



FOR RELEASE

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## **Medical sign language interpreters available to Yukoners in B.C. and Alberta**

WHITEHORSE—Members of Yukon's Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities are accessing new professional medical sign language interpretation services when receiving health care in British Columbia or Alberta.

"It has been shown that using qualified medical sign language interpreters reduces misunderstandings about diagnosis and treatment and can also reduce the need for repeat consultations", Minister of Health and Social Services Mike Nixon said. "Receiving health care outside the territory can be stressful for patients and their families. Registered interpreters can help alleviate some of that stress and ensure that health information is communicated clearly."

Two three-year agreements were signed late last year between the Government of Yukon and the Western Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in B.C. and Deaf and Hear Alberta. Each agreement is for \$1000 per year for three years.

"It is extremely valuable to have an interpreter available for medical appointments. Communication is so important for our health and well-being," Deaf community member Elke Kraemer-Tremblay said. "For so many years of our lives we have struggled through medical appointments, piecing together what we think our diagnosis is. Knowing now that interpretation services are in place brings relief and confidence to me and my family, and also makes me feel at ease when I am in hospital settings. I can ask the questions I need to ask and be sure that the medical professionals understand me and that I can clearly understand them. The difference in my health care is amazing."

The services provided in B.C. and Alberta supplement the Yukon government's American Sign Language interpreting service, which was recently extended for another three years. The Yukon service has provided nearly 600 hours of interpreting services for medical and health appointments over the last two years.

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