provided care to 2,900 clients.
- We budgeted **\$1.31M** for 2025-26 to support the operations of the Whitehorse Walk-in Clinic.

Yukon Communicable Disease Control

- Yukon Communicable Disease Control (YCDC) provides testing, screening and resources for sexually transmitted diseases and communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis.
- The YCDC clinic at #4 hospital road is available on an appointment and drop-in basis for anyone to access free and confidential sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, emergency birth control and needle stick injuries. Clients do not require a primary care provider or a Yukon health care number to access services.
- This is a high-volume clinic that supports the majority of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection testing in the territory.
- In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, YCDC is responsible for the surveillance, prevention, monitoring and control of all communicable diseases throughout the territory in usual and outbreak situations.
- YCDC provides case management for reportable communicable diseases either in clinic or in consultation with health care providers

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(Physicians, Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, etc.) across the Yukon. This includes Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C.

- The team of Infectious Disease Nurses at YCDC are seen as experts in management of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections and provide advice and guidance daily to health care providers across the territory. This is accomplished in coordination with the consulting Infectious Disease Specialist for complicated cases.
- Guidelines developed by YCDC and the Chief Medical Officer of Health are available on Yukon.ca to guide health care providers in the care and public health management of reportable communicable diseases.
- With close collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as provincial and territorial counterparts, YCDC completes critical surveillance and reporting on all reportable communicable diseases as well as consultation and input into federal communicable disease workplans and guidelines.
- The YCDC program is supported by:
 - Seven FTE Infectious Disease Nurses
 - One Infection Control Coordinator
 - One Nurse in Charge
 - One Clinical Manager
 - Three Medical Office Assistants and one Lab and Data entry Assistant.

Approved by:	
_____ Matt King	_____ May 1, 2025
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note
Insured Health Services**Spring 2025**Health and Social
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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We are always exploring 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 health care system for Yukoners for generations to come.
- Patients, who are eligible under the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and Pharmacare Program, transitioning from 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 of Health and Social Services completed work to reduce the costs associated with reimbursements for drugs on the public formulary on December 4, 2024 by streamlining processes between Pharmacies and Insured Health Services.

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- Our government is working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues on Canada's National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases.
- This work includes determining how the three-year funding commitment totaling \$1.4 billion can be used by provinces and territories to support the implementation of the strategy.

Children's Drug and Optical Program:

- The Children's Drug and Optical Program helps cover the costs of prescription drugs and eye care for children aged 18 and under. This program is for lower-income families.
- In 2024–25, and as of February 18, 2025, there are 40 children enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Plan.
 - In 2023–24, there were 46 children enrolled.
- 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:

Speaking notes:

- 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.

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- In 2024–25, and as of February 24, 2025, there are 1,223 people enrolled in the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program.
 - In 2023–24, there were 1,262 people enrolled.
- 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 the Regulation.
- As indicated under section 17 of the Regulation, the Director of Insured Health Services 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.
- 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.

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- Work is underway to determine pathways to develop a more formalized appeals or complaint policy subject to legal review and recommendation.

Background:

- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program is a legislated payer 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.
- 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; and
 - prostheses and orthotics.
- 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 committee may be one option.

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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.

Yukon Drug Formulary (TAB #47)

- The Yukon Drug Formulary defines the products included for coverage under the Yukon's public plans: Pharmacare, Chronic Disease and Disability Program, and the Children's Drug and Optical Program.
- The decision to list a drug such as Tolpavan for coverage in the Yukon is based on the Canada's Drug Agency recommendations.
- The Government of Yukon, as well as all the other provincial and territorial jurisdictions, contribute to these discussions as part of the Canada's Drug Agency Formulary Working Group.
- The Government of Yukon actively participates in the decision-making process as well as providing our unique local perspective.
- Before a drug can be added to the Yukon drug formulary, it must:
 - Be authorized for sale in Canada by Health Canada,
 - Complete the reimbursement review process by the Canada's Drug Agency, and
 - Complete successful negotiation processes with the pan Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance.
- This process is applied consistently in public drug plans throughout the country. In other jurisdictions, drugs may be covered by other agencies or programs when they are not included in the public drug plan.

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- A formulary addition request is triggered by a physician prescription and application to the pharmaceutical program on behalf of the client.
- Canada's Drug Agency undertakes reviews of drugs and issues reimbursement recommendations and/or review reports to federal, provincial, and territorial drug programs; cancer agencies; and Canadian Blood Services.
- Tolpavan:
 - Tolvaptan has been reviewed by Canada's Drug Agency and is not recommended for coverage as there was insufficient evidence that the drug delays time to progression of the disease.
 - Tolvaptan is the only disease-specific treatment indicated for an inherited form of polycystic kidney disease (Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease, or ADPKD). The drug is indicated to slow the progression of renal enlargement and decline in kidney function in patients with this condition.
 - Tolvaptan is not covered by BC's public drug plan but is covered by their renal program. This program uses different criteria than the Yukon Drug Formulary and does not necessarily follow CDA recommendations.
 - Yukon has approximately 5 to 10 citizens with this condition and are currently being followed by the BC renal care team and a visiting nephrologist in Whitehorse.
 - Tolvaptan is not indicated for all patients with ADPKD but is reserved for those at higher risk of rapid renal progression or documented renal progression.

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Federal Pharmacare:

Speaking notes:

- No one should have to choose between paying for prescription drugs and putting food on the table. That's why the Government of Canada is taking action so Canadians can get the medication they need, regardless of their ability to pay.
- Canada and the Yukon have announced the signing of a pharmacare agreement to invest up to \$9.5 million over four years to provide universal access to contraceptive and diabetes medications for residents of the Yukon. The funding from this agreement will also improve access to diabetes devices and supplies.
- Through this historic agreement, Yukon residents will receive public coverage for a range of contraceptives and diabetes medications at little to no cost. This will support the reproductive freedom of more than 12,000 Yukoners and make sure that over 3,000 residents with diabetes can access essential medications to reduce their risk of serious health complications and improve their quality of life.
- Yukon residents can anticipate beginning to receive coverage for these products not later than January 2026.
- This announcement is an important step forward to improve health equity, affordability and health outcomes for Yukoners.
- Federal Pharmacare is a first-payer program. This means that the coverage is comprehensive and up-front, reducing out of pocket costs and delays in reimbursement.

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- For some Yukoners using the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program, the new Federal Pharmacare program will replace or supplement existing coverage for diabetes medication.
- The new agreement covers diabetes medication and contraception. Supplies will remain with the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program.
- The agreement does not provide funding for supplies, but does include a one-time payment of \$300K to increase access to supplies.
- Ozempic is only covered under Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program but not under federal pharmacare
- Diabetes medication and supplies may include:
 - Insulin,
 - Metformin,
 - Sulfonylureas and SGLT-2 inhibitors
- Contraceptive drugs and devices included under the plan may include:
 - Oral contraceptives (the pill),
 - Copper and hormonal IUDs,
 - Rings,
 - Implants, and
 - Injections.

Background:

- 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.

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- 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.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program and for social assistance recipients. Access to birth control is also available through the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic.
- 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.
- More work is anticipated to understand what coverage will look like for all Yukoners with the intent to ensure equity of access regardless of coverage.
- Putting People First recommends working with the federal government to support a model of care for a national pharmacare program.

Insured Health Services spending:

- 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 *Travel for Medical Treatment 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 Services, including medical travel, due to Consumer Price Index increases, our growing and aging population, and the complexity of care needs.

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- 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.
 - We have increased the medical travel subsidy, which is now tied to inflation based on the Consumer Price Index. This fiscal year, the subsidy is \$174 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$88 for same day travel and approved escorts.
 - We added travel for fertility treatment and surrogacy services under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Regulation* in 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.
 - 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.
- In 2023–24, Insured Health Services processed a total of 11,048 subsidy form applications.
 - This is a substantial increase over 2021–22, when 8,163 subsidy forms were processed.
- In 2023–24, there were a total of 3,838 out-of-territory medical travel cases, resulting in the program booking 13,744 scheduled flights.

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- This is an increase from the 2021–22 total of 2,671 out-of-territory medical travel cases, and the program booking 7,523 scheduled flights.
- In 2023–24, in and out of territory medical travel subsidy costs totaled \$4.5M (\$4,515,601).
 - In 2021–22, in and out of territory medical travel subsidy costs totaled \$3.2M (\$3,183,488).

New Health Care Cards:

- In January 2025, the Department of Health and Social Services began to distribute new territorial health care cards.
- The new cards replace the stickers and are being rolled out over the next year. The new card will be received through the mail about a month in advance of the current card's expiration date. No one will be required to attend the Insured Health Services office to receive their new card.
 - This initial issuance of new cards has been done with staggered expiration dates.
 - After the initial issuance, cards will be reissued every five years.
- The new health care cards will enhance the security, integrity and quality of the cards. Instances of known fraud using the current health care cards are limited.
- As part of the new health care card features, Yukoners can specify if their preferred language of care is French and add French characters to their name to match their official ID.

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- Photos are not included in the initial rollout; however, the department is working to add photos as soon as the capacity is available.
 - Photos have been excluded from the initial roll out to support and simplify this process.
- Cards may begin to host photos within 12 to 18 months of the initial roll out.
 - At this point, in-person attendance 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 allocated **\$475K** (\$475,000) in the 2024–25 budget.
- In 2025–26 we are allocating an additional **\$300K** (\$300,000) to support the continued rollout of health cards.
- The Department of Health and Social Services will continue to receive monthly migration reports from provinces and territories indicating Yukon cardholders who are now receiving health care coverage under another jurisdiction.
- As part of the work on the new health care cards, we are exploring options to ensure plan beneficiaries continue to meet eligibility requirements.

Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program:

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- This program assists individuals over the age of 65 and Yukoners between the ages of 60 and 64 who are married to a Yukon resident who is 65 or older.
- In 2024–25, and as of February 24, 2025, there are 6,937 people enrolled in the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits Program.
 - In 2023–24, there were 6,682 people enrolled.
- The program provides supports 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:

- 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.
- 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 travel, and medical supplies and equipment.

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Approved by:

Matt King

April 30, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

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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:

- We understand that some people need to travel outside their home communities to receive medical services and we are committed to supporting this necessary travel.
- The Medical Travel Program provides support for insured health services, as defined under the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act* and regulations, that are not available in an individual's home community.
- The program subsidy to reduce the cost and burden of travelling for medical purposes goes above and beyond what most Canadians receive.
- 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. On April 1, 2025, the subsidy will increase by an additional 2 per cent.
 - This will bring the subsidy rates to \$178 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$90 for same day travel and approved escorts.

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- In 2024–25, the medical travel subsidy rate was \$174 per day for overnight outpatient services and \$88 for same day travel and escorts.
- 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 the 2024–25 fiscal year, Insured Health Medical Travel has supported:

Service	2024–25 (February 18, 2025)	2023–24	2022–23	2021–22
In-territory medical travel cases	3,942	4,716	4,278	4,081
Out-of-territory medical travel cases	3,797	3,845	3,179	2,671
In-territory medevacs	519	593	438	373
Out-of-territory medevacs	718	707	421	451
Scheduled air flights booked	13,453	13,744	11,693	7,523
Subsidy forms processed	10,248	11,050	10,156	8,163
Mileage allowances processed	5,793	6,552	7,401	3,864

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Out-of-territory residential treatment:**Speaking notes:**

- 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.
- 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 Wellness and Substance Use 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, at Last Door Recovery Centre, Edgewood Treatment Centre, Homewood Ravensview, Westminster House Society and Cedars Recovery in British Columbia, and at Last Door Addictions Recovery Centre in Alberta.

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- All facilities covered under the Out-of-Territory Residential Treatment Directive have been reviewed by clinical advisors.

Policies and procedures:

- To begin a request for medical travel, a Physician, Nurse or other authorized practitioner must provide an application on behalf of their patient to the Medical Travel Program outlining the necessity for an identified insured medical service provided by a licensed medical practitioner that cannot be offered in one's home community.
 - At the same time, the authorized practitioner can also recommend a travel escort with all relevant contextual information with clearly outlined medical need.
- Applications take on average seven to ten days to be reviewed by the Medical Officer or Health Clinical Advisor.
- The Medical Officer of Health will review the medical travel application and any supporting documents to determine if the request meets the programs legislated requirements and criteria.
 - Out-of-territory requests for escorts are reviewed by the Medical Officer of Health as part of the legislative framework.
- If approved, a member of the Medical Travel Program team will contact the patient or guardian to book flights around the days the patient is medically required to be out of the territory and share information on how to claim the daily subsidy.
- Travel must originate from the Yukon.
- For any pre-approved medical travel, the eligible individual can submit a subsidy form to assist with the accommodation, meals and

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transportation costs incurred while out on pre-approved medical travel.

- To receive the subsidy, individuals must bring their subsidy form to each appointment and have the medical practitioner(s) sign to confirm the delivery of services. The completed form must be submitted to the Medical Travel Program upon completion of their travel.
- Should an individual wish to appeal the decision made by the Medical Travel Program, they are advised to write to the Director of Insured Health Services.
- All decisions taken are made in alignment with the legislative framework for the Travel for Medical Treatment Program.

Residences:

- The Department of Health and Social Services has been working to explore avenues to respond to Recommendation 2.6 in Putting People First, suggesting the creation of medical residences in Vancouver and Whitehorse.
 - The recommendation 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’.
- To better understand the need and assess associated costs for a medical residence in Whitehorse, we recently posted a Request for Information bid. The bid closed February 27, 2025, and we will be working to develop a thorough data analysis.

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-
- The Request for Information is looking for options with a high-level cost estimate and timeline to provide accommodation for Yukoners and approved escorts who need to travel from the communities to Whitehorse for medical care, Hearing Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Child Development Services, Outpatient therapy services at the Whitehorse General Hospital and Fertility Services when services are not available in their community.
 - Accommodations should be close to the Whitehorse General Hospital and have the potential to expand to meet the needs of the growing population.
 - We will explore partnerships with First Nations governments, non-government organizations and the private sector who are interested in creating a medical residence.
 - Further analysis and communication with our partners are necessary 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.

Supports for Rural Communities:

- As per the *Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations*, all eligible individuals are entitled to coverage for insured health services not available locally at the community health clinic, hospital or health centre.
- For those in need of emergency services, Yukon EMS has the capacity to respond across the territory by either land or air ambulance.

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Medical Travel

Health and Social
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Approved by:

Matt King

March 7, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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.
- 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 February 3, 2025, the Disability Services Unit had 294 children and 142 adults receiving services, with an additional 21 individuals with pending intake assessments.
- We currently fund six non-government organizations to support individuals with disabilities, including:
 - Autism Yukon, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society – Yukon, Inclusion Yukon, LDAY Centre for Learning, Opportunities Yukon and Teegatha’Oh Zheh.
- 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.

Yukon Supplementary Allowance:

- The Yukon Supplementary Allowance is paid to every Yukoner who is eligible for assistance and excluded from the labour force. This

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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 January 31, 2025, an average of 53.5 per cent of adult social assistance clients received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance (543 individuals from 531 households per month).
- In 2023–24, there was an average of 56.9 per cent of adult social assistance clients who received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance per month.
- Yukoners with disabilities who meet program eligibility criteria can access the Yukon Home Care Program. Services include acute, chronic, palliative, respite care and rehabilitation.
- Yukoners with disabilities who cannot be supported to live at home or within the Disability Services residential continuum may be eligible for long-term care. Eligibility is assessed on an application basis.

Canada Disability Benefit:

Speaking notes:

- The Government of Canada passed the *Canada Disability Benefit Act* in June 2023 and came into force in June 2024. The Act is intended to reduce poverty and support the financial and social security of working-age people with disabilities.
- The *Canada Disability Benefit Regulations* will become operational on May 15, 2025. The regulations establish eligibility criteria, the amount and how the amount will be calculated.

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- Payments are anticipated to begin in July 2025.
- The Government of Yukon participates in federal/provincial/territorial and provincial/territorial meetings, which include the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee.
- While our government strongly supports the benefit being deducted from income, we are working to understand how the proposed eligibility thresholds and benefit amounts will impact Yukoners.
- Together with colleagues in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, we recommended that the Government of Canada apply an equitable approach to rolling out the Canada Disability Benefit instead of a uniform approach to better address the increased cost of living and challenges unique to Northern living. This recommendation has not been included in the newly developed regulations.
- We continue advocating for Yukoners and our unique Northern considerations through discussions with our federal and provincial partners.
- The Canada Disability Benefit is an income-tested benefit for low- and modest-income working-age persons with disabilities. To be eligible for the benefit, you must meet the following conditions:
 - be aged 18 to 64
 - have been approved for the Disability Tax Credit
 - be one of the following:
 - a Canadian citizen
 - a permanent resident
 - a protected person
 - a temporary resident who has lived in Canada for the last 18 months

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- registered or entitled to be registered under the Indian Act
 - be a resident of Canada for the purposes of the Income Tax Act
 - have filed an income tax return with the Canada Revenue Agency for the previous tax year. To receive benefits between July 2025 and June 2026, for example, you must have filed a return for the 2024 tax year.
- If you are married or have a common-law partner, your spouse or common-law partner must also file an income tax return for the previous tax year for you to be eligible.
 - This requirement may be removed in some cases, such as when your spouse or common-law partner is not resident in Canada for tax purposes, where someone lives apart from their spouse or common-law partner for reasons they do not control (for example, a long-term care home), or where it would be unsafe for someone to ask their spouse or common-law partner to file a return.
- The benefit amount you receive will depend on how much income you have. Generally, the higher your income, the lower your benefit amount will be. This is to make sure the benefit goes to those who need it the most.
- To become approved for the Disability Tax Credit, an application that has been certified by a medical practitioner will need to be submitted to the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Based on Canada Revenue data from 2022, it is estimated that there are 546 Yukoners registered for the Disability Tax Credit. While not every person with disabilities may be eligible for this Credit, based on this low number, we believe there may be additional Yukoners who

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will need to apply for the Disability Tax Credit in order to apply for the Canada Disability Benefit.

Background:

- The maximum amount an approved person can receive from July 2025 to June 2026 is \$200 a month (\$2,400 annual maximum). The amount you receive will be based on:
 - your adjusted income;
 - your family status (whether you are single or have a spouse or common-law partner, and, if you are in a couple, whether both you and your spouse or partner are eligible for the benefit); and
 - whether you and/or your spouse or common-law partner have employment or self-employment income (working income).
- You will receive the full benefit if your adjusted income is \$23,000 or less if you are single, or \$32,500 or less if you have a spouse or common-law partner.
- Your adjusted income is based on family net income and includes all sources of money that you and your spouse or common-law partner reported on your income tax return to the Canada Revenue Agency, such as social assistance payments, workers' compensation and income from employment. Adjusted income does not include Canada Disability Benefit payments.
- The working income exemption will apply if:
 - you are single and have employment or self-employment earnings, up to \$10,000 of it will be exempt when calculating your benefit; or
 - you have a spouse or common-law partner, up to \$14,000 of combined earnings will be exempt when calculating your benefit.
- Eligible individuals who did not apply for the benefit can request retroactive payments for up to 24 months from the program's start date.

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Improving Services for Yukoners with Disabilities:

- In 2024, we completed an engagement with Disability Services clients as part of a quality improvement initiative to inform our review and enhancement of programming for people with disabilities.
- Through in-person interviews or through an online survey distributed by Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 78 individuals (32.6 per cent response rate) shared their input on how to improve programming and services.
- The following Putting People First recommendations relate specifically to the design and delivery of Disability Services and 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.’ This recommendation is being pursued as part of the rate review of Social Assistance and the modernization of Income Support Services.
 - 5.10 – ‘Create a separate, stand-alone disability benefit for those with permanent disabilities.’

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- 5.14 – ‘Provide self-or family-managed care funding to enable adult Yukoners to live at home for longer.’ This recommendation is a quality improvement initiative with Continuing Care.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder:

- The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Interagency Advisory Committee released its Yukon Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan in September 2019.
 - The committee includes NGOs, 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 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; and
 - a variety of activities to promote Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day annually on September 9 to raise awareness and prevention strategies.
- We recognize that aging parents require additional support when supporting adult children living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

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As we implement the Putting People First recommendations, we are looking at ways to expand support to these families.

- Our government also participates in the Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership.
- The Governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon formed this alliance for the purpose of working collaboratively towards the development and promotion of an inter-provincial/territorial approach to prevention, intervention, care and support of individuals affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- As part of this partnership, we have supported the development of the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network for the purpose of pooling resources to build research capacity across and within the partnership jurisdictions.

Individualized Supervisory Care (caregiver benefit):

- In November 2022, we updated the In-Home Child Care financial support and renamed it Individualized Supervisory Care.
- 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.
- Funding is only approved for use outside of regular school hours for school-aged children, as the *Education Act* mandates provision of education to all school-age children, including those with disabilities.

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- Through collaboration with the Department of Education supports are also available during school hours for some high-needs children with disabilities.
- 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.

Transfer Payment Agreements with non-profits:

- The Yukon's non-profit organizations are vital community partners, and we are grateful for their programs and services that support the inclusion of Yukoners with disabilities.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working towards renewing several Transfer Payment Agreements that expire on March 31, 2025.
- Opportunities Yukon provides critical services related to disability and mental wellness through:
 - Max's Place, a residential housing program for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and addiction;
 - River Place (formerly Granger Haven), a residential program for adults with developmental disabilities and concurrent disorders; and
 - Tay St and Ketza, two group homes for adults with intellectual and/or neurodevelopmental disabilities.

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- Disability Services has two Transfer Payment Agreements with Opportunities Yukon totaling \$3.3M (\$3,312,000). Opportunities Yukon is the department’s second-highest funded NGO.
 - Teegatha’Oh Zheh is a centre-based day program that supports 24 adults with intellectual disabilities.
 - Inclusion Yukon provides services to 21 clients through either individualized one to one day programming, individualized workplace supports, or via Community Support Workers who work with adults living on their own that need support with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living.

Teegatha'Oh Zheh financial pressures:

- Teegatha'Oh Zheh is a dedicated centre-based non-profit organization that offers essential programming and support services to Yukoners with intellectual disabilities.
- Their work is invaluable, providing opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, and community integration.
- We recognize that Teegatha'Oh Zheh is currently experiencing financial challenges, and we are working with their Board of Directors to explore viable solutions to ensure their operations continue.
- Our goal is to help Teegatha'Oh Zheh navigate these financial pressures and maintain their important services for the community.

Approved by:	
_____	_____
Matt King	April 25, 2025
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 recognize and appreciate the dedication of Family and Children's Services staff in supporting 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 committed to protecting children from harm and ensuring they receive the necessary care 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:

- The Placement Resource Team delivers adoption services and caregiver services to adoptive parents and caregivers looking after children in out-of-home care.
- The team currently includes an Adoptions Coordinator and two Placement Resource Social Workers. Recruitment efforts are underway for the third Placement Resource Social Worker position.
- 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.

Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Orders – Final Settlement Agreements related to compensation and long-term child welfare reform:**Compensation of Class Members:**

- Class Members of the First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle Settlement will be able to submit their claims for compensation starting on March 10, 2025.
- The first claims period to open is for the Removed Child Class and the Removed Child Family Class, which represent two of nine classes included in the settlement.
- These first two classes include First Nations individuals who were removed from their homes as Children between April 1, 1991, and March 31, 2022, while on reserve or in the Yukon and placed into care funded by Indigenous Services Canada, as well as their Caregiving Parents or Caregiving Grandparents.
- Base compensation under the Removed Child Class is \$40,000. Claimants may be entitled to additional payments and interest.
- Up to two eligible Caregiving Parents or Caregiving Grandparents can receive base compensation of \$40,000 each with respect to a Removed Child. If more than two Caregiving Parents or Caregiving Grandparents have submitted a Claim for the same Child, priority will

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be given to the two Claimants from whom the Child was first removed.

- The Department of Health and Social Services is working to amend the *Social Assistance Act* to exempt any money paid to an eligible class member under the First Nations Child and Family Services, Jordan's Principal and Trout Class Settlement Agreement in the calculation of net monthly income.
- The Federal Court approved the \$23.34 billion Agreement on October 24, 2023. On June 19, 2024, the Federal Court approved the distribution protocol for the Removed Child Class and Removed Child Family Class.

Long-Term Child Welfare Reform:

- On July 11, 2024, the Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Canada reached a \$47.8 billion 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 the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.
 - The Long-Term Child Welfare Reform settlement agreement has not been finalized. The Government of Yukon is continuing to

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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.

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 \$23.4 billion 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.

Close to Home report

- On February 5, 2025, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office released the "Close to Home: A Yukon Approach to Supporting Children with Complex Needs: Summary of Findings" report.
- The report provides a systemic review of how the Government of Yukon supports children with complex needs and included learning

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from parents, First Nations, not-for-profit organizations, medical professionals, education professionals and other Yukon government employees.

- The report contains five recommendations to the departments of Health and Social Services and Education to support children with neurodiversity and dysregulation and their families.
- Recommendations include creating a multi-departmental complex case committee, establishing Yukon-based therapeutic resources, developing programs and policies for parent supports, providing additional training for educators, and for the Yukon government to provide an initial and follow-up response.
- The report identified 39 children that fall within the scope of the review, with 90% of these children having complex issues and 70% of these children are Indigenous.
- The review of out-of-territory treatment included 15 children and youth.
- In collaboration with Family and Children's Services, Disability Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and the Child Development Centre, we are exploring models of care for children with disabilities who are in out-of-home care and have complex needs.

Family Resource Unit:

- The Family Resource Unit supports parents and caregivers of children from prenatal to age 19.

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- From January 1 to December 31, 2024, the Family Resource Unit supported 211 families through home visiting and group programming.
- The Family Resource Unit currently has offices in Whitehorse and Watson Lake and travels to the communities of Old Crow, Dawson City, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Carmacks, Ross River, Haines Junction, Burwash and Carcross.
- From January 1 to December 31 2024, in addition to home visiting, the Family Resource Unit has offered over 210 groups in the Yukon for parents. Many of these groups are in partnership with First Nations and community organizations.
- The Family Resource Unit has also begun to offer a parenting support program called the Positive Parenting Program.
- These parenting programs give parents of children ages five to 16 years simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior and prevent problems developing.
 - Topics include coping with teens' emotions, reducing family conflict, developing good bedtime routines and managing fighting and aggression.
- These programs have been widely accepted, and staff are traveling to communities across the Yukon offering a variety of support to families with children and teens.

Jordan's Principle changes:

- Jordan's Principle is intended to make sure that First Nations children have substantively equal access to government services, considering

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their distinct circumstances, experiences and needs as First Nations children.

- In February 2025, Indigenous Services Canada announced that they are implementing changes to Jordan's Principle's operating procedures related due to substantial increases in requests.
- These changes provide further clarity and consistency on the required documentation, available services and ensure long-term sustainability of Jordan's Principle to continue filling gaps and addressing delays and denials.
 - To limit duplication and speed up request processes, decision-making powers in regional offices will be expanded.
 - Requests to Canada under Jordan's Principle are to include supporting documentation from a professional (e.g. health professional, educational professional, Elder, Knowledge Keeper) linking the request to the child's needs.
- Provincial and territorial levels of Jordan's Principle's processes and policies are also in review. This is to ensure products, services and supports align with available resources.
- Family and Children's Services does not make Jordan's Principle requests or provide documentation to support requests.
- Family and Children's Services does cover costs for services that a Child Protection Social Worker assessed to be necessary.
- Due to these changes, potential impacts to Family and Children's Services include:

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- additional requests from Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to fund services that were denied by Jordan's Principle;
 - an increase in the number of families in contact with Family and Children's Services due to services that were denied by Jordan's Principle that would have prevented child protection concerns from escalating; and
 - the Council of Yukon First Nations may want to be designated as a First Nation Service Authority, or under the *Child and Family Services Act*, be delegated by the Family and Children's Services Director to receive funding from Canada's First Nation Child and Family Services Program.
- Jordan's Principle requests are confidential and it is difficult to understand the impact on Yukoners or on Family and Children's Services at this time.

Necessities of Life Supports

- The Council of Yukon First Nations' Family Preservation Services is working with Indigenous Services Canada to renew funding for the Necessities of Life program.
- Historically, this program was funded through Jordan's Principle. Due to recent changes with how Jordan's Principle is being implemented, funding for the Necessities of Life program ended March 31, 2025.
- The Necessities of Life program supports families with essential needs such as groceries, baby products, children's clothing and children's bedroom furniture.

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- While the Council of Yukon First Nations advocates for additional funding, the program is not able to continue beyond March 31, 2025.
- Family Preservation Workers are working with their clients to find alternative supports, such as accessing community food programs and pre-natal programming.

Jordan's Principle's Extension**Speaking points**

- On March 22, 2025, the federal government announced the continued funding for Jordan's Principle through 2025–26.
- The funding will support requests for products, services, and supports for families, communities, and organizations made through Jordan's Principle for First Nations children in the year to come.
- Indigenous Services Canada will also review First Nations recipients' contribution agreements to make sure eligible and documented expenses that have been incurred under Jordan's Principle in 2024–25 will be considered for funding. This review is intended to support partners who are providing critical services to First Nations children through the transition to the new operating procedures related to processing requests under Jordan's Principle.
- The Government of Canada is committed to working with First Nations Partners and provincial and territorial counterparts on programs and initiatives aimed at closing these gaps in both the short and long term.
- Parents, guardians and communities should continue to submit requests to Jordan's Principle for First Nations children. An existing or previously approved request does not guarantee that a new request

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for funding will be renewed or approved as each new request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Background:

- Since 2016, nearly \$8.8 billion has supported more than 8.9 million products, services, and supports approved under Jordan's Principle.
- In 2024–25, total funding allocated to the three territories for Jordan's Principle was \$242,508,252.95. Total funding for each territory is not provided separately.
 - This does not include funding through the Inuit Child First Initiative.

Out-of-home care placements:**Speaking notes:**

- Family and Children's Services supports children in out-of-home care, including those in extended family care and those under the care of the director.
- Between April 1, 2024, and March 13, 2025, Family and Children's Services expended \$5.3M on costs related to children in out-of-home care.
- As of January 31, 2025, there were 192 children in out-of-home care, with 99 children in the care of the Director and 93 children in extended family care.
 - The number of children in out-of-home care (192) exceeds the number of caregivers (124) available to care for the needs of these children.

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- On March 3, 2025, Government of Yukon's Transitional Support Services' group homes were at capacity; 42 bedrooms were available for 46 children and youth.
- 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 and 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 Support 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, 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 age six.
- On October 1, 2024, caregivers' basic monthly payments were adjusted to the Consumer Price Index and increased to the following:
 - Whitehorse: \$47.99 per day
 - Rural communities: \$51.36 per day
 - Old Crow: \$88.47 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 operate their Family Reunification Home pilot, where children in out-of-home care are reunified with their parents in a supportive, 24/7 staffed environment.
- The Council of Yukon First Nations deliver an annual caregiver training module on Yukon First Nations culture. This training will be included in

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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.
 - This new group home has four bedrooms, two bathrooms, two living rooms, one kitchen and one office.
 - As of March 2025, there are five children sharing the four bedrooms. When possible, siblings share rooms.

New group home 2025–26 budget		
	\$	FTE
Personnel		
Supervisor	109,000	1
Case Worker	89,000	1
Transitional Support Workers	972,000	12
Subtotal	1,250,000	14
Other O&M		
Program costs	50,000	
Rent	60,000	
Utilities	40,000	
Maintenance	100,000	
Subtotal	250,000	
Total	\$1,500,000	

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Background:

- As of January 31, 2025, there were 99 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 January 31, 2025, there were 93 children residing with extended family members, as opposed to being in the care of the Director of Family and Children's Services.
 - 99 per cent of these children identified as Indigenous.
 - 87 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 88 children in care and 108 children in extended family care on January 31, 2024.
- The Yukon's Child Welfare programs comprise a broad suite of programs, including:
 - Placement services;
 - Adoption services;
 - Transitional Support Services;
 - Family Resource Unit; and
 - Regional services.

Prenatal and Infant Nutrition

- The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program supports families and assists in setting the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities.
- The Government of Yukon continues to match federal funding of \$677K (\$677,000) to support the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program

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in the Yukon. This has been ongoing since 2021–22 with funding ending March 31, 2026.

- The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program operates through the following groups and communities:
 - Carcross: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
 - Dawson City: Healthy Families, Healthy Babies
 - Watson Lake: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
 - Whitehorse:
 - Victoria Faulkner Women’s Centre - Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
 - Teen Parent Centre Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
 - Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Prenatal Nutrition Program
 - Les EssentiElles.
 - Teslin: Teslin Prenatal Program
- The Government of Yukon also provided \$175K to the Yukon’s Network for Healthy Early Human Development for fiscal years 2022–23 and 2023–24. This is part of the federal government’s Community Action Program for Children, with funding ending March 31, 2026.

Progress of jury’s recommendations from Coroner’s inquest into death of Kaiya Stone-Kirk:

- As of February 25, 2025, four recommendations have been implemented and four recommendations are in progress.
- Recommendations 10 and 11 are ongoing as we remain committed to collaborating with Yukon First Nations on a regular basis to support Yukon First Nation children remain in their communities.

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- Recommendation 5 (implemented): 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 (implemented): Develop and incorporate policies related to the stock of safe sleep equipment maintained in Family and Children's Services offices.
 - We have implemented processes for internal communication among staff and management regarding the stock of safe sleep equipment in each office and allocated the necessary funding to maintain this stock.
- Recommendation 7 (implemented): Provide mandatory in-person training on the safe sleep policy.
 - We continue to deliver mandatory in-person training sessions throughout the year on the safe sleep policy to all Family and Children's Services frontline workers.
- Recommendation 8 (underway): 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 regularly 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

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

- Recommendation 9 (implemented): Develop a course in collaboration with First Nations that must be completed by caregivers who work for Family and Children's Services.
 - On February 25, 2025, the Council of Yukon First Nations began providing an annual training module on Yukon First Nations culture for caregivers. All community caregivers will be required to complete this training.
- Recommendation 10 (underway, ongoing): 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 caregiver recruitment events with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government in October 2024. In November and December, we met with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Carcross/Tagish First Nation to discuss caregiver recruitment events in 2025.
 - We planned recruitment sessions with White River First Nation and Ross River Dena Council, but those events were cancelled last minute due to staffing shortages.
 - We continue to extend the offer to host similar events in all Yukon communities to Yukon First Nations.

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- 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 or urgent situations.
- Recommendation 11 (underway, ongoing): Support Yukon First Nations in establishing resources in their communities for temporary care of children in emergency situations.
 - 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 establishing these resources.
 - We continue to discuss establishing these resources with other Yukon First Nations when addressing caregiver shortages in their communities.
- Recommendation 13 (implemented): Consider Yukon First Nations community safety officers when RCMP services are required.
 - 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 provide information and resources, discuss safe sleep strategies, conduct visual inspections of sleeping surfaces during home visits, and provide safe sleep spaces, such as pack and play mattresses, to all parents and

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caregivers with children two years of age or under receiving child and family services.

- Our Family Resource Unit has safe sleep conversations with expectant parents and delivers training to parents and caregivers on safe sleep practices.
- We provide funding to the Council of Yukon First Nations to support service users of Family and Children's Services that require prenatal and infant support services.

Social Workers in Yukon Communities

- The Government of Yukon deeply values Social Workers for their dedication, compassion and efforts to enhance the lives of those they serve.
- Social Workers provide essential services to vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- There are 11 Family and Children's Services offices in rural Yukon and all communities are covered by Regional Social Workers.
- The 14 Regional Social Worker positions throughout the Yukon include 12 community positions and two mobile positions. Of these, 10 are filled (71 per cent) as of April 1, 2025.
- There are permanent Regional Social Worker positions in each of the following communities:
 - Carcross
 - Carmacks
 - Dawson City
 - Faro

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- Haines Junction
- Mayo
- Pelly Crossing
- Ross River
- Old Crow
- Teslin
- Watson Lake (two positions)
- Both Mobile Social Worker positions are filled, while current vacant community positions are in Dawson City, Faro, Ross River, and Watson Lake.
- Several Regional Social Workers are covering two communities during vacancies.
 - A Mobile Regional Social Worker provides coverage to Faro and Ross River.
 - A community Regional Social Worker provides coverage to Dawson City.
- The Department of Health and Social Services has continuous, rolling competitions for Regional Social Worker vacancies.

Staffing and rural resourcing:**Speaking notes:**

- As of January 2025, approximately 66 per cent of total Family and Children's Services Social Worker positions are filled. 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.

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- We are temporarily reassigning more Social Workers to communities that are most in need of services.
- Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations have expressed concerns in the First Nations Health and Social Development Commission meetings that not all children, youth and families are receiving the services they are legally entitled to.
- Currently, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations provide culturally relevant primary and secondary prevention programs but do not provide protection services.

