

Biannual Public Report Putting People First Implementation Committee January 2023

The 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Yukon Liberal Caucus and the Yukon NDP Caucus requires the establishment of joint policy implementation committees. The commitment states:

Section 3.2 Within one month of the swearing-in of a Yukon Liberal Government, two policy implementation committees shall launch. The committees will be comprised of the appropriate Cabinet Minister and a Yukon NDP MLA to work jointly with the civil service to finalize implementation of the Our Clean Future and Putting People First reports.

The Putting People First Implementation Committee (PPFIC) was established in June 2021. Its members are the Honourable Tracy McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services and Annie Blake, MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The *Putting People First* report was adopted by the Yukon government in August of 2020. The report is a roadmap to creating a people-centred approach to health and wellness in the territory that will be more effective and sustainable for the future.

Since the last report of this committee, the PPFIC has received updates on Confidence and Supply Agreement commitments as well as the progress of *Putting People First* initiatives from the Minister of Health and Social Services and her department. The *Putting People First* initiatives were accepted in full by the Yukon government in August 2020 and endorsed by both the Yukon Liberal and Yukon NDP caucuses. The PPFIC meetings have also been an opportunity to discuss other health and social services related matters.

Ongoing discussion topics:

Land Based treatment/healing

Commitment 4.5: *Work with Yukon First Nations governments and the Government of Canada to fund a rural, on-the-land mental health and substance treatment centre that incorporates:*

- *Clinical and traditional/cultural approaches (including land-based healing).*

- Strong linkages with community-based cultural healing resources (pre- and post-treatment).
- Development and governance in partnership with Yukon First Nations people.
- Accessibility of services to all Yukoners

Commitment 4.6: Partner with the Government of Canada to create a fund to support land-based healing in communities across the territory that includes program planning, infrastructure and training. The fund should be flexible and able to accommodate the diverse needs of unique Yukon First Nations, and take into account other funding and negotiations, such as further implementation of self-government agreements.

The PPFIC discussed funding available for land-based programs via the Department of Health and Social Services. There were discussions about which programs were moving forward with which communities or First Nations and the importance of communicating with communities about this funding and providing support to apply to it. It was confirmed that Yukoners can access programs offered by First Nations outside of the territory.

Dental Care Program

Commitment 5.8: Create an income-tested, payer-of-last-resort public plan for extended benefits.

Both the *Putting People First* report and the Confidence and Supply Agreement commit to a publicly funded, payer of last resort dental care program.

The PPFIC has received updates on this program throughout its development. The program began to accept applications on January 4, 2023. The committee discussed the importance of communications about this program and supporting Yukoners during the sign-up period to ensure they are able to access services.

Minister McPhee committed to reaching out to First Nation Health Commissions to share information broadly.

Safer Supply

The PPFIC spoke about the need for safer supply in other Yukon communities. The Department of Health and Social Services is exploring ways that nurses can help with this program. People who wish to access safer supply require a prescription from a

medical practitioner. Alternative options are being considered but are not currently available.

Social Assistance Rate Review

Commitment 5.1: Bring together all social assistance delivery agents to create a common vision for social assistance, leading to the design and delivery of more equitable, effective, easy-to-navigate and person-centred income support programming. This is a necessary precursor for recommendation 5.5

Commitment 5.5: Conduct a program evaluation of social supports, to determine if current practices and policies are achieving program objectives and are cost-effective, and what the most influential factors in entering, staying on, and leaving social assistance are in Yukon.

Minister McPhee provided an update. This review is led by departmental staff at Health and Social Services. Preliminary conversations have occurred between social assistance delivery agents and there will be broader external engagement as part of this review.

MLA Blake has urged the government to review and immediately increase social assistance rates to keep up with rising costs.

Universal Basic Income

Commitment 5.7: Design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot, in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and potential funding partners such as the federal government, health and social research programs and others.

It was noted that work on this commitment includes engagement with Yukon First Nations and the federal government, as well as stakeholders such as Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. The Department of Health and Social Services is working on preliminary research, including an initial jurisdictional scan, as well as considering options that may include a feasibility study.

This is the final PPFIC report as committed to under the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement.