

Biannual Public Report

Putting People First Implementation Committee

September 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 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement continues the work of the 2021 CASA Agreement.

Since the last report of this committee, the PPFIC has received updates on the progress of Putting People First initiatives from the Minister of Health and Social Services and her department as well as other updates. 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 discussions:

PPF 1.3 *Status update on negotiations with the Yukon Medical Association*

Minister McPhee provided an update on the Memorandum of Understanding with the YMA which covers the period from April 1, 2022-March 31,2025. She confirmed that conversations are ongoing with regards to exploring alternative payment models with the YMA.

MLA Blake requested a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding, and Minister McPhee committed to discussing this proposal with the YMA.

PPF 2.6 *Residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver for medical travel*

Minister McPhee reported that the current priority is focusing on establishing short term residences both in Whitehorse and out of territory. MLA Blake requested information about the sharing of best practices between the Yukon and the NWT model of medical lodges.

PPF 5.8 *Create an income-tested payer of last resort public plan for extended benefits*

Minister McPhee confirmed that the launch of the Yukon Dental Program on January 4, 2023 has been successful. Work has not begun on implementing similar extended benefit programs for services such as pharmacare and optometry. Minister McPhee indicated that any further changes will likely take place after the establishment of a health authority.

The Yukon NDP enquired about the possibility of private coverage top-up. Minister McPhee indicated that her department would investigate the suggestion.

PPF 3.7 *Encourage a culture of moderate alcohol consumption*

Minister McPhee indicated that the Yukon Liquor Board operates at arms' length from the government, therefore adapting licensing practices and regulations to respect recommendations of the Putting People First report is outside of the department jurisdiction. MLA Blake requested information on new policies enacted to implement recommendations around moderate alcohol consumption.

PPF 5.11-5.14 *Disability services*

Minister McPhee provided a general update on the actions as related to disability services in PPF, including:

- Confirming that the department is developing a department-wide approach to publicly funded self or family-managed care programs to support Yukoners. The department is also examining the design, delivery and accessibility of programs and services available to Yukoners with disabilities which are delivered through various areas of the department.

- The Government of Yukon is working with federal, provincial, and territorial governments to support the Government of Canada's design of its new Canada Disability Benefit. Through this work, the department is assessing whether it will meet the needs of Yukoners with disabilities or if additional support is needed.

PPF 5.1 – 5.5 Social Assistance

MLA Blake requested information about the details of the review, as committed in the Confidence and Supply Agreement. Minister McPhee provided details of the planning stages of the consultation.

There were also discussions on items outside the scope of Putting People First. This included:

- Walk-In Clinic: the Yukon NDP enquired about updates related the model of the walk-in clinic as committed in the Confidence and Supply Agreement. Minister McPhee talked about the model of a polyclinic described in PPF as a model for future clinics in the Yukon.
- Safer Supply: MLA Blake indicated that she is hearing concerns that safer supply is only being offered as a last resort instead of pro-actively informing and proposing safer supply to clients who are struggling with addiction. The Minister emphasized that safer supply was available to anyone who requires it, through an established medical process. MLA Blake also requested an update on expanding the scope of practice of RPNs, RNs and LPNs to be able to expand the availability of safer supply in Yukon communities.
- Access to emergency mental health support in communities: MLA Blake requested information about dispatching mental health support in communities quickly and effectively to respond to crises. Minister McPhee relayed that as part of the Yukon Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy, the Government of Yukon will be exploring opportunities to expand access to supports to Yukon First Nations to meet specific community needs.
- Midwifery: MLA Blake enquired about the midwifery program and its availability in Whitehorse and in Yukon communities. The Minister shared that with the new collective agreement, Midwifery positions have been re-

classified. She also relayed that she hopes to expand services to the communities soon.

- Coverage of fertility treatment under medical travel: the Minister relayed that this initiative is currently in the planning stages, and that preliminary legal review indicates that there may be a requirement for an amendment under the *Treatment for Medical Travel Regulation*.
- The Attachment and Attraction program: the Minister shared that the Attachment and Attraction program provides incentives for Yukon physicians to expand their patient rosters. It offers funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet the specific criteria related to number of appointments and same day access to appointments. Family doctors who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half day they see patients.
- Vaccination for children: MLA Blake requested information regarding the administration of vaccines and travel vaccines to children by pharmacists. Minister McPhee indicated that children under the age of five cannot be vaccinated by pharmacists and are able to access vaccines and travel vaccine via their primary care provider.