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.
- 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 Nations 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 to 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.
 - Long-term supports are provided for justice-involved youth through vocational training, education and recreational

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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 Nations governments and other community supports to consider a holistic approach to support the youth.
 - Youth Probation Officers service all Yukon communities through Mobile Probation Officer/Extrajudicial Sanctions positions. These positions provide in-community support, programming and supervision as well as community specific panels.
 - Young Offenders Facility:
 - The Young Offenders Facility offers rehabilitative, cultural and life skills programming to all youth who enter the facility.
 - The Facility operates with 14 beds that offer both open and closed custody options for youth who were ages 12 to 17 at the time of their offence.

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- 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

April 25, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Services

Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives supported through Yukon Housing Corporation's Creating Home: Strategic Plan 2023–24 to 2027–28, the Housing Action Plan for Yukon, the Community Advisory Board's review of the 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.
- Offering housing to those who need it most and decentralizing services are key parts of the Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan.
 - The Action Plan aims to improve safety and wellbeing to create a more vibrant, safe and inclusive downtown.

By Name List:

- Safe at Home Society reports that on February 17, 2025, there were 152 people on the By Name List actively experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.

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- On July 31, 2024, there were 216 people on the By Name List actively experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.
- The majority of those experiencing homelessness use temporary shelter such as couch surfing, shelters, hotels/motels, public institutions like corrections and treatment centers or are in transitional housing.
- Safe at Home Society counted at least 145 individuals experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse through the fifth Point-in-Time Count during a 24-hour period on October 22, 2024.
 - The Safe at Home Society'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.
 - Community Outreach Services is operating at a maximum capacity of supporting 50 individuals or households.

Emergency Shelters:

- We provide operation and maintenance funding to support shelters in Whitehorse, including 405 Alexander, Kaushee's Place and the Emergency Youth 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.

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- Our government continues to support the newly opened Council of Yukon First Nations Family Preservation Wellness Centre. The Centre is the First Nations-led shelter in the Yukon dedicated to supporting women and children.
- To ensure safety, the number of emergency beds depends on the level of care and the needs of the individuals accessing the care.
- The Department of Health Social Services supports 133 emergency shelter beds available in the territory:

Shelter	Community	Maximum # of Beds
405 Alexander	Whitehorse	54
Kaushee’s Place	Whitehorse	15
Youth Emergency Shelter	Whitehorse	11
Help and Hope for Families	Watson Lake	11
Jëje Zho	Dawson City	5
Dawson Women’s Shelter	Dawson City	5
CYFN Family Preservation Wellness Centre	Whitehorse	32

- From April 1 to December 31, 2024, there was an average of 74 stays per night in all shelters across the Yukon.

Funding Initiative (Unsheltered Homelessness):

- The Government of Yukon, along with the federal government, announced the Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampments Initiative on February 17, 2025.
- Under this agreement, the governments of Canada and the Yukon will each contribute \$1 million over two years to provide supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.

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- Funding provided for this agreement is part of the federal Solving the housing crisis: Canada's Housing Plan to address the urgent issue of unsheltered homelessness across Canada.

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 with access to permanent homes without pre-conditions, such as sobriety.
- A comprehensive evaluation of Housing First has been completed with community partners, including the 16-unit housing first complex on 5th Ave and Wood St, and the 20 units at 405 Alexander.
- An Expression of Interest has been released to determine the best use and operation plan for the Wood St. housing residence going forward.
- The Government of Yukon has completed a 10-unit 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.
 - The 10-unit Housing with Services 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 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.

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- Construction began in 2023, and the anticipated completion date is early 2025.

Housing First at 5th and Wood Street

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives.
- Housing First principles address poverty by providing unhoused people with access to permanent homes without pre-conditions, such as sobriety.
- The Transfer Payment Agreement with Connective, the current operators of the residence, was recently extended to June 30, 2025, to ensure stability while long-term sheltering solutions were developed.
- A Transfer Payment Agreement with the new operator is in development.
- Under the new agreement, the Housing First units will transition from a tenancy model to a program model. This will allow better oversight of the units and ensure residents participate in programming.

Housing with Services Stock:

- Housing with Services housing units are subsidized, non-market housing options. Residents are provided with various supports and services, depending on the needs of the individual and structure of the program. There are 74 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles:

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Location	Number of units
405 Alexander	20
Wood Street Housing First	16
Cornerstone Community Building	21
408 Alexander	17

- 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 Rent-Geared-to-Income stock, Grey Mountain affordable housing stock or long-term care beds.
- There are 19 units for second stage housing for women and their children fleeing violence in the territory.
- 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 Ketzá	5
Aspen group home	5
Residences for Yukon Review Board clients	2
Approved caregiver homes for adults with disabilities	21

Office of the Auditor General Report on housing:

- On May 25, 2022, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a report on housing in the Yukon.

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- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation accepted all the recommendations and to continue working with housing partners to address them.
- We continue to work towards enhancing collaboration and coordination of housing and services.
- In May 2022, the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services 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 suitable and affordable housing.
- In 2022, we released an Action Plan and associated workplan with Yukon Housing Corporation.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to addressing the recommendations in this report. This includes:
 - # 62. The Department of Health and Social Services should, in consultation with housing partners, undertake regular and comprehensive needs analysis, including a review of the use of hotels as temporary accommodation and take appropriate action to meet client needs.
 - #64. The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that agreements with third-party providers are comprehensive and are monitored for key deliverables.
 - #79. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that there is governance and oversight in place by effectively working together and with other housing partners to demonstrate meaningful progress, resolve problems, and achieve results.

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- #87. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should work together and with housing partners to identify gaps and improve information systems to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to support decision making and to report on the planning, delivery, and results related to housing in Yukon.
- #91. The Department of Health and Social Services should establish appropriate performance indicators as well as conduct regular program and housing provider evaluations to assess and report on the achievement of desired results.
- As of December 2023, progress on implementation includes:
 - amending the prioritization system for the Rent-Geared-to-Income housing program ensures that all eligible Yukoners have equal access;
 - developing a social support branch quarterly housing report to inform programs and services improvements;
 - updating third-party agreements for targeted, efficient service delivery and improved monitoring, ensuring better accountability and responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable Yukoners;
 - 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.

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Safe at Home Society's "The Hearth":

- The Government of Yukon is supporting Safe at Home Society'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.
- 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 budget;
 - \$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.
- 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.

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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 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 7,459 individuals (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:**Speaking notes:**

- Normandy Living is a privately-owned 84-unit residence that offers Seniors' and Elders supportive housing.
- Normandy Living offers support services such as meals, weekly housekeeping, laundry services, activities and programming and 24/7 security.
- We provide funding for 4.0 FTE in Home Care to support 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.

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- These units are available to Yukoners through the Yukon Housing Corporation's Rent-Geared-to-Income program. These units include a services-geared-to-income component.
- Eligibility is based on income testing and results of a Clinical Frailty Scale assessment.
- 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 dedication ensures that every offering upholds the Commission's benchmarks for excellence.

Background:

- 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.
- Yukon Housing's lease agreements are for a period of 20 years from the initial lease date of the unit's tenant.
- The costs associated with Normandy Living are roughly 20 per cent of the cost of housing individuals in long-term care homes.

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.

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- We support people in their choices, which may include tenting, couch surfing, or staying in a hotel or at a shelter.
 - Between April 2024 and December 2024, there was an average of 2.5 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.

Watson Lake 10-plex

- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation have developed an Expression of Interest to seek proposals from community-based and government organizations to manage and operate a substance-free supportive housing program at a new 10-Plex in Watson Lake.
- Originally planned as a low-barrier housing initiative, results from the recent 2024 program evaluation of Housing First programs have informed the need for different programming.
- The ideal proposal will present a transitional, supportive housing program. The preference is for a recovery housing program that targets Yukoners seeking a path to sobriety or who seek or welcome

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sober living. Proposals that address other supportive housing gaps in the community, reflect a partnership with other service providers, or present mixed programming opportunities based recovery-friendly living will be considered. This may include people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, but who strive to maintain sobriety.

- Designed to provide safe and stable housing, this development is set to welcome Yukoners in 2025.

Background:

- The 10-Plex includes eight studio units, two of which are accessible, and two one-bedroom units, ideal for double occupancy.
 - All units are furnished and have a private bathroom, kitchenette, and include kitchen supplies, towels, dishes and bedding.
- An office space, door/guest management entry, communal kitchen and meeting areas are included in the building. These spaces may be utilized by complementary community service providers approved by the funder.
- The Watson Lake 10-plex was designed with input from the Liard First Nation Chief and Council, the Town of Watson Lake Mayor and Council, and local community members.
- The project meets a recommendation made in the 2022 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Yukon Housing.

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).

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- The society is pursuing additional funding options through Yukon Housing Corporation and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's application-based programs.
- 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.

Youth Shelter Operation

- Effective April 1, 2025, BGC Yukon (formerly Boys & Girls Club of Yukon) began transitioning the operations of the Youth Emergency Shelter to "The Landing Pad".
- The Landing pad emergency youth shelter and reopen at the same location in early June 2025, once facility repairs and changes that reflect BGC Yukon's mission, core values, and best practices are complete.
 - At that time, BGC Yukon will post hours of operation and service, programming and support updates on its website and social media.
- BGC Yukon is dedicated to providing stability through a safe, supportive space that will build upon the success of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.
- During the transition, BGC Yukon will continue working with all available service providers, the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre,

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Government of Yukon and community partners to ensure the space is reopened as quickly as possible.

Approved by:

Matt King

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

May 1, 2025

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We recognize that some Yukoners face financial challenges in meeting core needs such as food and shelter.
- Our government, along with community partners, have programs and services available to help alleviate poverty.
- In addition to basic Social Assistance, we offer the Yukon Supplementary Allowance, Social Work supports, connection to employment and training programs, and approval-based prescription drug and optical coverage.
- We continue to explore ways to support Yukoners most affected by inflation.
- Reviewing social assistance rates is part of our work to address recommendations in Putting People First 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:

- The Yukon Supplementary Allowance is \$250 per month. Yukoners who receive social assistance may also receive the Yukon supplementary allowance if they are:
 - a Yukon resident;
 - 19 years or older; and

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- either assessed as unemployed because of severe or long-term disability;
 - receiving Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits; or
 - receiving or eligible for Old Age Security.
- Between 2023–24 and 2024–25, the number of individuals receiving Social Assistance increased by 6 per cent.
- From April 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, there were an average of 957 social assistance cases (households), comprising an average of 1,361 recipients (individuals).
 - This includes 816 social assistance cases in Whitehorse and 141 cases in other communities per month
 - From April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, an average of 57.6 per cent of social assistance cases (531 households) had at least one household member who received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance per month (among cases receiving regular social assistance benefits).
- 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 60.8 per cent of social assistance cases (531 households) had at least one household member who received the Yukon Supplementary Allowance per month (among cases receiving regular social assistance benefits).
- From April 1, 2024, to March 4, 2025, there have been an average of 1,161 Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients per month, with a total of 1,409 unique recipients throughout the same time frame.
 - From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, there were an average of 1,240 Yukon Seniors' Income Supplement recipients per

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month, with a total of 1,545 unique recipients throughout the year.

- Due to program growth in 2024–25, the second supplementary estimates increased by \$300K (\$300,000) for the Pioneer Utility Grant legislated grants.
 - In 2024–25, there were 2,340 unique Pioneer Utility Grant recipients.
 - In 2023–24, there were 2,319 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 collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and potential other partners such as the federal government and researchers.
 - The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition’s report on policy options is currently in review.
 - 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.
- The Government of Yukon is prioritizing improvements to social assistance through the ongoing Social Assistance Rate Review, which aims to enhance financial support for low-income Yukoners as part of the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.

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- The Basic Income Guarantee options paper was commissioned as an exploratory research project, not a policy commitment, and the government has not adopted its recommendations.
- Any major policy shift, such as a guaranteed income program, requires further research, consultation and financial analysis before being considered.
- The government will ensure clear communication so Yukoners understand the distinction between the Social Assistance Rate Review, which is an active policy initiative, and the Basic Income Guarantee options paper, which is a research study.
- The government values its collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and other stakeholders and will work to better define expectations for commissioned research projects in the future.
- 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.

Pioneer Utility Grant (PUG):

- The Pioneer Utility Grant assists Yukon seniors with the cost of heating their home – whether owned or rented.
- Yukon Seniors aged 65 or older in the year of the grant can apply.
 - Applications are accepted between July 1 and December 31.
 - Eligible applicants receive one payment, typically within a month of application.
 - Eligibility for the grant is based on income, marital status and residential address.

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- A person is ineligible for the Pioneer Utility Grant if they receive another housing subsidy, subsidized housing, or social assistance.
- 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.

Rates for Social Assistance:

- 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.
- In November 2024, per the Consumer Price Index in Whitehorse, an increase of 2.4 per cent was applied to basic assistance rates.
 - In November 2023, there was an increase of 6.4 per cent to basic assistance rates.
- Financial assistance through Yukon's Social Assistance program varies by family size and residence location.
 - 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.

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- 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.

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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- 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.

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, 2024 to December 31, 2024, an average of 2.5 per cent of social assistance cases involved a hotel stay each month.
 - From April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, an average of 3.4 per cent social assistance cases had a hotel stay each month.

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.

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- As part of inflation relief measures, we are including a \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients until more comprehensive rate enhancements are in place.
- 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 Government of Yukon committed to a Social Assistance Rate Review in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement and completed the review in 2024.
- 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.

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- In January 2024, we met with non-governmental service providers to discuss and receive feedback on the social assistance rates,
 - As of August 2024, surveys were completed.
 - A What We Heard report is being prepared to reflect the results of the 2023 engagement. The additional payments of \$100 per month will remain in place while the recommendations arising from the engagement are considered.
 - The department has compiled recommendations for changes to the *Social Assistance Regulation* to enable easier access to all categories of assistance, remove administrative barriers to clients and staff, and to increase overall amounts to be cost neutral with the current amount provided, including the additional interim \$100, to better meet the basic needs of Yukoners. These changes will need to be reviewed and approved to amend the Regulation.

Social Assistance Transportation Allowance

- In 2024–25, Health and Social Services provided eligible Social Assistance recipients **\$1.5M** (\$1,511,496) in transportation allowances.
- Per the *Social Assistance Regulation*, recipients may be eligible for transportation expenses if required for employment or health reasons.

Yukon Seniors Income Supplement (YSIS):

- The Yukon Seniors Income Supplement is available to low-income seniors.

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- 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 Guaranteed Income Supplement amount, which is then used by the Government of Yukon to calculate the individuals' Yukon Seniors Income Supplement.
- The Yukon Seniors Income Supplement increases annually based on the Consumer Price Index, calculated in October each year.
- In October 2024, we determined there was a transcription error in the input of the Old Age Security benefits amounts that carried over to the Yukon Senior Income Supplement calculations, resulting in lower payments for Yukon Seniors.
 - A letter was sent to all recipients informing them of the error and their additional payment.
 - The additional payments were sent November 1.
 - Our finance team worked with the Government of Canada to review and update the formula(s) and our procedures to ensure this error was corrected and prevent it from recurring in future payments.

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- 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.
- Payments under Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement are automated through the Canada Revenue Agency's payment system.
- We have updated the process manual 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.
- 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.
- During the postal strike, Yukon Seniors Income Supplement payments for Whitehorse residents that would normally be mailed were available at the Income Support Services office for Seniors to pick up.
 - Yukon Seniors Income Supplement payments for Seniors in rural communities were sent via courier to rural post offices, which were still open during the postal strike.
- 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 amounted to 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 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.

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- The last inflationary payment for Yukon Seniors Income Supplement was issued March 13, 2024.

Approved by:

_____ Matt King _____

_____ March 28, 2025 _____

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****Chronic Conditions**Health and Social
Services

Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We continue to work with our partners, including Yukoners with Type 1 Diabetes, their families, advocacy groups and service providers, to develop a Type 1 Diabetes Action Plan for the Yukon. This initiative aligns with recommendations from Putting People First to enhance the health and well-being of Yukoners.
- The Chronic Conditions Support Program leverages technology to enhance access to services across the territory. Through the Home Health Monitoring service, Yukoners can access:
 - Virtual monitoring for their chronic conditions.
 - Virtual services such as one-on-one consultations with the Chronic Conditions Support Program team, exercise classes and group education sessions.
- The Department of Health and Social Services, through the Chronic Conditions Support Program, is actively collaborating with the Department of Education to provide essential support for students with chronic conditions. This includes:

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- Tailored education sessions for teachers and Educational Assistants during Welcome Week and as needed throughout the school year.
- A collaborative initiative to revamp student care plans, ensuring they are comprehensive and effectively guide staff in supporting students with various health needs.
- The Department continues to explore opportunities to expand and enhance services for other chronic conditions, ensuring Yukoners have access to the care and resources they need to manage their health effectively.

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.
- In 2024, the Chronic Conditions Support Program amalgamated with the Diabetes Education Centre, centralizing access to diabetes education to one location.
- 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

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- 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 2025–26 fiscal year, we are budgeting **\$895K** (\$894,957) for the Chronic Conditions Support Program.
- As of January 2025, the Chronic Condition Support program has 1,181 patients on their active list and receives about 45 to 70 referrals a month.
- There are 10 staff supporting the Chronic Conditions Support Program including four Chronic Conditions Nurse Educators, two clinical exercise specialists, one Exercise assistant, one supervisor, one registered Dietitian, one program administrator, various contract pharmacists.
- The services provided by the Chronic Conditions Support Program support all people with or at risk of developing, a chronic condition. Condition-specific programming is available for respiratory conditions, diabetes, heart failure and cardiovascular disease.
- As of 2020, data submitted to the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System estimates there are approximately 3,182 Yukoners living with diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2, excluding gestational diabetes).

Type 1 Diabetes Strategy:

- 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

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- data collection and system improvement.
- We recognize that the Type 1 Diabetes Strategy has been in development for some time.
- 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.
- 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 being updated to simplify access to insulin pumps
- Insured Health Services has reached out to the T1D Support Network to identify individuals interested in participating in a journey mapping

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exercise to better understand a person's experience moving through the health system with Type 1 diabetes.

- Insured Health Services has completed 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 and Extended Benefits Program.
- The department is also 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:

- Through the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program and Pharmacare Program 18 people receive coverage for a continuous glucose monitoring device.

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.

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- Exercise Specialist-led exercise programming is also available to clients to build healthy habits and better manage blood sugars.
- The clinical dietitian supports the creation and facilitation of group education sessions and offers one-on-one consultations as required.

Sleep Apnea:

- At the moment, the Government of Yukon only covers sleep apnea machines for seniors on Pharmacare.
- The Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit Program provides coverage for Yukon residents who have a chronic disease or disability and are under the age of 65.
- Sleep apnea is not designated as a chronic disease under the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Regulation and is not eligible for coverage.
- While sleep apnea is not listed as a chronic disease under the regulation, some manufacturers work with individuals directly to explore a payment plan to help manage costs.
- Yukoners with sleep apnea conditions are encouraged to reach out to manufacturers directly to discuss possible payment options.
- The machines are also covered by most private drug plans with a local business providing payment plans.

Approved by:_____
Matt King_____
May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that dental care is accessible to Yukoners as we continue implementing 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 work with dental care providers in the territory to support Yukoners' oral health.

Federal Dental Program:**Speaking notes:**

- The Federal Dental Program is a new nation-wide dental program.
 - It is anticipated that all eligible Canadians will have access by the end of 2025.
- At the moment, the territory does not have the opportunity to opt out of the Canada Dental Care Program due to Canada's existing contractual obligations.
- The Yukon government has been engaging with the federal government throughout the development and rollout of the CDCP, consistently raising concerns about potential challenges with uptake in the territory.
- With the current rollout, participation is at the discretion of individual dentists and clinics.

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- While some clinics in Whitehorse have enrolled, others have expressed concerns about administrative requirements. The list of participating providers, including those in the Yukon, is maintained by Sun Life, the federal administrator of CDCP.
- Canada is interested in understanding how to improve uptake in the territory and we are working on helping them work towards higher enrollment.
- Eligible Yukoners can use both the Canada Dental Care Program and the Yukon Dental Program to maximize their dental coverage.
- Eligible Yukoners can continue to see their preferred dental provider under the Yukon Dental Program, regardless of whether the clinic participates in the federal program. Those who receive services from a federal CDCP-enrolled provider may benefit from additional coverage if their needs exceed the Yukon Dental Program's annual financial cap.
- We continue to work with the Government of Canada to identify ways to improve participation and ensure Yukoners can access the benefits available through both programs.

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.
- 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 per cent

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coverage can be accessed in accordance with the plan fees. Between \$70,000 and \$79,999 there is 60 per cent coverage and between \$80,000 and \$89,999 there is 40 per cent coverage.

Service in Communities:

Speaking notes:

- At present there is no government-funded provision of private dental services for adults in the communities.
 - 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 *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*, most often this extends to services provided in a publicly funded 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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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*.
- The Government of Yukon is currently working on updates to the *Health Professions Act*. As part of this modernization, we will evaluate the scope of practice for dental hygienists, considering current educational standards, training, licensing classes, qualifications and practice standards.
- The Government of Yukon is conducting engagement to support the modernization of the *Health Professions Act*.
- The engagement is an opportunity to gather input from the public and health professionals in the Yukon on how the government can create consistent, efficient and flexible legislation that will make it possible for the territory to stay current with regulatory standards across Canada.

Background:

- The Itinerant Dental Services contract sat 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.

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- Dentists interested in providing this service are encouraged to reach out to the Department of Health and Social Services.

Yukon Children's Dental Program:**Speaking notes:**

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

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Dental Program will cover costs associated with these referrals, to ensure that students have continued access to dental care.

- We have attached a letter to the referral that is to the parent or guardian of impacted children 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 or guardians.
- 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:
 - 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.

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- 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:**Speaking notes:**

- The Yukon Dental Plan is a publicly funded dental plan designed to support Yukoners who do not have dental insurance.
- Yukon Dental Plan provides basic dental services and supplemental coverage to eligible Yukoners. The program is administered through a contract with Pacific Blue Cross.
- The program covers essential dental services necessary to:
 - Relieve pain and infection
 - Prevent disease
 - Restore chewing function or social function
- Supplemental coverage may be available for procedures required under specific medical circumstances, including:
 - A risk of negative medical outcomes if untreated
 - A direct result of a severe and prolonged disability
 - A condition caused by a medically diagnosed illness (e.g., oral cancer)
 - A requirement before undergoing necessary medical procedures (e.g., surgery)
 - Dental issues resulting from a recent and unexpected event (e.g., facial trauma)

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- Key cost drivers for supplemental coverage include full dental clearance with dentures and unexpected urgent dental needs.
- There are currently 1,742 active clients enrolled in the Yukon Dental Program as of March 2025.
- The Canada Dental Care Plan is a separate federal program that provides direct payments to participating dental providers. The funding does not flow through the Government of Yukon.
- Yukoners can combine benefits from both programs to maximize their dental coverage.
 - Those enrolled in Yukon Dental Program can continue seeing their preferred dental provider, regardless of whether the clinic participates in the federal program.
 - If a Yukon resident receives treatment from a federally Canada Dental Care Program-enrolled provider, they may receive additional coverage if their needs exceed Yukon Dental Program's annual financial cap.
- Billing is done for Canada Dental Care Plan first and then Yukon Dental Plan and is coordinated between the two.
- Canada Dental Care Plan does not have an annual cap for eligible expenditures but has deductibles and co-pays therefore the Yukon Dental Plan can help with co-pays not covered by Canada Dental Care Plan.
- The Government of Yukon continues to work with the Government of Canada to improve participation and ensure Yukoners can access the full range of benefits available through both programs.

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- The Yukon Dental Program was officially launched on January 4, 2023.
- On July 1, 2024, a new coverage period began; eligible individuals enrolled are covered through to June 30, 2025.
- A new coverage period will be launched on July 1, 2025. Yukoners can visit the Yukon Dental Program on Yukon.ca to reapply or mail in an application.
- 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 and there is no intention to end the Yukon Dental Program.

Background:

- As of February 15, 2025, there is a total of 1,618 people enrolled in the Yukon Dental Program. Of those enrolled, a total of 1,271 Yukoners have received dental care.

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- 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.
- 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.

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- 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

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date Approved

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We are working to support Yukoners to access sexual and reproductive care and services.
- We remain committed to implementing action items from the 2021 LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan and from Putting People First.
- We work collaboratively with stakeholders and partners including the federal government, health care providers, the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, Yukon First Nation governments and Queer Yukon 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:**Speaking notes:**

- 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 government of Canada and the government of Yukon announces the signing of a pharmacare agreement to invest up to \$9.5 million over four years to provide universal access to contraceptives and diabetes medication for Yukoners.
- We will be working with federal partners to understand the implications of this agreement for the Yukoners.

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:

- 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.
- In the summer of 2024, the Department of Health and Social Services upgraded the bettertoknow-yukon.ca 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.

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- The goal of the Better to Know program is to help prevent gender-based violence and improve Yukon's sexual health indicators through inclusive and evidence based comprehensive sexual health education.
- 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 (and Yukon'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 and reduction, development of healthy relationships, prevention of child sex abuse, improved social and emotional learning and increased media literacy.

LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan:

- The LGBTQ2S+ Action Plan was developed in partnership with the queer community and sets out a plan to make government programs and services more inclusive and accessible. A number of the action items under this plan are geared towards the provision and access of health care.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services has taken great strides to meet these actions.
- The plan includes a commitment to establish a health care navigator position to improve access to healthcare avenues for 2SLGBTQ+ Yukoners.

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- The Government of Yukon began providing funding to Queer Yukon to create a health care navigator position in 2022. The position aims to help 2SLGBTQ+ Yukoners access safe, equitable and timely health care services.
- The plan lays out a commitment to improve access to information and resources to support family planning efforts.
 - To help reduce the financial burdens associated with travelling for fertility treatment and surrogacy services, the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* was amended to provide travel for services not available in one's home community.
 - Additionally, individuals and families are encouraged to visit the Sexual Health Clinic in Whitehorse or the health care navigator to talk with the team as an entry point.
- Additionally, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has counsellors in every high school who are prepared to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth who seek counselling.
- Training for health care professionals was raised a number of times across the action plan and in recognition of this call to action the Department has developed a number of avenues to support this.
 - The Government of Yukon provides WPATH training to Yukon government clinicians and non-governmental organizations.
 - The Government of Yukon offers and encourages all staff to attend a workshop entitled "LGBTQ2S+ Awareness and Inclusion in Services and Practices".
 - The Government of Yukon employees are also encouraged to attend additional educational sessions offered, such as Two-Spirit Awareness training.

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Fertility and Surrogacy Tax Credit

- Our government is committed to making fertility and surrogacy treatments more accessible and affordable for Yukoners who wish to start or grow their families.
- We recognize that fertility treatments are expensive and often out of reach for many individuals. That is why we have taken steps to improve support for those who need to travel for these services.
- Last fall, we made amendments to the Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations which defined a list of fertility and surrogacy treatments eligible for travel coverage under the Insured Health Services' Medical Travel program.
- We took steps to recognize and support those using assisted reproduction and surrogacy through the proposed Inclusive Yukon Families Act.
- To further support Yukoners, the Government of Yukon is introducing a refundable fertility and surrogacy tax credit, to help offset the costs of these services.
- The Yukon Fertility and Surrogacy Tax Credit will:
 - Cover 40 per cent of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year.
 - Have no lifetime cap, meaning it can be accessed as often as needed.
 - Be available to all Yukoners who undertake fertility treatment or surrogacy services.
- To put this into perspective, according to the Canadian Medical Association Journal, one in six Canadian couples experience infertility.

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- With this tax credit, individuals or families who spend \$25,000 on eligible expenses will receive the maximum refund of \$10,000.
- This support is in addition to the currently available federal and territorial Medical Expense Tax Credits worth up to 21.4 per cent of eligible costs.
- We will continue working to ensure equitable access to fertility and surrogacy treatments, including for those covered under Non-Insured Health Benefits, the RCMP, Canadian Forces and federal employee health plans.
- Our government is committed to reducing financial barriers and supporting all Yukoners who dream of building their families.

Fertility Treatments:**Speaking notes:**

- Insured Health Services' Travel for Medical Treatment program provides coverage for initial fertility consultations and diagnostic tests completed locally.
- We recognize the high cost of fertility treatment is out of reach for many Yukoners, to address this we have made travel for fertility and surrogacy treatments more affordable for those who fall under Insured Health's Medical Travel program.
- Amendments to the *Travel for Medical Treatment Regulations* provide a defined list of fertility and surrogacy treatments now eligible for travel as of October 17, 2024.
 - We are also taking steps to recognize the experiences of those using assisted reproduction and surrogacy through the amended *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*.

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- This amendment serves 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.
- To further improve access to fertility and surrogacy treatments for Yukoners, the Government of Yukon has developed a new refundable tax credit which will be administered by the Canadian Revenue Agency.
- The Department of Finance made amendments to the *Income Tax Act* during spring 2025 legislative sitting.
- 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.
- Thank you to all those on the ground taking steps to support access to fertility and surrogacy treatments.

Background:

- The *Travel for Medical Treatment Act* and Regulations provides medical travel coverage for eligible individuals, 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".

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Gender Affirming Care:

Speaking notes:

- 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.
- 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.

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- 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 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.

Intrauterine Device Insertion

- The Yukon government is committed to ensuring that individuals have access to a range of contraceptive options, including IUDs, through existing programs and the new federal pharmacare agreement.
- The new pharmacare plan is expected to provide no-cost access to most contraceptive drugs and devices, including oral contraceptives, IUDs, rings, implants and injections. Details on implementation and coverage specifics are still being finalized.

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- In Whitehorse, IUD insertions are available at multiple clinics, including Opal Clinic, Yukon Sexual Health Clinic, Solstice Maternity, family doctors and at the Whitehorse Walk-In Clinic.
- For individuals in rural communities, IUDs are not stocked at health centres, but clients can obtain a prescription and either bring the device with them or have it shipped to their community.
- The decision about sedation or medication is made between the physician and client based on medical needs and available resources.
 - The Opal Clinic offers conscious sedation as an option to reduce discomfort and anxiety.
- At this time pentrox, a handheld inhaler that provides pain relief, may be available to clients in some cases. However, it is not currently covered under the new pharmacare plan, as it is not classified as a contraceptive.
 - The availability of Pentrox is determined by the provider, in discussion with the client.
- Individuals in rural communities can contact their community health centre or the Opal Clinic for guidance, including information on available supports, such as travel assistance if needed.
 - Emergency contraception (Plan B) may be available at some health centres and is also accessible without a prescription at pharmacies in Whitehorse.

Period Products:

- Through a funding partnership between our government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada, all Yukon schools have been equipped with free period products.

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- 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:**Speaking notes:**

- Medical abortion using Mifegymiso is available in Whitehorse, Dawson City and Watson Lake. In Whitehorse, services can be provided by both Physicians and Nurse Practitioners.
- At this time, Mifegymiso is not available in Community Health Centres because it is not included in the Community Nursing formulary.
- Medications available in communities are reviewed and approved by the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, which focuses on ensuring a standardized, safe, effective and economical supply of medications across all Community Nursing health facilities.
- In addition to approval by the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, the review undertaken by the Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement team to assess whether the introduction of a new program or offering is within the current scope of practice for Primary

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Health Care Nurses and what patient care policies, procedures, and training may be required to ensure the provision of safe care for the patient and provider.

- While we recognize the importance of increasing access in communities, there are barriers that must be addressed to ensure safe and appropriate care.
- Managing potential risks such as excessive bleeding or other complications from medical abortion, requires ensuring that appropriate medical supports and diagnostic equipment are in place.
- Anyone in a community who needs abortion care can access initial pregnancy testing at their Community Health Centre. If they choose to terminate the pregnancy, they are referred to the Opal Clinic.
- Medical travel is available for those who need to travel to Whitehorse for this care, with no prior application or approval required for travel related to abortion services.
- Mifegymiso is not covered under the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program or the Pharmacare and Extended Benefits Program. However, since 2018, our government has provided universal coverage for Mifegymiso when prescribed through the hospital system in Whitehorse, Dawson and Watson Lake.
- Expanding coverage to include pharmacies would require adding Mifegymiso to the Yukon Drug Formulary, which will require regulatory considerations.

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- We are committed to working with Yukoners who have lived experience to identify ways to improve access to reproductive health care in the territory.
 - The Yukon Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research, in partnership with the Opal Clinic, Community Nursing and the Yukon Status of Women's Council, is exploring the feasibility of providing telehealth abortion services in rural communities.
 - This project is still in its early stages and an advisory committee is being formed to guide its development.
 - The Department of Health and Social Services has recently upgraded the **Better to Know** website to provide Yukoners with up-to-date information on abortion services, including where and how to access care.
 - Yukoners looking for information on abortion care can visit Bettersknow-yukon.ca for resources and support.

Background:

- Pregnancy termination options are available for 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.

Women's Health:

- Women in the Yukon have access to a number of services across the health and social services field.

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- The Women's Midlife Health Clinic can support women who are approaching, experiencing or are beyond menopause.
 - This service can be accessed without the need for referral, Monday through Friday between the hours of 9 am to 4 pm.
- Mammography services can be accessed by a referral by a primary care provider or self-referral for anyone over the age of 40.
 - This service is located at the Whitehorse General Hospital and appointments can be made Monday to Friday 7 am to 3 pm. To book an appointment please call 867-393-8738.
- A mammography exam is a low dose X-ray of the breast and is the best method for early detection of breast cancer.

WPATH training:

- We are committed to improving access to Two-Spirit, trans and 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 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, the departments of Justice and

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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.
- The Government of Yukon offers and encourages all staff to attend a workshop entitled “2S/LGBTQ+ 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, licensed practical nurses, medical office assistants, registered nurses and other health care 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, 2SLGBTQ+, gender inequality and anti-racism issues.

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Gender and Reproductive Care

Health and Social
Services

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

Session Briefing Note

**JUS 74
WGED 11
HSS 61**

Spring 2025

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.
- We are committed to expanding sexualized assault response services to Yukon communities. The expansion of services is guided by the findings and recommendations of the What We Heard report and is informed by leading practices and approaches from experts in the field.
- 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 enhance supports for victims of sexualized assault in rural communities.

Additional response:

- We are making progress in several areas including:
 - strengthening relationships with rural service providers;
 - providing travel assistance for rural victims of gender-based violence;
 - improving navigation and pathways to access forensic care from rural communities;
 - expanding access to training for community service providers; and
 - updating communication material to better reach victims in rural communities, enhance awareness and understanding of sexualized violence and existing services such as the 24/7 toll-free support line, and priority access to counselling through the Mental Wellness and Substance Use community hubs.

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Spring 2025

Expansion of SART Services

Justice, WGED, HSS

Context:

- The Minister's 2021 and 2023 mandate letters include a commitment to expand the services of the Yukon's SART to Yukon communities beyond Whitehorse.
 - The SART expansion shares many 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 of sexualized violence, including:
 - updating the website and refreshing communication material to create awareness of available services for communities;
 - cross-agency training for front-line workers in communities outside Whitehorse and building content for a self-paced online training catalogue;
 - improving transportation options for victims who need to access services outside their communities; and
 - improving pathways to access forensic care from communities.
 - Victim Services, community health centres, hospitals, First Nations governments, the RCMP and women's shelters or safe houses also provide services.
 - 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 the network of agencies is supported by two Government of Yukon positions who work in partnership with SART agencies to ensure there is continuity of care and a team-based, integrated approach for victims of sexualized violence.
-

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Expansion of SART Services

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- Available services include a 24/7 support line, accompaniment to the hospital and RCMP, 24/7 on-call physicians at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH) and priority 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.
- SART in Whitehorse was initially 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 partner 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;
 - Kwanlin Dün First Nation;
 - 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.
- 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 Whitehorse General Hospital); and
 - forensic care "on ice" where the SAEK is stored at the hospital to provide time for 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 SAEK, toxicology kit, and writing a forensic report for evidentiary purposes and evidence collection which may be used in court.

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- Specialized SART services, such as pediatric care, are also available at WGH. All community health centres offer standardized, clinic-based care to support victims.
- Transportation support is available to assist victims who choose forensic care as part of their journey through the criminal justice system.
- Although forensic care is not available in community health centres, we remain committed to providing comprehensive care and support to victims.
- Training is provided for SART agencies and any Yukon service providers who support victims of sexualized violence. A public catalogue of online, self-paced SART training is available via YGLearn.
- Annual priorities are set by SART agencies based on the SART training framework and include topics such as:
 - cultural safety and awareness;
 - understanding trauma-informed care
 - responding to specific populations, such as 2SLGBTQIA+, child and youth victims; and
 - responding to technology facilitated sexualized violence.
- Expansion of SART services aligns with action item 2.5 in Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy: Improve victim-centred and crisis-responsive supports for victims of gender-based violence and sexualized assault.

Approved by:

Mark Radke

Deputy Minister, Justice

Sierra van der Meer

Deputy Minister, WGED

Matt King

Deputy Minister, HSS

February 6, 2025

Date approved

February 6, 2025

Date approved

February 6, 2025

Date approved

Session Briefing Note**Spring 2025****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:**Speaking notes:**

- Our government remains committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to the best possible healthcare.
- The Government of Yukon has signed a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada to increase access to effective drugs for rare diseases.

