

# LEGISLATIVE RETURN



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

1. On April 28, 2022, Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge
- asked the following question during the Oral Question Period at page(s) [page numbers] of *Hansard*
  - submitted the following written question – WQ No. 25
  - gave notice of the following motion for the production of papers – MPP No. #

RE: [subject] *healthcare in rural Yukon communities*  
**OR**

2. This legislative return relates to a matter outstanding from discussion with Kate White, Member for Takhini-Kopper King on March 28, 2022 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:  
See attached letter dated November 23, 2023.

Nov. 23, 2023  
Date

  
Signature



**Minister's Office**  
**PO Box 2703 Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6**

November 23, 2023

Brad Cathers  
MLA, Lake Laberge  
Yukon Legislative Assembly  
P.O. Box 2703  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Dear MLA Cathers,

**Re: Written Question No. 25**

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Thank you for your written question regarding access to health care for Yukoners living in communities.

I am pleased to provide the following update on health care services in communities as of March 2023.

All Yukon communities have access to visiting physician services through their nearest Community Health Centre. In addition to this, some also have access to a visiting Nurse Practitioner. Resident physicians are based at clinics in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Watson Lake. Additionally, a new resident physician started in Haines Junction on October 24, 2022, and is based at the Haines Junction Health Centre with regular service available through the other Health Centres along the North Highway.

In communities where physician services are provided by a visiting physician, ensuring Yukoners can access healthcare relies on a coordinated team of primary healthcare providers based on the right provider for the right reason, at the right time. This includes Community Nursing staff who deliver a higher level of primary care through Community Health Centres, and who are able to make referrals to physician and Nurse Practitioner services, including pediatric services. Physician services may be provided in-person through a private clinic, during a visiting physician clinic, or by virtual appointment.

I understand you also have questions regarding health care positions in Yukon communities, as well as the number of vacancies. As of March 2023, there are the following Health and Social Service positions in Yukon communities:

In Beaver Creek there is one Primary Health Care Nurse FTE with 0.5 FTE filled. One Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Counsellor visits Beaver Creek biweekly from the Haines Junction Hub, with additional support provided by a Child and Youth Clinical Counsellor as needed. A Mental Health Nurse is able to support Beaver Creek on an as needed basis both in-person and virtually.

A Mental Health Support Worker provides regular support to the community. Family and Children's services regional social worker provides as needed coverage through the Haines Junction office.

In Destruction Bay, the Health Centre, which also serves Burwash Landing, there is one Primary Health Care Nurse FTE and it is filled. In Burwash Landing, a Mental Health Nurse is able to support clients on an as needed basis in-person and virtually. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Counsellors and a Child and Youth Counsellor from Haines Junction visit Burwash Landing on a weekly basis. Family and Children's services regional social worker provides as needed coverage through the Haines Junction office.

In Carcross, there are three Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs and a 0.5 Community Health Nurse FTE. There are 2.5 of the Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs filled. The Carcross Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services office is connected to the Haines Junction Mental Wellness Hub with a Mental Health Nurse visiting regularly and providing virtual support. There is one Community Counsellor FTE, one Child and Youth Clinical Counsellor FTE, and a Mental Health Support Worker position. The department is working to hire an additional Support Worker into the community. Carcross has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position which is filled and a 0.5 FTE administration assistant position which is vacant.

In Carmacks, there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs, which are both filled, and a 0.5 Nurse Practitioner FTE filled by an AOC. The Mental Wellness Hub in Carmacks has two Community Counsellor FTEs, one Mental Health Support Worker FTE, and one Mental Health Nurse FTE. While all positions are filled, nursing clients are temporarily being covered in-person and virtually by a nurse stationed in Whitehorse. Family and Children Services has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position and a 1.0 FTE administrative position in Carmacks both positions are filled.

In Dawson City, there are two Community Health Nurse FTEs with one FTE filled. The Mental Wellness Hub in Dawson City has four Community Counsellor FTEs, two Clinical Counsellor FTEs, one Child Youth and Family Counsellor FTE, two Mental Health Support Worker FTEs and one Mental Health Nurse FTE. Both the Mental Health Support Worker FTEs are filled, along with the Mental Health Nurse FTE. One Community Counsellor FTE is vacant, and the Child and Youth Clinical Counsellor FTE has recently been filled. Family and Children's Services has a 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Dawson City which is vacant; and a 0.5 FTE administration assistant position which is filled however, the caseload is being covered by a regional mobile worker.

In Faro, there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs, which are both filled. A Community Counsellor from the Carmacks Mental Wellness Hub visits Faro biweekly. The Mental Health Nurse provides services in-person and virtually in Faro. Family and Children's Services has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Faro which is vacant, but the caseload is being covered by a Regional Supervisor.

