

## **Biannual Public Report Putting People First Implementation Committee Fall 2024**

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-Anne 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 (PPF) initiatives from the Minister of Health and Social Services and the department as well as other updates. The Putting People First report was 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 and present questions about many other health and social services related matters.

### **General PPF Update:**

- The second annual PPF report was released in December 2023.
- A total of 21 of the 76 recommendations from the PPF report are operational, three of which achieved this status in 2024. This includes a major milestone with the passage of the *Health Authority Act* in Spring 2024.
  - Additionally, 46 actions are in progress and nine are not started.

### PPFIC issues addressed:

#### 1.1 and 1.5 – Reorienting our health care system to person centred care and a population health approach

These actions represent principles to guide the Government of Yukon's approach to implementing the recommendations in Chapter 1. The principles of person-centred health care based on social and Indigenous determinants of health are built into the *Health Authority Act* and were embedded in the process of creating that legislation.

The department shared that the objective is to have a comprehensive and systematic approach for population health data, evidence and evaluation. Work to undertake a integrated care project in rural Yukon is scheduled to begin next year. This is complex but important work that includes engagement with communities, frontline staff and union partners. The NDP raised the importance of meaningfully including people with lived and living experience at the table.

#### 2.6 Health care lodges

Work to establish medical travel residences in Whitehorse and Vancouver is in its early stages and is anticipated to be a long-term action. The current focus is to determine interim options to house people which could include renting existing hotel spaces.

The NDP raised the importance of consulting with local chambers of commerce on this issue and the Minister agreed this was important.

#### 2.9 Alternative transportation between rural communities and Whitehorse

This is a complex issue with a multi-departmental response. There is work being done through the Department of Justice related to supporting victims of gender-based violence. The departments are working jointly to address this recommendation.

The NDP raised the importance of supporting existing infrastructure and businesses.

#### 2.14 Expansion of the vaccine program as recommended by public health.

Health and Social Services (HSS) continues to monitor the vaccine landscape and associated National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendations on offering additional publicly funded vaccine products to Yukoners. This includes expanding the eligibility of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine program to all Yukoners up to and including age 26 and continuing efforts to support Yukoners' access to COVID vaccines and PAXLOVID.

The Department shared that the federal government ceased their purchase and supply of Paxlovid as of May 30, 2024. Insured Health Services is providing coverage for those eligible and registered under Chronic Disease and Disability Benefit (CDDDB) and Pharmacare program. For those who are immuno-suppressed and not already a recipient under the CDDDB, a prescribing doctor may register the individual for coverage.

#### 3.8 Early Childhood Education

Every licensed daycare space in the Yukon now receives funding from the Yukon government resulting in parent fee reductions by up to \$700 for full time enrollment. There is an additional income-tested subsidy for lower income earners.

Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay, and Tagish are the only communities without daycare as there are few children eligible for childcare. These communities have access to early kindergarten.

The Department of Education has partnered with the Yukon University and Yukon First Nations Education Directorate to provide opportunities to students in Early Childcare programs. The Early Learning and Child Care Branch delivers professional development directly and provides full and part time bursaries to students studying early learning. There is an additional fund for early childhood educators working in licensed programs.

#### 3.9 Funding for palliative care and end of life care for families and individuals.

The expansion of palliative and end-of-life care programs and supports has included the development of the Rural End-of-Life program. The department of

HSS is continuing to develop and formalize this program as they learn from the experiences of early participants.

#### 5.7 Guaranteed annual income pilot.

Work is ongoing on this item. A contract is in place with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) to develop a policy options paper, anticipated to be complete in September 2024. Department officials and YAPC attended a Basic Income Guarantee Forum in Ottawa in May 2024.

#### 8.4 Universal pharmacare program

Yukon is participating in Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) and bilateral discussions with Canada on a national universal pharmacare program. Work is underway to explore the implications of recently tabled federal pharmacare legislation covering birth control and diabetes drugs, as well as the *National Strategy for Drug for Rare Diseases* that would introduce consistent coverage for these across Canada.

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

#### Update on the review of social assistance:

The social assistance rate review survey for Government of Yukon recipients was completed in Fall 2023, while the survey for those who receive social assistance through Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, or their First Nation was completed in April 2024. A virtual meeting for First Nation partners was held in November 2023, and for non-government organizations in January 2024. A What We Heard report with survey outcomes is currently being developed, as well as a costing analysis for next steps.

#### Discussion around coverage of dental health surgeries and emergencies

The NDP raised the issue of some emergency dental surgeries not being covered through insured services.

The department shared that the Yukon Dental Program provides funding for eligible Yukoners to access \$1,300 a year including for dental emergencies.

Immediate care (e.g. antibiotics or pain management) for urgent dental and orofacial emergencies may be provided at hospital emergency rooms.

The Canada Dental Program has begun a phased launch and is currently available to seniors aged 65-69, and children under 18, with people with disabilities eligible at the end of June 2024. The plan will provide reimbursement for several services including “major services” such as restorative services and oral surgeries. Coverage is dependent on family net income.

The NDP raised the concern that the Yukon Dental Program provides more comprehensive coverage than the federal program, and a desire that the Yukon continue to offer the same high level of coverage.