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- Under this agreement, the Yukon will receive \$ 8.5 million in federal funding over the three years to support better access to these expensive but important treatments.
- The first step in this bilateral agreement will be to deliver funding, under the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases to provide access to medications like Yescarta a drug used to treat several forms of relapsed cancer.
 - Yescarta is a chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy, a type of immunotherapy that uses a person's own immune cells to fight cancer.
- This funding will help ensure that more patients receive the medications they need without facing insurmountable financial barriers.
- In Canada, 1 in 12 people live with a rare disease. People with rare diseases have faced challenges in accessing specialized medications. These treatments are often expensive and difficult to obtain, significantly impacting a patient's quality of life.
- This new investment will improve coverage and access to both new drugs for rare diseases and existing drugs for rare diseases. It will also be used to enhance screening and diagnostics for rare diseases to improve early detection and treatment.
- This new funding will also allow the Yukon to better collaborate with federal government departments agencies and other provinces and territories to enhance real-world evidence generation. This will support better decision-making for access to new rare disease treatments.

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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**.
- **\$1.4B** 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.
 - Since then, Alberta, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Ontario have also come to their own agreements.

Electroconvulsive therapy:

- 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.

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Hemodialysis:

- As of August 2024, British Columbia Renal supports nine Yukoners who need dialysis, either in-center hemodialysis, home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis.
- The Renal Care Working Group has been established and has met on three occasions.
- 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.
 - The Working Group has had the opportunity to virtually see hemodialysis service infrastructure in Stanton Hospital and talk to the administration and service providers delivering care.
- The department continues to research and meet with experts in the field to support the provision of care.

Ketamine:

- 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.

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- 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.
- We will continue working with psychiatrists and other partners to offer Yukoners psychiatric treatment and support.

Oxygen:

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

Spirometry:

- The Department of Health and Social Services has a contract with TrueNorth to deliver spirometry services. The contract will be extended until July 2025.

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- TrueNorth Respiratory performs an average of 55 spirometry tests per month.
 - TrueNorth Respiratory received an average of 60 referrals a month.
- Spirometry services remain an important part of respiratory care in the territory, and we continue to ensure that Yukoners have access to these essential diagnostic services.
- While options were explored for spirometry services to be delivered at point of care, it became clear that further review was needed to assess feasibility and impact.
- At this time, the department is maintaining an external contract for spirometry services to ensure continuity of care while we continue to evaluate the most effective way to deliver these services.
- Currently, there is no plan in place to fill the FTEs.
- The department remains committed to responsible fiscal management while ensuring that essential health services are available and delivered efficiently.
- As of January 25, 2025, there are 286 active referrals on the list and awaiting a test.
- 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.
- We no longer conduct testing in communities due to safety requirements. TrueNorth Respiratory strives to coordinate

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appointments with other trips into Whitehorse for clients from communities.

Tolvaptan coverage

- Tolvaptan has been reviewed by Canada’s Drug Agency and is not recommended for coverage as there was insufficient evidence that the drug delays time to progression of the disease.
- Tolvaptan is the only disease-specific treatment indicated for an inherited form of polycystic kidney disease (Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease, or ADPKD). The drug is indicated to slow the progression of renal enlargement and decline in kidney function in patients with this condition.
- Tolvaptan is not covered by BC’s public drug plan but is covered by their renal program. This program uses different criteria than the Yukon Drug Formulary and does not necessarily follow CDA recommendations.
- Yukon has approximately 5 to 10 citizens with this condition and are currently being followed by the BC renal care team and a visiting nephrologist in Whitehorse.
- Tolvaptan is not indicated for all patients with ADPKD but is reserved for those at higher risk of rapid renal progression or documented renal progression.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

Date approved

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- The department has a close working relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and our teams aim to support the operations wherever needed, to ensure adequate funding is in place, and to collaborate on efforts to stabilize and improve hospital-based care for Yukoners.
- We appreciate the contribution of the Yukon Hospital Corporation board of directors and staff who dedicate their time to ensure quality and safe patient care.
- Yukon government works throughout the year to meet the financial needs of the hospital, and the 2025/26 budget clearly demonstrates our commitment to adequately fund vital hospital operations.

Accreditation:

- Accreditation is a process through which 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's hospitals participated in the accreditation survey process in 2023. The three hospitals received accreditation with nearly 92 per cent compliance with the standards and practices assessed.

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- 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 while also recognizing that we can always improve. 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.

Bed numbers:**Key facts:**

- Whitehorse General Hospital has 68 inpatient beds. 55 of these beds are general inpatient beds and the remaining 13 beds are specialty beds including ICU and Maternity. The 68 beds includes the 10 beds recently added in Thomson Centre.
- Inpatient demand has significantly increased:
 - Total inpatient days at Whitehorse General Hospital as of January 31 fiscal year to date are 20,815. A projection to fiscal year end would indicate a total of nearly 25K inpatient days. This represents a 16 per cent increase in bed demand over the previous year.
 - Total inpatient days at Whitehorse General Hospital in 2023-24 were 21,318.

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- 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.
 - As of January 31, there have been 14 surgeries deferred on the day of surgery due to inpatient bed capacity to date in 2024-25.
 - In the 2023-24 fiscal year, there were 14 surgeries deferred on the day of surgery due to inpatient bed capacity.

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.
- 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.

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- 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 2025-26.
- In the 2025-26 Main Estimates, the Yukon Hospital Services O&M budget is **\$135.3M** (\$135,340,000). This is an increase of **\$24.5M** (\$24,531,000) compared to the 2024-25 Main Estimates and represents an increase of **22.1%**.
- We are also providing **\$1.2M** (\$1,150,000) to support initial work on development and construction for a proposed expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital. The project will aim to reduce surgical wait times, address hospital bed capacity issues and improve supports for an aging population.
- Included within the Insured Health Services budget, the Department of Health and Social Services provided \$16.1M in fee for service for hospital-based physician services in 2023-24 and continues to cover physician costs for services at Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- As of December 31, 2024 (end of Q3 2024-25), there were 550 FTEs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including:
 - 502 FTEs at Whitehorse General Hospital

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- 25 FTEs at Watson Lake Community Hospital
- 23 FTEs at Dawson City Community Hospital.

Mental Wellness Unit:**Speaking points**

- The new unit will function as a psychiatric stabilization program, providing treatment for patients admitted to Whitehorse General Hospital with a primary mental health diagnosis.
- The unit is anticipated to open in early June 2025.
- The unit will accommodate patients in the acute phase of their psychiatric illness, ensuring they receive interdisciplinary assessment, intervention, and discharge planning.
- The redesigned facility will allow for improved coordination of care across different healthcare services, ensuring smoother transitions for patients.
- The staffing model will include enhanced nursing and social work coverage, allowing for early intervention and better transitions between the Emergency Department and the Mental Wellness Unit.
- The facility will provide dedicated spaces for patients to engage in social activities, occupational therapy, and physical exercise, promoting overall well-being.
- Gathering Place will be established within the unit to support cultural healing practices and create a more inclusive environment for Indigenous patients.
- The new unit will introduce separate spaces for pediatric mental health patients to ensure they receive care in an age-appropriate and safe environment.

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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.
 - 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 on 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 June 2025, with eight beds purpose-built for mental health patients only and future capacity to include 12 beds once fully operational.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has undertaken preparation for the opening including, planning culturally appropriate activities, early implementation of First Nations self-care supports and establishing education and training plans for staff.
- Between now and June, actions that will be taken include training for the introduction of personal safety devices and response procedures, purchasing of remaining equipment and moveOn training and orientation in the unit.
- 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.

Surge response:

Key facts:

- Managing hospital overcapacity and surge continues to be a challenge. Despite the addition of 10 new inpatient beds in Thomson Centre, Whitehorse General Hospital occupancy was still 103 per cent in January with an average of 104 per cent occupancy for Q3 of 2024-25.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services have developed an integrated surge response for the health system, and we continue working together on quality improvement processes focused on prevention and guided by a home first philosophy.
- When surges are identified, the Corporation activates the Overcapacity Protocol which includes notifying system partners, convenes a response working group to ensure actions are identified (such as staffing required, expedite admissions to Continuing Care or request Emergency Medical Services support) and system-wide communication is clear. Situation updates and working group briefings are held regularly.
- Measures that may be taken to manage overcapacity or surge include:
 - Use of non-conventional spaces at Whitehorse General Hospital for inpatient care including the Surgical Daycare Unit, and Emergency Department (treatment space, alcove space, creation of temporary private bed spaces in the back hallway), 5 overflow beds in the old dining hall of Thomson Centre pod 1 and 3 overflow beds in a meeting room on the surgical unit.

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- Delayed repatriation of Out of Territory patients.
 - 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.
 - 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;
 - Leverage housing and mental wellness supports to support patients after discharge, as available.
 - In July 2024, 10 residents 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.

Background:

- Whitehorse General Hospital has been above 100% capacity most days since February 2024.
- Some significant recent occurrences include:
 - On January 24, 2025 there were 88 inpatients with a hospital bed capacity of 68

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- On December 13, 2024 there were 84 inpatients with a hospital bed capacity of 68
- October 10 and 11, 2024, there were 86 inpatients with a hospital bed capacity of 68.
- August 26 – September 12, 2024, Whitehorse General Hospital had 75+ inpatients daily with some days exceeding 80 inpatients.
- 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.

Surgical instrument sterilization

- Surgical instrument sterilization capacity was reduced at Whitehorse General Hospital between February 3 and April 2, 2025.
- On-site surgical instrument sterilization resumed on April 3, with full surgical service scheduled to resume Monday, April 7th.
- A public report will be completed and released, including an evaluation of how the situation was managed.
- I want to thank the team at the Yukon Hospital Corporation for their efforts to stabilize acute care services while also responding to equipment issues related to sterilization of surgical tools.
- Recognizing the complexity of the problems, the team at the hospital has developed redundancies while diagnosing and taking action to fix the equipment issues.

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- YHC has purchased more surgical sets and is expanding on site sterile storage capacity. They have established a protocol for out of hospital equipment sterilization and have implemented this approach.
- In the meantime, the team continues to employ experts, engineers, the manufacturer, and all necessary support to identify and resolve the problems.
- YHC purchased more surgical sets and is expanding on site sterile storage capacity. They established a protocol for out of hospital equipment sterilization as a redundancy measure.
- All emergency procedures continued throughout the disruption.
- Hospital schedulers rebooked patients as soon as possible. They are implementing plans to ensure all surgeries are caught up now that the equipment situation is resolved.
- Health & Social Services continues to support the hospital as requested. This has included collaboration through the incident management team, quality and infection control support, and to work with the team to meet requests.

Background

- On February 3, 2025, the Medical Device Reprocessing (MDR) team at the Whitehorse General Hospital discovered a residue appearing on instruments that were cleaned and sterilized. These instruments are not able to be used until they can be reprocessed. The Whitehorse General Hospital teams are working with external experts to try and pinpoint the root cause of the issue.
 - There were no concerns for any patient who had a surgical procedure before the issue was identified.
 - Emergency procedures were still safe and possible with the use of sterile kits.
- Process improvements implemented include:

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- Upgrades to the water system;
- Development of a washing policy and stain guide to help medical device reprocessing staff determine what passes or fails inspection;
- Ongoing work to augment surgical inventory and expand storage.
- In the first week of the issue, 24 of a planned 119 surgeries were completed (20 per cent).
- In subsequent weeks, approximately 90 per cent of planned surgeries were completed.
- The priority has been to preserve emergency surgery capacity. The Whitehorse General Hospital team partnered with Vancouver General Hospital to develop a protocol that supports sending instruments out of Territory to be sterilized. This protocol has allowed the Yukon Hospital Corporation to increase the number of planned procedures that can be completed.
 - Planned surgical procedures required for cancer diagnosis and treatment were prioritized. Other additional procedures were prioritized based on inventory and consideration for preserving the capacity to respond to emergencies.
- In some instances, there is not enough available inventory to have sufficient equipment for a planned surgery and emergency redundancy. In these cases, the hospital makes decisions to cancel the surgeries and rebook at a future date.
- Patients impacted have been contacted. Whitehorse General Hospital encouraged individuals who are waiting for surgery and feel their condition has changed to follow-up with their physician and/or seek care in the Emergency Department.
- The Whitehorse General Hospital has proactively been updating the public through their Facebook page on the situation.
- During the equipment malfunction, Whitehorse General Hospital developed a partnership with Vancouver General Hospital to support reprocessing and sterilization off-site. Detailed shipping and quality assurance protocols were in place.

HSS assistance

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- The Yukon Hospital Corporation requested Subject Matter Experts from the Department of Health and Social Services to support YHC's response. One Infection prevention and control person and one policy person from the Continuing Care Division were assigned to provide support.
- HSS's Incident Management Team secured sterilization capacity in Whitehorse by using one small mobile sterilization unit from YHC's own inventory. They considered using another unit offered at a local dental clinic and the Health and Social Services Children's Dental program but ultimately declined as the volume of instrument cleaning and size of instruments made these small units impractical.
- The department also provided other resources, an Infection Prevention and Control expert advisor and a policy support person, all from Continuing Care.

Surgical services slowdowns:

- 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 Hospital continues to provide urgent care surgeries and some planned surgeries during these periods.
- No further slowdowns are planned at this time. This is largely due to the Health Human Resources strategy measures implemented to improve the sustainability of the surgical service.

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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 and additional inpatient beds 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 the 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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- \$1.15M has been included in our 2025/26 proposed budget to support a planning process for a proposed infrastructure expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital.
- This is the next step towards building modern surgical services spaces, increasing the hospital's inpatient bed capacity, and increasing space and capacity for support services.
- The planning work will centre on designing the right equipment, space and tools so that hospital staff and physician teams can deliver the high-quality care that Yukoners deserve and rely on.
- Building off the previous planning that has been done, this next phase will involve detailed scope, budget and sequencing to ensure we have an overall design that meets the future needs of staff, service providers and Yukoners.
- There will be a dedicated project team to support planning, along with committees to ensure appropriate representation of program needs.
- Staff and physician input and participation will be critical at this phase to ensure the designs and plans will meet care needs. There will be engagement opportunities, and we look forward to hearing the insights and expertise of staff.
- 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.

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- 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 the report, with the priority being expanding to 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.

X-ray Machine replacement:

- The outpatient X-ray machine at WGH is scheduled to be replaced from January 20, 2025 to March 3, 2025.
- During this time, walk-in X-ray services are not available, however a booked appointment system will be implemented to ensure any outpatient requiring an urgent X-ray examination can receive one, without having to go to the Emergency Department.

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Yukon Hospital Corporation loan:

Key facts:

- 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 professionals can feel confident that when they retire their hard-earned pension will be waiting for them.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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Government priority:

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

Key messages:

- We continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association and physicians to address Yukoners' timely and appropriate access to speciality services closer to home and reduce the need for out-of-territory medical travel.
- The ability of a health care system to rapidly adapt and expand its capacity is paramount to effectively respond to increased demand and emergent situations.
- We support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's visiting specialist programs, which enable Yukoners to access these speciality services, without leaving the territory.
- 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.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has seen some improvement in MRI and Mammography wait times compared to last year, largely driven by stable staffing in these areas.

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- Wait times in CT, X-ray and Ultrasound continue to be pressured due to growing demands for services and recruitment challenges.
- The hospital has undertaken several human resource strategies to address nursing vacancies in surgical services. As of January 2025, there is 1.0 FTE nursing vacancy in surgical services.
 - This has mitigated the increasing cost of travel or agency nurse resources needed.
- Dawson City and Watson Lake hospitals have similarly experienced a growth in the number of inpatient days and outpatient visits.
- Imaging volumes through January of 2025 were:

	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	January 2025
CT	681	582	631	669
MRI	328	296	283	325
Ultrasound	727	948	713	689
Mammography	358	377	336	324
X-ray	2082	1814	1899	2093

- Surgical volumes were:

	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	January 2025
General Surgery	44	48	31	46
Endoscopy	122	76	98	160
OB/Gyn	44	52	43	42
Orthopedics	53	48	43	50
Ophthalmology	49	49	51	46
Other	42	15	22	51
Total	354	288	288	395

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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 2023-24 fiscal year, 1,517 patient appointments were provided through the cardiology program.
- As of December 31, 2024, there have been 1,459 visits for the cardiology clinic in the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- 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 December 2024, there were 214 individuals on the wait list, down from 312 in June 2024. This is down even further from 329 individuals waiting as of June 30, 2023.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation triages referrals for cardiology services with those with the highest need supported first.

Discharge 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

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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 Ambulance or 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 Rooms:**Key facts:**

- 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.
- Increasing inpatient demand and increasing patient acuity are both putting additional pressure on the Emergency Department.

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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:**

- Since 2022, work has been underway to formalize the “hospitalist program” at Whitehorse General Hospital in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon Medical Association, and the Government of Yukon.
- A hospitalist service is a dedicated roster of physicians that provide inpatient care to attached and unattached patients.
- In previous years, inpatient care was provided by family physicians supporting their own patients while in hospital and a ‘Doctor of the

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Day' model to provide inpatient care to unattached patients (without a dedicated primary care provider).

- Formal program development and optimization has progressed slowly as issues related to the contract, patient flow and staffing have been addressed.
- The Government of Yukon works collaboratively with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association on a tripartite committee in support of quality and sustainable hospital care.
- Recently, progress has been to improve the admission process and flow from emergency to inpatient care – and align the Yukon with best practices across Canada.
 - A clear workflow for handover from one service to another has been co-designed by the physician teams involved. Progress will be tracked to inform future program planning and decisions.
- At present, the program is heavily reliant on locum physicians and is experiencing vacancies.
- Recruitment efforts have been prioritized and are ongoing, including enhancing/clarifying the contract and proactive recruitment strategies, and a review of aspects of the compensation structure to remain competitive with other jurisdictions.
 - 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 program will contribute to a health care system that values people and achieves overall wellness goals for Yukoners and will:

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- 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.
 - 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.
 - As of May 1, 2025, 88 hospitalist shifts have been covered for the month ahead.
 - There are four shifts per day and one shift per evening, for a total of 124 day shifts and 31 evening shifts in a 31-day month.
 - The Yukon Hospital Corporation prioritizes filling day shifts. Day shift hospitalists rotate evening and on-call coverage.
 - A new hospitalist rate structure became effective April 30 and is anticipated to support filling scheduling gaps.
 - Yukon government is in process of negotiating a new MOU with the Yukon Medical Association. With the passage of Bill 310 we will be

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moving to ensure contracts are scoped into future negotiations. In the meantime, the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon government agreed at the table to determine the contract structure for Hospitalist services and to include the Yukon Hospital Corporation in the process.