In Haines Junction, there are three Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs and one Community Health Nurse FTE. The Mental Wellness Hub in Haines Junction has one Community Counsellor FTE, one Clinical Counsellor FTE, one Mental Health Support Worker FTE and one Child Youth and Family Counsellor FTE. All FTEs in the Mental Wellness Hub are filled. A Mental Health Nurse provides in-person and virtual

supports to the community regularly. As of October 24, 2022, there was a resident physician in Haines Junction and servicing communities along the North Highway. Family and Children's Services have a 0.5 FTE administrative position which is filled and a 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Haines Junction which is vacant, but the caseload is being covered by the Carcross Regional Worker and Supervisor.

In Mayo, there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs, one Community Health Nurse FTE and one Nurse Practitioner FTE. The Nurse Practitioner FTE is filled while one Primary Health Care Nurse position is filled with another vacant, and the Community Health Care Nurse FTE is vacant. There is one Clinical Counsellor FTE in Mayo, and a Child Youth and Family Counsellor visits the community every third week. Mental Health Nursing services are provided from the Dawson City Hub. Family and Children's Services has a 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position and 1.0 FTE administrative position in Mayo, which are both filled.

In Old Crow there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs, one is filled and one is vacant. A Community Counsellor FTE is dedicated to Old Crow and travels to the community regularly, as well as provides virtual services and supports to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens in Whitehorse. The Child Youth and Family Counsellor from the Dawson City Hub travels to Old Crow monthly. The Mental Health Nurse from the Dawson City Hub provides services to Old Crow. Family and Children's Services has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Old Crow which is vacant, but the caseload is being covered by a Regional Mobile Worker.

In Pelly Crossing, there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs with one filled and one vacant. A Community Counsellor from the Carmacks Mental Wellness Hub travels to Pelly Crossing weekly. A Mental Health Nurse from the Carmacks Hub provides in-person and virtual services. Family and Children's Services has a 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Pelly Crossing which is vacant, but the caseload is being covered by the Regional Social Workers in Carmacks and Mayo.

In Ross River there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs, one is filled and one is vacant. A Community Counsellor from the Carmacks Mental Wellness Hub travels to Ross River biweekly. A Mental Health Nurse provided live-in services in the community but is on long-term leave. Mental Health Nursing Services are provided from the Carmacks Hub. Family and Children's Services has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Ross River which is vacant and 1.0 FTE administration assistant position which is filled, but the caseload is being covered by the Regional Supervisor.

In Teslin, there are two Primary Health Care Nurse FTEs with 1.5 of these positions filled, and a 0.5 Community Health Nurse FTE which is vacant. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has one Community Counsellor FTE in Teslin. A Child Youth and Family Clinical Counsellor travels to Teslin weekly to provide services, and the department has worked with Teslin Tlingit Council to increase service days to twice weekly and work on collaborative programming in the community. Mental health nursing services are provided from Whitehorse. Family and Children's Services has 1.0 FTE Regional Social Worker position in Teslin which is vacant, but the caseload is being covered by the Regional Social Workers in Watson Lake.

In Watson Lake, there are two Community Health Nurse FTEs, one is filled and one is vacant. The Mental Wellness Hub in Watson Lake has two Community Counsellor FTEs, one Child Youth and Family FTE, two Mental Health Support Worker FTEs and one Mental Health Nurse FTE. All of the Mental Wellness FTEs in Watson Lake are filled except one support worker position is in recruitment. The Mental Health Nurse FTE is based out of Whitehorse but travels regularly and provides virtual support to Watson Lake. Family and Children's Services has 3.0 FTE Regional Social Worker positions and 2.0 FTE administrative positions in Watson Lake. One of the Regional Social Worker and two administrative positions are filled.

Recruitment is ongoing for all vacant positions in Yukon communities. Nursing positions in communities are temporarily filled when possible with float, auxiliary-on-call nurses or with agency nurses when no nurses employed by the Government of Yukon are available. Public health nurses from Whitehorse travel to communities to support vaccination clinics, as needed.

I understand you have some questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccination requirement for Government of Yukon employees. As of May 17, 2022, there were seven employees in the Department of Health and Social Services with religious or medical exemptions to the vaccine mandate, and seven employees on leave without pay with no exemptions to the vaccine mandate. Due to privacy concerns, we cannot report on which community and branch were impacted by employees placed on leave without pay, as there were less than five employees in rural communities. The vaccine mandate was lifted on July 13, 2022, with all Health and Social Services staff on leave without pay due to the vaccine mandate eligible to return to work.

Yours truly,



Tracy Anne-McPhee  
Minister of Health and Social Services