

LEGISLATIVE RETURN



SUBMITTED BY: Hon. Ms. McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services

1. On October 13, 2022, Kate White, Member for Takhini-Kopper King
- asked the following question during the Oral Question Period at page(s) [page numbers] of *Hansard*
 - submitted the following written question – WQ No. 29
 - gave notice of the following motion for the production of papers – MPP No. #

RE: Ongoing medical staff shortages

OR

2. This legislative return relates to a matter outstanding from discussion with [MLA] on [date] related to:
- Bill No. # Second Reading Third Reading
 Committee of the Whole: [Vote]
- Motion No. # RE: [subject]
at page(s) [page numbers] of *Hansard*.

The response is as follows:

Question: Regarding ongoing medical staff shortages for the 2021-22 fiscal year and 2021 calendar year:

- (1) what is the number of unfilled scheduled nursing shifts at Whitehorse General Hospital by department;
- (2) what is the number of unfilled scheduled nursing shifts in continuing care facilities such as Whistlebend Place and McDonald Lodge; and
- (3) what is the number of instances and the duration of Code Yellow and Code Red delays either by station or across Emergency Medical Services as a whole?

Response:

1. Yukon Hospitals are committed to maintaining safe and quality care with minimal service disruptions while facing a local, national, and global health care provider shortage. Hospital staff continue to deliver excellent patient care and their efforts are ensuring that Yukoners have access to hospital services.

Currently, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's nursing (LPN & RN) vacancy rate is 8.7%. These vacancies represent 22.25 FTEs including: 5 vacant nursing positions at the Watson Lake Community Hospital, 4.5 nursing positions at the Dawson City Community Hospital, and 12.75 nursing positions at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

These vacancies do not mean shifts go unfilled. The Yukon Hospital Corporation does not have a system that can readily or easily report every instance or number of shifts they are "short staffed" because they have deployed several strategies to mitigate shortages. These strategies include calling out to permanent and casual employees to pick up shifts, utilizing agency nurses (when given longer notice of vacant shifts), "up-staffing" in other departments or the float pool to move nurses where patient volumes and acuity dictate, augmenting RNs with LPNs or LPNs with RNs when needed or adding additional nursing supports such as Health Care Aids, utilizing clinical Nurse Educators or Clinical Nurse Leaders to provide additional support, and finally balancing resources across all departments and moving staff across departments to support gaps.

Apart from a few instances during the summer when elective surgery capacity was reduced, the Yukon Hospital Corporation has avoided high-level service disruptions. Additionally, the Yukon Hospital Corporation has never had to mandate an employee to work at the Dawson City or Watson Lake Community Hospitals.

24 November 2022
Date


Signature

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The Government of Yukon acknowledges the additional strain the health human resources challenge has placed on hospital and medical staff across the territory. We thank them for their tireless dedication to providing Yukoners with exceptional services and care in these circumstances.

2. The Yukon's long-term care homes have among the highest hours of direct nursing care/resident/day in the country. On average, the Yukon provides 4.58 hours of care a day, per resident. This exceeds other jurisdictions such as the Northwest Territories who averaged 3.6 hours per day, and British Columbia with 3.0 hours (3.36 for allied facilities) per day per resident.

The staffing model supports enhanced staffing levels, which allows us to deliver exceptional service and be resilient in the face of unfilled shifts. This means that even when we have vacancies, or are unable to cover a sick call, there is capacity to operate at core staffing levels, delivering the full spectrum of services to residents.

When unfilled nursing shifts bring the staffing levels below core, to what we consider essential staffing levels, the essential duties list helps prioritize the most important work to ensure staff can continue to safely meet the basic care needs of all residents. This only occurs when no additional staff are available to be called in to work. When this happens, processes are in place to share staff across houses and neighbourhoods within each long-term care home. Across all houses in Whitehorse long-term care homes, unfilled scheduled nursing shifts resulted in essential staffing levels for a portion of 32 days over the past quarter (July-September 2022).

The high levels of service that have been maintained in the Yukon's long-term care homes throughout the national and global health human resources challenge has only been possible through the commitment of dedicated and flexible staff. The hard work of all long-term care staff is recognized and appreciated. To deliver the services Yukoners in long-term care deserve requires the collaboration of an interdisciplinary team. The teams working to support the residents of the Yukon's long-term care homes include nurses, nursing home assistants, allied health professionals, therapy assistants, rehabilitation assistants, First Nations liaison workers, social workers and all the support services staff: cooks, dietary aides, domestic aides, administrative assistants, receptionists, scheduling clerks, security, finance and supply chain. Finally, the supervisors and managers who support these teams have also played critical roles and continue to work together to share resources and assist one another. Each and every person's role in the organization is important and they are essential to providing high quality person-centered care to the residents of the Yukon's long-term care homes.

3. In Whitehorse, "Code Reds" are attributed to increased call volumes which exceeds available resources. These instances are minimally or not at all attributed to staffing shortages or off-loading delays at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Since January 2022, there have been 235 Code Reds. The duration of these instances varies, and accurate data requires further assessment.

Yukon Emergency Medical Services do not actively track instances referred to as "Code Yellows", however EMS does track overall coverage levels for communities. Since January 2022, EMS in Yukon communities had full coverage 68% of the time, while EMS in Dawson City and Watson Lake had full coverage approximately 95% of the time or higher.

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