- The Hospitalist contract rates and details have been communicated and the parties continue to work to ensure physician coverage in this vital program into the future. We appreciate the collaboration and look forward to stabilizing this program.
- The parties have more details to discuss as related to physician compensation generally, including how recruitment incentives are addressed so it is fair and transparent, but also responds to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's responsibilities to ensure rostering and schedule for hospital based physician service.
- There is progress. Yukon Medical Association's active and successful recruitment has resulted in 41 locum physicians supporting the hospitalist program since January 2024, and recent efforts are resulting in commitments from local physicians to support the Hospitalist program.
- Our team looks forward to continuing these important discussions and to ensure a clear division of responsibilities for the benefit ultimately of Yukon people who need timely access to health care services.

Background:

- The "Doctor of the Day" program at Whitehorse General Hospital has been in place since 2008. This 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

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unattached patients and the patients of physicians who did not have active hospital privileges.

- The Doctor of the Day model worked similarly, but had an additional physician caring for unattached patients, while other family physicians cared for their own.
- The new program reflects a further shift where family physicians are increasingly releasing their patients to a “hospitalist” physician to provide that inpatient care, thus freeing up family physicians to provide other services.

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, medical imaging studies and 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).
- Wait time target 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.

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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 (tripartite 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.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25 Yukon Hospital Corporation is projected to complete 4,500 mammograms with 3,161 mammograms already completed between April 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024 .
 - This represents nearly a doubling of mammograms compared to two years ago.

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.
- Yukon Hospital Corporation began providing breast density scores directly to patients in January 2024.

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- 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 December 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 December 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 3,200 MRIs per year.
- For the fiscal year 2024-25, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projected to complete at least 3,100 MRIs.
 - Progress towards the target was affected by an unplanned downtime in the fall of 2024. Teams have been working hard to complete as close to the target as possible with the human resources available.

Background:

- In the 2023-24 fiscal year, 2,659 MRI exams were completed.

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- 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 December 31, 2024, semi-urgent exams are being completed within 36 days.
- Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 180 days as possible. As of December 31, 2024, these are being completed within 119 days.

OBGYNs:

- Obstetric-gynecologists are provided at an independent clinic with care accessed through a referral.
- The OBGYN clinic, as well as the Opal Sexual Health Clinic, are relocating from their location in Whitehorse General Hospital to a new location downtown in 2025. No change is anticipated to the services provided by the clinics.
- 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.
- 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, registered Midwives and nurse practitioners.

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- We are working in collaboration with contract OBGYNs to enhance service delivery through provisions in our contracts. This includes specific actions to reduce and control wait times:
 - Wait time of less than one month for urgent referrals.
 - Make a meaningful effort to reduce wait times for non-urgent referrals to less than six months.
 - Work with representatives of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to implement service prioritization and wait time tracking and targets, based on Ontario model, within 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:

- In 2022 a funding agreement with the Department of Health and Social Services was established allowing for up to 600 cataract surgeries per year.

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- We are meeting our target of completing cataract assessments within four months.
- 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.
 - As of December 2024, 465 cataract surgeries have been completed in fiscal year 2024-25.
 - During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 583 cataract surgeries were completed.

Orthopedics:

- The Yukon is currently supported by one resident orthopedic surgeon with additional coverage provided by locums.
- We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the resident orthopedic surgeon to explore opportunities to ensure the success and stability of the program in the future.
 - We are closely reviewing a February 2025 proposal from the orthopedic program related to reducing the wait list. We have committed to working with the resident and locum Orthopedic surgeons, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and other involved providers to further assess the operational feasibility of this approach.
- YHC received approval in September 2024 to increase the annual total joint target to 150.

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- Yukon Hospitals have met, and exceeded, the joint replacement targets set in the 2021/22-2022/23 Memorandum of Understanding: 100 total joint procedures and 480 total orthopedic surgical procedures (all types).
 - As of December 2024, 97 total joint replacement surgeries have been completed through the Hospital Corporation in 2024-25.
 - As of February 2025, seven joint replacement surgeries have been completed out of territory in 2024-25.
 - In 2023-24, a total of 107 total joint procedures were completed in-territory (55 total knee replacements and 42 total hip replacements) and 25 joint replacements completed out-of-territory. .
 - In 2023-24, a total of 568 orthopedic procedures were completed.
 - In 2022-23, a total of 104 joint replacement surgeries were completed in-territory and 35 joint replacements completed out-of-territory.
- As of December 31, 2024, there were 195 individuals on the wait list for a total knee replacement and 45 on the wait list for a total hip replacement.
- Total joint replacement wait times (request for surgery until surgery completed):
 - 18 months for total knee replacement surgery.
 - 12 months for total hip replacement surgery.
- In 2023-24, there were 2,918 cast clinic visits supported which was more than any year prior.

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- In 2022-23, a total of 2,480 visits to the cast clinic were supported.
- In addition to scheduled elective 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.

Pediatricians:

- Yukon pediatricians provide a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to child health that addresses social determinates and child equity.
- This approach has resulted in parents reporting that they are able to build more trusting relationships with pediatricians and receive care that is more consistent.
- This approach has 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

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- Clinics at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre with the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Expansion of pediatric outreach clinics

- The Government of Yukon recently met with the BC Children’s Hospital to review the Yukon’s support for outreach clinics in 2025–26.
- Pediatric outreach clinics will now include Dermatology and Neurology, along with the previous years’ clinics with Cardiology and Endocrinology.
- Outreach clinic days will increase from 10 to 20 days in the upcoming year, with four days for Dermatology and six for Neurology.
- With these additional clinics, it is anticipated that 70 patients will be able to receive care closer to home, reducing the amount of time and money spent on out-of-territory medical travel for themselves and their parent or guardian companion.
- The cost of the expansion is estimated to be \$40,000 to cover the costs of the health care providers’ travel expenses, while reducing medical travels costs by \$145,000. Overall, the Yukon government will see an estimated savings of \$105,000.
- Additional benefits of this expansion include supporting the training of residents and fellows who attend the clinics, and further relationship building between local Pediatricians and the clinic Physician.

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Rheumatology:

- Rheumatology services are provided by a visiting specialist. Wait times and wait lists fluctuate based on the frequency of visits.
- Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by a visiting rheumatologist, who provides eight visits per year.
- For the 2024-25 fiscal year, Yukon Hospital Corporation is projecting to provide 450-475 patient visits.
- As of December 31, 2024, there were 154 patients on the waitlist to access these services. This is down from the 222 individuals on the wait list as of June 30, 2023.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 454 patient appointments were provided.
- 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 for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Approved by:

Matt King

May 1, 2025

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

[Date approved]

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

Finance

Embargoed until day of budget tabling

Recommended response:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners and communities while considering how to most effectively allocate financial resources.
- Budget 2025–26 plans for gross O&M spending of \$1.88 billion, addressing significant O&M pressures in health and education, as well as the response to the heap leach failure at the Eagle Gold mine.
- Overall, Budget 2025-26 forecasts a surplus of \$82 million, thanks in part to our continued capital investments in strategic infrastructure that will provide lasting benefits for Yukoners.
- Despite increases in expenditure, we continue to work to ensure that government spending is allocated in a way that meets key priorities and long-term goals.
- The Yukon remains on a strong financial footing. Budget 2025-26 prioritizes strategic investments that support economic growth, protect the environment, and enhance the quality of life for all Yukoners. It fulfills our commitment to making life affordable for Yukoners while investing in the programs and infrastructure the territory needs to thrive.

Additional response

- **Affordability for all:** Budget 2025-26 reflects our commitment to keeping life affordable for Yukoners with over \$47.3 million in funding for early learning and child care programs, including the universal child care program; \$3.8 million for the new Winter Electrical Affordability

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Finance

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Rebate; \$4.8 million for the National School Food Program; and increases in Legislated Grants such as Social Assistance, post-secondary grants and the homeowners grant.

- Budget 2025-26 also includes a record-setting \$57.6 million capital investment in the Yukon Housing Corporation for the construction of new affordable housing units, continued tenancy support and programs responding to the housing needs of Yukoners.
- **Territory-wide growth:** The budget reflects investments in infrastructure across the territory, including major projects such as \$75.5 million for runway and infrastructure upgrades at Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, over \$50 million for bridge infrastructure, and \$31 million for repairs and upgrades to the North Klondike Highway.
- **Building prosperity through reconciliation:** The Government of Yukon maintains its commitment to reconciliation with First Nations, as demonstrated through a number of partnerships in 2025-26, intended to build economic prosperity. This includes working with Kluane First Nation on the \$15.7 million investment in the Kêts'ádañ Kù School construction in Burwash Landing and partnering with Kwanlin Dun First Nation on the Range Point subdivision with an investment of \$5 million.
- **Safe and healthy families and communities:** Health care continues to be a significant source of financial pressure across Canada. Budget 2025-26 provides an additional \$47 million to address ongoing pressures on Insured Health Services and an additional \$24.5 million in Operations and Maintenance and \$4.2 million in capital to support

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

Finance

Embargoed until day of budget tabling

the Yukon Hospital Corporation. These funds will support orthopedic surgeries, new acute care beds, breast cancer screening, medical travel, physician fees, pharmacare, and medical treatments both in and out of the territory.

- **Protecting our environment:** Budget 2025-26 will grow our green economy with \$59 million in investments for *Our Clean Future* initiatives such renewable energy infrastructure and building retrofits. We are making further efforts to protect the environment with an additional \$118 million in additional funding to support environmental protection efforts at the Eagle Gold Mine site, and \$21.5 million for reclamation at the Minto Mine.
- **Supporting Yukon businesses and industry:** The Government of Yukon will continue to provide support for Yukon businesses and industry with over \$11 million for diverse and responsive initiatives that provide sustainable economic benefits to Yukon communities. A few examples include the Innovation Strategy, the Economic Development Fund, the Community Destination Development Fund, the Creative and Cultural Industries Strategy, and the development of a Yukon Trade Resilience Program to support Yukon businesses impacted by possible U.S. tariff decisions.

Context — this may be an issue because:

- The 2025-26 Main Estimates will be debated during the March 2025 legislative session.

Session Briefing Note

Corporate Note – Budget Highlights

Finance

Embargoed until day of budget tabling

Background:

- Gross O&M expenditures are forecast to increase by \$282.6 million, or 17.7 per cent, from the 2024-25 Main Estimates.
- The O&M recovery forecast has also significantly increased over the 2024-25 Main Estimates, by about \$10.5 million. Net O&M expenditures are forecast to increase by \$272.1 million, or 19.3 per cent, compared to the 2024-25 Main Estimates.
- Gross capital expenditures are forecast to be about \$477.3 million for 2025-26, which is a \$6.7 million decrease from the 2024-25 Main Estimates. Capital recoveries are forecast to decrease by \$10 million.
- The \$75 million contingency is not included in departmental budgets and would still need to be presented to the legislative assembly for approval, but is included in our fiscal plan so that, if required, it will not affect Yukon's forecast fiscal position.
- On a consolidated basis, when all government reporting agencies, such as Yukon University and public corporations are included, the 2025-26 Main Estimates forecast an annual surplus of \$132.7 million and net debt of \$402.2 million.
- There are 5,561.5 FTEs in the 2025-26 budget, which is an increase of 76.6 FTEs from 2024-25. Growth is primarily for long-term care and home care, Emergency Medical Services, and education personnel, including operational positions for Whistle Bend School and teachers and clerical based on enrollment.

Approved by:

Jessica Schultz

February 25, 2025

Deputy Minister, Finance

Date Approved

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

Recommended response:

- Canada and the United States (U.S.) have one of the strongest and mutually beneficial relationships of any two countries in the world.
- The U.S. is Canada's largest trading partner, and I hope to see more Yukon companies benefiting from that relationship.
- The Premier has been meeting regularly with Premiers and the Prime Minister to inform a united Team Canada approach to U.S. relations.
- Our government is doing its part to ensure the relationship between our countries remains secure and prosperous.
- The Yukon has had a lot of success over the last four years with the U.S. government, including a trade mission, solving border issues, and funding the Alaska Highway.
- Our interests in Arctic security, a healthy environment, critical minerals, robust transportation infrastructure and access to tidewater serve both our jurisdictions as investment and geopolitical focus remain on the North.
- We are working together to advance shared priorities that will improve the prosperity, stability and wellbeing of both jurisdictions.
- We continue to engage regularly with Governor Dunleavy, Alaskan congressional officials, and the U.S. Consul General in Vancouver.

Response to Tariffs

- On April 2, 2025, the U.S. Administration decided to push forward with unjustified and short-sighted global tariffs.

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

- While we are relieved that the “Reciprocal Tariffs” Executive Order does not result in new tariffs for Canada, we remain concerned about the considerable tariffs which remain.
- The tariffs imposed by the U.S. administration challenge the U.S.’s reliability as a trading partner.
- As the U.S. Administration continues to be impulsive in their decisions relating to tariffs on Canadian goods, we will hold steady on our response until all threat of tariffs have been removed.
- U.S. tariffs on Canadian imports are deeply concerning and will harm workers and businesses on both sides of the border.
- These tariffs are unjustified, harmful to economic stability, and run counter to the spirit of free and fair trade that has defined our relationship for decades.
- While we value our relationship with the United States, we will not accept unfair trade practices that threaten Canadian jobs and prosperity.
- The Government of Yukon has developed a path forward to support a strong Team Canada response to see these tariffs lifted and to limit the impact on Yukoners.
- As part of our initial response, our government will:
 - Reduce purchasing products of American origin, such as liquor;
 - Limit U.S. business access to government procurement;
 - Mitigate impacts on Yukon businesses through the development of an assistance program;

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

- Support the development of buy local campaigns; and
- Work to break down interprovincial and trade barriers.
- Additionally, in response to U.S. tariffs on automobiles and auto parts, we are reducing our reliance on U.S. companies by:
 - Suspending our EV rebate program for Tesla vehicles.
 - Suspending all Yukon government X accounts; and
 - Cancelling YG Starlink contracts except for those essential for emergency services and business continuity
- We are also working closely with the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to push back against U.S. tariffs.
- The only acceptable solution is the removal of all tariffs for Canada and Canadian products and businesses.

Economic and Trade Impact of Tariffs

- The imposition of U.S. tariffs on key Canadian exports creates uncertainty for Canadian businesses, discouraging investment, slowing growth, and straining cross-border economic relationships.
- We saw the damaging impact of past tariffs in 2018, and we will not hesitate to take strong action to protect Yukon jobs and industries.
- Retaliatory measures are never our first choice, but we will defend our economic interests, as necessary.
- CUSMA was signed to ensure fair and open trade between our countries. The United States should uphold its commitments under this agreement.

First Ministers' Meetings

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

- The Premiers, the Prime Minister and key federal ministers have held regular discussions, both virtually and in person, since U.S. tariffs were first threatened in November 2024.

Context—this may be an issue because:

- Canada-US relations and threats from the Trump administration have seized all leaders in Canada.
- First Ministers have met regularly to discuss Canada-U.S. relations, which has been well covered by local and national media.

Background:

Canada-US relations

- Summary of U.S. tariffs imposed on Canada to date:

Type	Rate	Date of entry into effect
Fentanyl/Migration tariffs – non-CUSMA compliant goods	10% for potash & energy 25% for all other goods	March 4
Fentanyl/Migration tariffs – CUSMA compliant goods	0%	March 7
Steel and aluminum	25%	March 12
Autos	25% on all autos that do not meet the CUSMA rules of origin 25% on the value of non-U.S. content, for autos that qualify for CUSMA preferential treatment, but only once the Commerce Secretary certifies the determination of U.S. content on a model-by-model basis	April 3

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

Auto Parts	0% for auto parts that qualify for CUSMA preferential treatment	To be announced in Federal Register, but May 3 at the latest
Reciprocal Tariffs	10% baseline does not apply to Canada (and Mexico) due to the current Fentanyl/Migration Tariffs	April 5

- On April 3, the U.S. Administration announced they will impose expansive country-specific tariffs ranging from 10 to 49 per cent on global trading partners, but did not levy any additional tariffs against Canada and Mexico. The U.S. stipulated that exemptions will continue for goods from Canada and Mexico that are compliant under the Canada-United States-Mexico (CUSMA) free trade agreement.
- The Prime Minister of Canada announced new countermeasures on April 3 to protect Canadian workers and businesses and defend Canada's economy. These countermeasures include:
 - Twenty-five per cent tariffs on non-[CUSMA](#) compliant fully assembled vehicles imported into Canada from the United States.
 - Twenty-five per cent tariffs on non-Canadian and non-Mexican content of CUSMA compliant fully assembled vehicles imported into Canada from the United States.
 - Canada's intention to develop a framework for auto producers that incentivizes production and investment in Canada.
 - Every dollar raised from these tariffs will go directly to support our auto workers.
- The evolving tariff situation has prompted diplomatic efforts and political discourse. Canadian officials are engaging in negotiations to seek clarity and potential exemptions, while U.S. policymakers deliberate on the broader implications of the proposed tariffs.

Canada and United States Relations – Corporate Response

Executive Council Office

- The Yukon-U.S. two-way merchandise trade in 2023 stood at \$150.1 million, down from \$240.5 million in 2022. Roughly 85 to 95 per cent of this annual trade is with Alaska.

Yukon government's April 3, 2025 response

- **In response to U.S. auto tariffs, YG will:** Immediately suspend our EV rebate program for Tesla vehicles, suspend all Yukon government X accounts (formerly known as Twitter) and cancel YG Starlink contracts except for those essential for emergency services and business continuity.

Yukon government's March 4, 2025 response

- **Reduce purchasing of products of American origin:** Direct the Yukon Liquor Corporation to stop placing orders of U.S.-made alcohol and to remove U.S.-made products from all Government of Yukon liquor stores. Because we do not want to hurt local businesses, licensees may continue to sell American-made products they already have in stock, but no new orders for U.S.-made alcohol will be placed.
- **Limit U.S. business' access to government procurement:** Direct the Department of Highways and Public Works to update territorial government procurement policies to encourage the purchase of more goods and services from local businesses and non-U.S. companies and minimize the purchase of U.S. goods and services.
- **Mitigate impacts on Yukon businesses:** Our government is allocating \$1 million to develop an assistance program, complementary to federal support programs, to help Yukon businesses adapt to the uncertain economic environment created by these tariffs. The goal of this funding is to keep support as flexible as possible, to be tailored to the specific needs of affected businesses. This program is funded through Budget 2025-26 and subject to legislative approval. Contingency funds in Budget 2025-26, also subject to legislative approval, will also be available to support Yukon businesses.

**Canada and United States
Relations – Corporate
Response**

Executive Council Office

- Support "Buy Yukon" campaigns: Support the development of buy local campaigns organized by local chambers of commerce.
- Break down interprovincial and international trade barriers: Through the Department of Economic Development, work with Yukon chambers of commerce and provincial and territorial partners to reduce barriers to internal trade and promote access to non-U.S. markets.

Approved by:

Justin Ferbey

2024 04 07

Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office

Date Approved

Session Briefing Note

Spring 2025

**Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**

Environment & Finance

Recommended response:

- The Government of Yukon has supported carbon pricing to help reduce emissions and reach our climate targets. We remain committed to taking action on reducing emissions across the territory and to meeting our commitments outlined in *Our Clean Future*.
- However, we anticipate that the consumer carbon price in Canada will likely end in the near future.
- As Minister of Finance, I have asked Canada to provide certainty with respect to how and when carbon pricing will end and also what actions will be taken to contribute to emission reductions in lieu of carbon pricing.
- [We will continue to monitor federal actions on carbon pricing diligently and are committed to keeping Yukoners informed about any changes that may affect them. This includes recent comments by Prime Minister-designate Carney to end the consumer carbon tax “immediately”.](#)

Additional response (federal government changes in policy):

- The Government of Yukon will continue to work with our federal counterparts to ensure we remain compliant to any evolving regulations or changes to carbon pricing programs at the federal level.
- All federal Liberal party candidates, along with the federal leaders of the other parties, have signaled that they will end or significantly change the consumer carbon pricing program. The end of the federal carbon price means that the Yukon would no longer receive revenues to sustain the carbon rebate program.

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Spring 2025

**Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**

Environment & Finance

- The Yukon's carbon rebate is revenue neutral, and on average, Yukoners receive more than they pay in carbon pricing levies.
- We have written to the federal government, requesting collaboration on a systematic wind down of the Yukon carbon rebate program. We have also urged the cancellation of the carbon levy increase planned for April 1, 2025.
- Carbon pricing is just one tool to address climate change. Our plans outlined in Our Clean Future extend beyond any federal programming. Our government will continue to aspire to meet our greenhouse gas emissions target by 2030.

Third response:

- The departments of Environment and Finance continue to work with federal counterparts to assess the implications of carbon pricing on large industrial emitters that are subject to the Output Based Pricing System in the territory and ensure the needs of the Yukon are recognized in national policy.
- The Output Based Pricing System is separate from the consumer carbon price. Canada is currently conducting a review of that system.

Context—this may be an issue because:

- On February 25, Yukon's Minister of Finance issued a statement confirming that he had written to the federal government, requesting collaboration on a systematic wind-down of the Yukon carbon rebate program and urging the cancellation of the planned carbon levy increase set for April 1, 2025.
- Carbon pricing remains a 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.

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**Carbon Pricing
(Corporate Note)**

Environment & Finance

- The federal carbon pricing system is expected to be a central talking point as part of any forthcoming federal election.

Background:

- Most provinces and territories, including British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, have publicly opposed the federal carbon pricing system.
- Recently, federal liberal leaders have committed to ending the federal carbon tax in Canada.
- On April 1, 2025, the carbon levy will increase from \$80 to \$95 per tonne.
- [The new Liberal leader and other federal party leaders have expressed their commitment to end or change the consumer carbon levy.](#)
- [The new federal Liberal leader has indicated the consumer carbon levy would be eliminated “immediately”. No specific dates or timelines have been provided yet.](#)
- Given that the end of the federal carbon price means that the Yukon will no longer receive revenues to sustain the carbon rebate program, on February 24, 2024, Minister of Finance Sandy Silver wrote to federal Ministers Guilbeault and LeBlanc asking for collaboration in winding down the Yukon’s carbon rebate program, including a request to cancel the scheduled April 1, 2025, increase to the carbon levy.
- On February 25, 2024, Minister Silver issued a statement outlining the Yukon’s request to federal Ministers.

Approved by:

Dennis Berry

Deputy Minister of Environment

March 10, 2025

Date approved

Jessica Schultz

Deputy Minister of Finance

March 10, 2025

Date approved

Session Briefing Note

Spring 2025

Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

Recommended response:

- We recognize the seriousness of the heap leach failure and continue to treat our response to the situation with the appropriate urgency.
- Our priorities are to ensure the health and wellbeing of Yukoners and to protect the environment.
- 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.
- We have full confidence in the court process governing all aspects of the Receivership proceedings, including the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers as the Receiver.
- As the Eagle Gold situation continues to unfold, we will continue to assess and improve our understanding of the impacts on Yukoners and the local economy.
- For the most up-to-date information on the situation at Eagle Gold Mine and actions that we are taking, you can visit Yukon.ca.

Additional responses:

- An Independent Review Board has been established to investigate the heap leach failure that occurred at the Eagle Gold mine.
- The Board has developed its own work plan and timeline to

Session Briefing Note

Spring 2025

Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

conduct its review, and we respect the Board's autonomy in this regard. (See EMR BN #1)

- Impacts on human health and on the environment are being monitored by technical experts from the Government of Yukon, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and the Government of Canada.
- Our government continues to monitor labour market data, such as the number of unemployed and the number of Employment Insurance claimants, for potential impacts of the mine closure.

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:

- The Yukon.ca website is updated with information bulletins to inform the public on the Victoria Gold heap leach failures current situation.
- See 'historic overview' section for an overview of key dates.

Economic and labour market

- The Eagle Gold Mine heap leach failure 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 effect of closure on the labour market has been minimal, as displaced workers were reabsorbed into the Yukon's tight labour market. At 4.3 per cent in 2024, Yukon's unemployment rate was the lowest in the country. The economy continued to add jobs with employment up by 5 per cent annually.

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Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

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- 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 territorial employment in 2024.
 - As of January 16, 2025, there are 30 liens against Victoria Gold worth over \$60.2 million.

Finances

- PwC manages project finances and procurement for the site in its capacity as the court-appointed Receiver and as an officer of the court must ensure funds are being spent responsibly.
- As approved by the Court, the Government of Yukon has advanced \$105 million to the Receiver for urgent works on site in 2024-25.
- Financial security for the Eagle Gold Mine totaled \$104 million. In 2024–25 the Government of Yukon accessed \$55 million of these bonds. The remaining \$48.7 million balance of the Surety Bonds has been accessed and will offset the costs for the loans to the Receiver in 2025–26.
- Additionally, the Receiver had access to \$29.2 million in cash assets of Victoria Gold Corporation to fund receivership activities in 2024-25. The Receiver utilized all of these assets in the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- \$118 million is included, as part of Energy, Mines and Resources' budget 2025-26, to continue to respond to the heap leach failure.
- Funding advanced to the receiver has a net zero impact on the government's surplus and net financial debt, as the Government of Yukon has priority to recover these advances from the assets of the company.
- Interest applies to all loans advanced to the Receiver at a rate of nine per cent. An estimated \$3 million of interest will be accrued in 2024-25 and \$9.5 million is forecast to be accrued in 2025-26.

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Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

Local procurement

- As part of the agreements established under the receivership order, the Government of Yukon requires that the receiver take steps to maximize local benefits and report to the Government of Yukon on those metrics.
- To date, \$20.8 million has been provided to local contractors under the receivership.
- The Receiver has contracted nine local contractors and in the past month, 72 per cent of the contracted work force were local Yukon contractors.

Independent Review Board

- An Independent Review Board was launched under the Government of Yukon's Guidelines for Mine Waste Management Facilities.
- The Independent Review Board will provide a thorough and expert review of the heap leach failure. It will operate with full autonomy, with contracts managed by the court-appointed receiver, ensuring impartiality in the process.
- The Terms of Reference can be found in the Second Report of the Receiver on the Receiver's website at pwc.com.
- In accordance with the terms of reference, the IRB will provide its report to the Receiver, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources by June 15, 2025. The Receiver will make public the report on its website by July 15, 2025.
- Highly qualified experts are on the Independent Review Board. The Independent Review Board Members are:
 - Dr. Jean-Marie Konrad, M.Sc., Ph.D., FCAE, FEIC
 - Mark E. Smith, P.E., P.Eng.
- More information about the Board Members can be found on Yukon.ca.
- There has been no decision as to whether an inquiry will also be established under the *Public Inquiries Act*.

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Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

- If the Office of the Auditor General decides to conduct an audit, we will support its requests for participation and information.

Historic overview

- 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 12, 2024, the Government of Yukon submitted an application for receivership of Eagle Gold Mine, which was supported by the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun.
- On August 14, 2024, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. was appointed by the court as Receiver of the assets and property of Victoria Gold Corp. The Receiver is responsible for overseeing remediation of the heap leach failure and its environmental impacts, including compliance with territorial and federal orders.
- On October 1, 2024, PricewaterhouseCoopers released a report that shared receiver's communications with former Victoria Gold Corp's employees, advising they may be eligible to make a claim for outstanding wages up to \$8,500.00, vacation and/or severance pay under the *Wage Earner Protection Program Act*.
- On December 20, 2024, the Yukon Water Board approved the Receiver's application for an emergency amendment to the site's water licence to allow for the discharge of partially treated water. The amended discharge criteria expired on March 31, 2025 and is no longer in effect.

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Eagle Gold Mine – Impacts

EMR-ECO-FIN

- On December 28, 2024, PricewaterhouseCoopers issued a notification to the Government of Yukon and the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun regarding a potential leak in a newly constructed containment pond.
- As of February 18, 2025, the Government of Yukon has done 11 technical briefings to continue to keep Yukoners informed with up-to-date information.

Approved By:

Sierra van der Meer

April 29, 2025

Deputy Minister
Energy, Mines and Resources

Date Approved

Justin Ferbey

2025 04 22

Deputy Minister
Executive Council Office

Date Approved

Jessica Schultz

April 25, 2025

Deputy Minister
Department of Finance

Date Approved

Recommended response:

- Access to housing remains a priority, and work continues to address key challenges, including:
 - Expanding housing with support services for those in need.
 - Increasing the supply of affordable rental units.
 - Helping Yukoners navigate housing costs.
- Yukon Housing Corporation and its partners are adapting to high construction and borrowing costs by finding innovative ways to develop and maintain housing.
- The corporation's five-year strategic plan, *Creating Home*, is driving a more client-focused and collaborative approach to affordable housing and integrating support services to improve outcomes for Yukoners.

Additional response:

- Governments and stakeholders are working together to develop new land, expand housing options, and respond to the findings of the 2022 Office of the Auditor General Report on housing.
 - Housing projects continue to move forward to meet the needs of Yukoners.
-

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:

Section 1: Yukon population

- In June 2024, the estimated Yukon population was 46,640; an increase of 1,354, or 3.0%, compared to the revised figure for June 30, 2023 (45,286).
- The Yukon's population is forecast to increase to 51,520 by 2030.
- While the population of most age groups is expected to increase over this period, the number of seniors and people between the ages of 55 and 64 is expected to grow the fastest.

Section 2: Housing statistics

Average Whitehorse house prices (YBS)

	2023 Q4	2024 Q4	% Change
Single-detached house	\$627,400	\$657,900	3.0%
Condominium	\$416,000	\$611,900	7.2%

Yukon rents and vacancies (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%

New residential permits issued, Yukon (YBS)

Year	# of new residential permits
2020	657
2021	635
2022	416
2023	429

Residential building construction, Yukon (YBS)

	January-December 2023	January-December 2024
# residential permits issued*	988	839
\$ value of new permits*	\$81.1 million	\$156.2 million (92% increase)

*In addition to new dwelling units, residential permits include renovations, garages, and additions.
The totals do not include permits issued for plumbing or stoves.

City of Whitehorse, new housing completions (CMHC)

Year	Homeowner	Rental	Condo	All
2018	66	100	61	227
2019	55	78	110	243
2020	80	116	152	348
2021	86	57	53	196
2022	111	194	181	486
2023	129	189	126	444
2024	73	19	151	243

Section 3: Capital projects 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 Housing Initiatives Fund partnership projects have been completed, creating over 276 new units.

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

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 HPWW/managed by YHC)	Summer 2021	Jan 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

Section 4: Underway or upcoming housing capital projects for YHC and partners

YHC projects underway

Project	Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date	Number of Units
Watson Lake - 10-unit supportive living residence (TAB #20)	Summer 2023	Winter 2025	10
Dawson - 34-unit housing project - Korbo lot (TAB #19)	Fall 2024	2026-27	34
Whitehorse - 45-unit Ryder replacement	Fall 2024	Spring 2026	45
Burwash Landing - 1 staff duplex (TAB #25)	Fall 2024	Summer 2026	2
Whitehorse - Purchase of 190 Olive May Way (TAB #5)	July 2024	February 2025	18
Total units underway:			109

Major partnership projects underway or completed

Project	Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date	Number of Units
Safe at Home Society's supportive housing "The Hearth"	March 2024	Spring 2026	67

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**TAB #71
Spring 2025**

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

Safe at Home Society's supportive housing at 408 Alexander	May 2024	Completed	17
DDDC's affordable rental project "Winter Crossing"	Spring 2024	Spring 2026	105
Northern Community Land Trust Society's affordable homeownership "Project 1096"	June 2024	December 2025	32
HIF-7 funding recipients	Spring 2024	Fall 2026	78
Total units:			299

YHC projects planned

Project	Anticipated Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date	Number of Units
Teslin – 6-plex with Village and Teslin Tlingit Council	Design – 2025/26	2027/28	6
Carcross – 6-plex	Lot selected, YESAB approval in progress	2027/28	6
Mayo – 10-Unit Community Housing Project	Lot selected, Design – 2027/28	2029/30	10
Ross River – duplex	2026/27	2028/29	2
Haines Junction – 6-plex	2027/28	2029/30	6
Whitehorse – Accessible Triplex at 44-13 th Ave.	Deferred due to lack of city sewer/water infrastructure, plan to upgrade in 3-5 years.		3
Total units planned:			33

Section 5: Support for new residential land development

September 2024	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 are being released in communities across the Yukon in partnership with municipalities and Yukon First Nations. <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 This is the sixth lot release this year and is a direct result of the Government of Yukon's historic investment in land development. Since 2021, 685 lots have been released through lotteries and tenders, with over 1,000 expected by 2026. (TABS # 37 & 38).
August 2024	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 has released 33 new residential lots across the Yukon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twelve lots are available in Carmacks and Faro 21 country residential lots are 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.

Section 6: Tenants in Yukon Housing RGI units

YHC Unit Status as of April 24, 2025

Breakdown	Employee	RGI	Total
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Session Briefing Note

**TAB #71
Spring 2025**

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

Occupied	166	664	830
Under Allocation	2	13	15
Under Capital	2	9	11
Under Repair	3	25	28
Total	173	711	884

Length of RGI tenancy as of April 24, 2025

Length of RGI tenancy in years	Non-Senior	Senior	Total
<1 Year	79	41	120
01-02 Years	96	39	135
02-03 Years	38	33	71
03-04 Years	29	15	44
04-05 Years	18	17	35
05-10 Years	78	97	175
10-15 Years	21	25	46
15-20 Years	8	13	21
20+ Years	7	9	16
Total	374	289	663
Average Years	3.7	5.6	4.5

*The longest running tenancy is 29 years.

Section 7: Waitlist

YHC waitlists for seniors and non-seniors as of April 24, 2025 (TAB #13)

Community	Non-Senior	Senior	Total
Carcross	1	0	1
Carmacks	4	0	4
Dawson City	13	9	22
Haines Junction	2	2	4
Ross River	1	0	1
Watson Lake	16	3	19
Whitehorse	180	93	273
Total	217	107	324

As of April 24, 2025, 13 employees are on the waitlist (TAB #10)

Community	Employee
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Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

Dawson City	6
Faro	1
Haines Junction	3
Pelly Crossing	1
Ross River	1
Teslin	1
Total	13

*Note Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay, Old Crow and Pelly Crossing do not have Rent-Geared-to-Income units and Whitehorse does not have employee housing units.

RGI Waitlist based on Priority Status as of April 24, 2025

Priorities	Non-Senior	Senior	Total
Affordability	136	59	195
By-Name List/Homeless (Community)*	5	2	7
Priority – Medical	11	17	28
Priority – Mobility	10	31	41
Priority – Gender-based violence	56	1	57
TOTAL	218	110	328

*Note this category is used to identify homeless priority in the rural communities outside of Whitehorse. This does not represent the total number of individuals and/or households on the Community By-Name List. Individuals who are homeless may be included in the affordable category until information is shared from the Coordinated Housing Access Team.

Time on Waitlist based on Secondary Status

Breakdown	Affordable	By-Name List	Medical	Mobility	Gender-based violence	Total
<1 Year	129	6	16	21	25	197
1-3 Years	51	0	9	13	28	101
3-5 Years	8	0	3	2	1	14
5-7 Years	7	1	1	2	0	11
7+ Years	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	196	7	29	38	54	324
Average Years	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.0	1.2

* The By-Name List category identifies homeless priority in the rural communities outside of Whitehorse.

Section 8: Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit (TAB #9)

- The program helps low-to-moderate-income Yukoners in private market rental housing who cannot afford rent. Applicants can receive \$200, \$400, \$600 or \$800 per month, which will be paid directly to the individual.

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

- Applicants must provide proof of income to be eligible.
- Since the program's launch in November 2020, over 300 households have been supported.
- As of April 24, 2025:
 - 206 households were approved for the original benefit.
 - 18 households were approved for the gender-based violence stream.

Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit - Rental stream breakdown by benefit level as of April 24, 2025.

Benefit Level	# of Clients	Monthly Budget
200	77	\$15,400.00
400	38	\$15,200.00
600	47	\$28,200.00
800	44	\$35,200.00
Total	206	\$94,000.00

Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit - Rental stream recipients as of April 24, 2025.

Community	Non-Senior	Senior	Total
Dawson City	5	4	9
Haines Junction	3	0	3
Watson Lake	1	1	2
Whitehorse	149	43	192
Total	158	48	206

Section 9: Loans and Grants programs

1. **Yukoner First Home Program (TAB #6)** – Launched on April 23, 2024, the Yukoner First Home Program is a new program that provides a deferrable, low-interest loan to first-time buyers who have a pre-approved mortgage and need down payment support.
2. **Developer Build Loan (DBL) Program** – Provides loans for short-term construction financing to Yukon developers who may be unable to secure funding from traditional lenders. The program is for land and infrastructure development for residential purposes or building homes and multi-unit residential buildings. The loan is fully repayable to Yukon Housing Corporation.

Developer Build Loan Program

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan25	Total	%
Approved	1	1	1	0	2	5	46
Declined	0	0	2	1	0	3	27
Cancelled	0	2	0	1	0	3	27
TOTAL	1	3	3	2	2	11	100

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

- Home Ownership Loan Program** – A spring 2024 review found it was not adequately supporting the needs of Yukoners, prompting the transition to the new program. The program has been replaced by the Yukoner First Home Program.
- Municipal Matching Rental Construction Program (MMRCP)** – This is a one-time capital grant for projects that receive a municipal development incentive. It is meant to help increase the supply of rental housing in communities.

MMRCP

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total	%
Approved	13	12	17	12	10	64	64.6
Declined	2	1	3	4	0	10	10.1
Cancelled	1	0	12	10	2	25	25.3
TOTAL	16	13	32	26	12	99	100

- Home Repair Program** – Funding to repair or upgrade primary residence. This program includes emergencies, accessibility and wildfire grants and a home repair loan. *Note: Three intakes have been completed for the fiscal year 2023-2024.*

Grants stream:

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total
Approved/Pre-Approved	40	46	34	17	3	140
Declined	0	2	3	3	2	10
Cancelled	6	14	9	8	8	45
Total	46	62	46	28	13	195

Loans stream:

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total
Approved/Pre-Approved	0	6	8	10	2	26
Declined	0	5	10	12	5	32
Cancelled	0	25	32	24	20	101
Total	0	36	50	46	27	159

Accessibility stream:

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total
Approved/Pre-Approved	10	8	14	7	5	44
Declined	0	1	2	1	2	6
Cancelled	1	3	8	14	1	27
Total	11	12	24	22	8	77

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**TAB #71
Spring 2025**

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

Emergency stream:

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total
Approved/Pre-Approved	10	6	6	5	3	30
Declined	0	2	6	11	6	25
Cancelled	1	1	4	36	11	53
Total	11	9	16	52	20	108

Housing Landscape

Yukon Housing Corporation

Wildfire Grants stream:

Applications	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-Jan 25	Total
Approved/Pre-Approved	n/a	n/a	n/a	11	10	21
Declined	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	1
Cancelled	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	4	20
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	27	15	42

6. **Housing Initiatives Fund (HIF)** – Provides capital construction grants for planning and development of new affordable home ownership or rental housing. Affordable is defined as at or below the median market rent or house price. All projects funded under HIF must remain affordable for 20 years. (TAB #26)

Approved by:

Samantha Paterson
President, Yukon Housing Corporation

April 25, 2025
Date Approved

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

Recommended response:

- The Government of Yukon remains committed to supporting Yukoners with day-to-day affordability.
- While inflation has improved, high shelter and food costs remain the largest drivers of overall inflation. These elevated prices continue to stretch the budgets of Yukon households, with lower-income households often feeling the greatest impact.
- We are pleased to report that price pressures eased throughout 2024, with local inflation averaging 2 per cent for the year – well below 2023’s rate of 4.9 per cent.
- [Inflation stabilized in March after rising to 3.5 per cent in February. Further moderation is expected for April following the elimination of the consumer carbon price.](#)
- The Government of Yukon continues to monitor inflation and its impact on Yukoners to ensure we can take effective steps to ease financial burdens.

Additional response:

- Budget 2025-26 builds on existing supports for Yukoners by ensuring access to essential services at affordable prices.
- This year’s budget includes investments to advance housing projects across the territory. This includes affordable housing initiatives such as the replacement of the Ryder Apartments in Whitehorse and the recently completed supportive housing project in Watson Lake. It also supports ongoing residential land development projects, including Whistle Bend Phases 12 and 13 in Whitehorse, the Mountain Ridge

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

Development in Haines Junction, and the Frances Avenue
Development in Watson Lake.

- The budget provides more than \$47.3 million for early learning and child care programs, including the Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund to expand and improve child care spaces. The universal child care program continues to lower costs, reducing fees to an average of less than \$10 per day.
- Budget 2025-26 allocates \$4.8 million to the National School Food Program, helping support families and ensuring every child has access to nutritious meals at school.
- We are also making life more affordable through the Yukon-wide dental program, which remains a national leader with \$5.4 million in continued funding for 2025-26.
- To support workers, the Temporary Paid Sick Leave Rebate has been extended again, ensuring more Yukoners can stay home when they are ill.
- The Interim Electrical Rebate is being replaced by the new Winter Electrical Affordability Program to help Yukoners manage higher electricity costs during peak winter months.
- The government continues to support the free transit program, launched last year by the Department of Community Services, which provides free bus passes to Yukoners.
- Also, the Government of Yukon is working with partners such as Connective and the Safe at Home Society to expand supportive housing options in Whitehorse.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

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 in 2024 and will again increase on April 1, 2025, to \$17.94 per hour.
- The Yukon's minimum wage is the second highest in Canada, behind only Nunavut's minimum wage of \$19.00 per hour.
- These increases also contribute towards the strong earnings growth we continue to see in the territory. Average weekly earnings grew 5.3 per cent over the first eleven months of 2024, the third strongest growth in the country.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

Context—this may be an issue because:

- Inflation has fallen from historic highs, but Yukoners are still dealing with higher prices for goods and services following a lengthy period of elevated inflation.
- The moderation of inflationary pressures that began to take hold late in 2023 continued throughout 2024. Growth in the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index (CPI) was much lower in every month in 2024, and annual inflation of 2 per cent was much improved from 2023.
- Both nationally and in Whitehorse, Inflation has picked up in the first three months of 2025. While inflation declined nationally in March compared to February, Inflation of 3.5 per cent for Whitehorse was unchanged from February, and remains the highest in the country for a second-straight month.

Background:

Inflation – Recent performance and outlook

- Following ten increases in the overnight rate since March 2022, the Bank of Canada made five rate cuts in 2024, with the overnight rate dropping from 5.0 per cent to 3.25 per cent. As of March 12, 2025, there have been two additional cuts of 0.25 percentage points and further rate cuts are expected this year, given economic uncertainty around tariffs. These cuts will further reduce pressure on shelter prices as mortgage rates decline.
- Both locally and nationally, price pressures lessened in 2024, with inflation near historic norms.
- After much improved inflation figures throughout 2024, inflation has moved higher over the first three months of 2025. March's inflation of 3.5 per cent for Whitehorse was unchanged from February and remains the highest in the country for a second-straight month.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

- Nationally, inflation fell from 2.6 per cent in February to 2.3 per cent in March, with inflation down in most jurisdictions.
- Shelter costs continue to be a major driver along with restaurant prices and traveller accommodation.
- With the consumer carbon price ending at the end of March, lower gasoline and fuel oil prices in April should weigh on overall Whitehorse inflation. April data will be released on May 20, 2025.
- 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. Annual inflation is expected to average 2 per cent over the period 2025 to 2029.

*** Programs that support affordability listed below ***

HOUSING

Capital projects supporting housing affordability

- Programs such as the Housing Initiatives Fund and investments through the Permanent Affordable Housing program support Yukon Housing Corporation's five-year strategic plan, *Creating Home*, which prioritizes innovative projects and partnerships to expand affordable housing, close gaps in the housing continuum, and increase homeownership opportunities for Yukoners. These partnerships address housing needs and support economic development.
- Eighteen new units in Whistle Bend have been purchased to support a range of housing needs along the continuum.
- Work has begun on the old Korbo lot in Dawson City, which will provide an additional 34 Rent Geared to Income units, scheduled for completion in 2026.
- 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 will deliver 45 new affordable housing units.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

Supportive Housing (Health and Social Services & Yukon Housing Corporation)

- \$1.5 million for Safe at Home will go towards establishing temporary supportive housing at 408 Alexander Street.
- As well, we are contributing \$900,000 in 2025-26 of a total \$12.9 million dollar commitment towards Safe at Home Society's 67-unit project (*The Hearth*), which will provide safe, supportive and permanent housing in Whitehorse.
- Construction of a 10-unit housing complex in Watson Lake was completed in January 2025 which will open its doors in spring 2025.

Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit Rental Subsidy (Yukon Housing Corporation)

- The Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit offers a rental subsidy for low-to-moderate income renters.
- Funded through the National Housing Strategy, the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit rent subsidy has helped over 300 low- to moderate-income Yukoners with affordability challenges since 2020.
- In addition, the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit gender-based violence rent subsidy helps survivors access safe housing, so they are not forced to return to unsafe situations due to housing costs.

Winter Electrical Affordability Rebate (Yukon Development Corporation)

- As a replacement for the Interim Electrical Rebate, Yukon Development Corporation will launch the Winter Electrical Affordability Rebate to assist Yukoners with electricity costs in the winter months.

Energy retrofits and funding to improve efficiency (Energy, Mines and Resources)

- Funding that supports reducing energy costs is available for the transportation sector, renewable heating sector, home and building owners, and the construction industry.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

- 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.
- 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 by reducing their energy costs.

Affordable Heat Pump Program (Energy, Mines and Resources)

- The Affordable Heat Pump Program aims to help low-to-middle-income households cover the cost of purchasing and installing a heat pump, a device that has the potential to significantly reduce a homeowner's energy costs.
- Since the launch of the Affordable Heat Pump Program late last year, the response has been overwhelming, with over 90 applications.
- The program quickly reached its funding capacity and we are working with our federal partners to seek consideration for additional funds.
- People can still apply to a waitlist and applications will be approved in the order they are received. The program website remains the best way to stay informed about the program.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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.

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

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Income Supplement (GIS) from the federal government. This amount is adjusted for inflation in October, each year.

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.

FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

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.

Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund (Education)

- The Department of Education has a three-year agreement covering the years 2023-24 to 2025-26 with the Government of Canada that will see \$7.7 million in new funding flowing to the Yukon that can be used to create spaces and increase accessibility for not-for-profits and First Nations governments.
- This partnership with the Government of Canada will support a mutual vision of high-quality early learning and child care that is affordable, accessible, and inclusive.

Food in Schools program (Education)

- Good nutrition is vital for students' mental and physical health and increases all students' learning potential.
- On April 1, 2024, Canada announced a \$1 billion investment over five years to create a National School Food Program.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

Finance

- The new National School Food Policy outlines principles and objectives to support the vision of every child having access to nutritious food in school
- Budget 2025-26 includes \$4.8 million for the National School Food Program.

Fertility Tax Credit (Finance)

- We are committed to improving access to fertility and surrogacy treatments for Yukoners.
- The value of the refundable credit will be 40% of eligible expenses to a maximum of \$10,000 per year per taxpayer with unlimited lifetime availability.
- This generous support is in addition to the new medical travel coverage for fertility treatment and enhances existing support in the tax system, such as the Medical Expense Tax Credit and Northern Residents Deduction.
- Alongside the recently announced medical travel coverage for fertility treatments, the tax credit in this bill will help relieve financial pressures for Yukon families who are accessing these treatments.

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 for the 2023–24 benefit year.

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. Combined, this amounted to a 16.46 per cent rate increase for community and extended family caregivers.
- Rates are indexed annually to the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index, most recently increased by 2.4 % in October 2024.

Session Briefing Note

Inflation and Affordability (Corporate Note)

BUSINESSES and COMMUNITIES

Paid sick leave program (Economic Development)

- The Paid Sick Leave Rebate program is now extended until March 31, 2026.
- On April 1, 2023, the Department of Economic Development launched the Paid Sick Leave Rebate as a temporary program offering up to 40 hours of paid sick leave to employees and self-employed Yukoners that earn less than the average private-sector wage of \$33.94/hour.
- The program includes all illnesses (and injuries not covered by any other Act, benefit, or program). The program is available to employees regardless of whether their employer offers paid sick leave, though employees must use all paid sick leave available to them through their employer before they are eligible for the Paid Sick Leave Rebate.

Yukon Trade Resilience Program (Economic Development)

- In preparation for the potential of tariffs on Canadian goods being considered by the United States or other negative impacts on trade, the Department of Economic Development is creating a program to support Yukon businesses.
- The US remains the territory's most important international partner. We are working closely with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to ensure that we have programming available to mitigate the impact on the Yukon by ensuring support is available if needed.
- The program is still in early stages and will evolve in response to outside factors.

Curbside Recycling (Community Services)

- The Yukon government is supporting the City of Whitehorse with up to \$2.4 million over two years, through 2024 and 2025, for a curbside collection program. The City's program is now in place and the Yukon government's support reduces the cost for Whitehorse households by roughly 50 per cent.

Session Briefing Note
Inflation and Affordability
(Corporate Note)

Finance

Approved by:

Jessica Schultz

April 15, 2025

Deputy Minister, Finance

Date Approved

HSS #73/ ENV #20 / EMR #54

Session Briefing Note

Spring 2025

Our Clean Future Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

Recommended response:

- Yukoners recognize that our territory, alongside jurisdictions around the world, is facing a climate emergency that is increasingly impacting our communities and way of life.
- In 2020, the Government of Yukon released Our Clean Future, the territory's first climate strategy that is guiding our response to climate change and climate adaptation.
- We continue to make significant progress on implementing Our Clean Future. In November 2024, we shared the 2023 Our Clean Future progress report that highlights our progress in adapting to climate change impacts and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- As of the end of 2024 we:
 - Registered 597 zero emission vehicles in the territory and all road-connected communities are equipped with fast chargers;
 - Provided over 1500 rebates for electric bikes;
 - Completed over 300 high performance residential retrofits including over 50 high performance commercial and industrial building energy retrofits;
 - Installed 219 smart heating devices in homes and buildings;
 - Installed 10 megawatts of renewable electricity through the Micro-Generation Program.
- In addition, we recently launched a new income tested heat pump rebate, which was fully subscribed with in a month, providing 84 households with funding for heat pumps this year and next.

HSS #73/ ENV #20 / EMR #54

Session Briefing Note

Spring 2025

Our Clean Future Implementation

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

- By the end of 2023, 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 and continue to assess how we can better respond to climate change and reduce our emissions.
- 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.
- The new actions focus on reducing the Yukon's emissions, supporting accessible, reliable and affordable renewable energy, climate adaptation and transitioning to a green economy.
- By the end of 2024, we have made significant progress, including:
 - Completed flood maps for the Southern Lakes region, Teslin and Carmacks. Flood hazard maps are underway for Old Crow, the City of Dawson and the Klondike Valley, and Mayo.
 - 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.

HSS #73/ ENV #20 / EMR #54

Session Briefing Note Our Clean Future Implementation

Spring 2025

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

- 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.
- In 2024, we:
 - We passed legislation to set a target of a 45 per cent reduction in mining sector emissions per unit of production by 2035.
 - Began providing rebates for medium-duty electric vehicles.
 - Installed electric vehicle chargers in every road-accessible community in the Yukon, enabling zero-emissions travel throughout the territory. 20 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 543 energy efficient new homes, exceeding our 2030 target of 500.

HSS #73/ ENV #20 / EMR #54

Session Briefing Note Our Clean Future Implementation

Spring 2025

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

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 will continue to build on Our Clean Future as we learn more and implement new actions. This will be reflected in the annual reports.
- We will continue to find opportunities to reach our targets as we work with experts, stakeholders and partner governments across the territory and beyond.

Context — this may be an issue because:

- 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.

HSS #73/ ENV #20 / EMR #54

Session Briefing Note Our Clean Future Implementation

Spring 2025

Environment and Energy,
Mines and Resources

- 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

February 5, 2025

Deputy Minister, Environment

Date approved

Paul Moore

February 5, 2025

Deputy Minister, Energy, Mines and Resources

Date approved

Session Briefing Note

2024-25 Supplementary Overview (Corporate Note)

Finance

Embargoed until tabled

Recommended response:

- The changes outlined in the Supplementary Estimates No. 2 highlight the government's commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of Yukoners and communities. The government is making important investments in health and social services, education, environmental protection, and in needed infrastructure across the territory.
- The Government of Yukon continues to maintain a budgetary surplus of \$57.6 million. Increased spending of \$130.1 million is partially offset by additional revenue and recoveries of \$19.5 million.
- Despite increases in O&M and capital expenditure, we continue to work to ensure that government spending is allocated in a way that meets key priorities and long-term goals.
- Many of the O&M pressures in Supplementary Estimates No. 2 related to health and education are ongoing pressures for services and will continue to be reflected in the Main Estimates.
- The ability to remain in a surplus position despite an increase in spending is largely owed to:
 - Infrastructure investments, which are mostly tangible capital assets. As they are anticipated to provide benefits over many years, their impact on the surplus/deficit position is recognized over their expected life.
 - Also, the additional \$55 million funding to the Receiver for the Victoria Gold Corp. is provided as a loan, which offsets the impact of these expenditures on the budgetary surplus.

Session Briefing Note**2024-25 Supplementary Overview
(Corporate Note)**

Finance

Embargoed until tabled

- Even with significant financial pressures in recent years, and in particular the response to the heap leach failure at the Eagle Gold mine, the Yukon remains on a strong financial footing. The government continues to make strategic investments that support economic growth, protect the environment, and enhance the quality of life for all Yukoners.

Additional response:

- The 2024-25 Supplementary Estimates No. 2 forecasts an overall gross increase of \$114.3 million in O&M spending, with an offsetting increase of \$7.9 million in recoveries—mainly for the following pressures:
 - \$55 million in advances to the Receiver for environmental protection work at the Eagle Gold Mine.
 - \$20.7 million in additional health-related funding to support Insured Health pressures, Yukon Hospital Corporation operations, emergency medical services, and legislated grant programs.
 - \$13.8 million for education related pressures, including Collective Agreement increase for the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and funding the First Nation School Board.

Session Briefing Note

2024-25 Supplementary Overview (Corporate Note)

Finance

Embargoed until tabled

- Capital adjustments in the Supplementary Estimates No. 2 reflect an overall gross increase of \$15.8 million in spending and a \$3.8 million increase in capital recoveries. These adjustments are primarily driven by:
 - Increases of \$21.7 million for accelerated work on the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement and to address capital pressures related to ongoing land development projects;
 - \$7.8 million in decreases due to updated cash flow forecasts and revised timelines for major school replacement projects and the Watson Lake solar project.
- Revenues are projected to increase by \$7.8 million, driven by higher personal income tax and fuel tax revenue forecasts, as well as accrued loan interest from the Victoria Gold Corp. receivership

Context—this may be an issue because:

- The 2024-25 Supplementary Estimates No. 2 is tabled in the spring session and will be the subject of debate.

Approved by:

Jessica Schultz

February 24, 2025

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 Yukon First Nations governments in areas including child welfare, health, education and justice.

Additional response:

- The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations governments are leaders in demonstrating a collaborative approach to reconciliation.
- 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.
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Background:

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

Executive Council
Office

- 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:	
<u>Justin Ferbey</u>	<u>2025 01 30</u>
Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office	Date