



# Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues

Annual Report 2022–2023



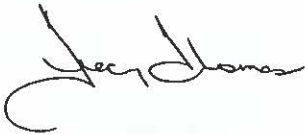
## Message from the Chair

It's been a great honour to serve as Chair of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues (YACWI). I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues Judy Hartling, Rowan MacPhail, and Zara Soukoroff and thank them for their hard work and dedication. This year has been a transformational one for YACWI. The changes following the passing of Bill 22, the *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, will ensure that the council remains relevant and representative of the community it serves. Expanded mandate and new membership criteria will bring in new perspectives and insights and will allow us to make an impact across the Government of Yukon on all matters related to gender, sexual orientation and women's issues.

Providing safe and affordable transportation and accessible childcare across the Yukon remain the council's areas of focus. We will continue to engage with issues related to taxi safety and rural transportation until all women in our territory can travel easily, without putting their own safety in jeopardy. Access to childcare is often linked to women's ability to pursue education and career opportunities, which directly translates to greater economic independence.

We continue to collaborate with advocacy and equity-seeking groups, researchers and policy makers to gain broader perspective on the issues we strive to address.

Sincerely,



Tracy Thomas  
Chair  
Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues

## About the council

The Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues (YACWI) was established under the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act* in May 1992. Under this Act, the council is comprised of up to eight members appointed by the Commissioner of Yukon. At least 50 per cent of members must be from rural areas and 25 per cent must be Yukon First Nations.

The YACWI Act (1992) mandates the council to:

- develop public awareness of issues affecting the status of women;
- promote a change of attitudes within the Yukon so that women may enjoy equality of opportunity;
- encourage discussions and expressions of opinion by Yukon residents on issues affecting the status of women;
- review policies, programs and legislation affecting women as directed by the Minister responsible for the directorate;
- advise the Minister with respect to such issues as the Minister may refer to the council for its consideration;
- advise the Minister with respect to such issues as the council considers advisable; and
- encourage organizations and groups that promote the equality of women.

Note: Bill 22, *the Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, was passed in April 2023, during the spring sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. The new legislation included a provision that the Act would come into force at a date to be decided by the Commissioner in Executive Council. Bill 22 introduced several changes to the existing legislation for YACWI – including a name change to the *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act*. However, at the time of writing this annual report, the council continued to operate under the YACWI Act as the new legislation was not yet in force. The year-in-review section outlines the changes introduced by Bill 22 to the YACWI Act and what it means for the structure and mandate of the council going forward.



## Year-in-review

This year brought major change for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Bill 22, *the Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, passed in the 2023 spring sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Once the Act comes into force, the council will be named the Minister's Advisory Council on Women Gender Equity and the YACWI Act will become the *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act*. Future reporting will reflect this.

These legislative changes are a milestone in supporting the Government of Yukon's commitment to inclusivity for all genders and sexual orientations. The *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act* will ensure that the council can provide advice related to gender equity, equity for those of different sexual orientations, and women's issues, on any government initiative. Updating the previous legislation, also fulfills a commitment the government made in its [2021 LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan](#) to restructure the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to include issues related to the Yukon's Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual plus communities (2SLGBTQIA+).

Key changes include:

- Updating the Act's title to the *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act* so that it better aligns with the updated title of the government's Women and Gender Equity Directorate.
- Updating the council's mandate so that it also aligns with the directorate's mandate, ensuring the council can advise on matters related to gender equity and sexual orientation, as well as women's issues.
- Expanding the scope of the council so that it can provide advice to all government ministers.
- Introduction of a subcommittee structure with a subcommittee focused on equity for women, and a subcommittee focused on gender diversity and equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.
- Removal of membership criteria that restricted the membership to women.
- Adding a regulation making power to the Act so the process of future membership criteria changes can be simplified.

The subcommittee structure will ensure that the council focuses on gender equity for women, as well as gender equity for the gender diverse and people who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Current YACWI members automatically became members of the Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity and they will serve the terms they were appointed to as members of YACWI.



The updated Act identifies that the council must consist of 4 to 12 members. New members will be nominated based on criteria that will be outlined in the regulation, which we anticipate will be finalized in the fall of 2023. Potentially these criteria could include gender identity, sexual orientation, Indigeneity, race, national and ethnic origin, age, place of residence, and disability. When reviewing applications, the Commissioner in Executive Council will make a reasonable effort to ensure that the membership of the council is diverse and reflective diverse identities.



## Meetings

June 9, 2022

Council members discussed taxi safety and the potential role of the City of Whitehorse in working towards improvements, as well as the Yukon Women's Coalition's January 2022 [Taxi Safety Report](#) and how YACWI and the coalition could collaborate. The members also discussed a report commissioned by the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce entitled [Yukon's Rural Transportation Challenge](#) (April 2021) and reached out to Steve Roddick, one of the report's key contributors, to arrange for a presentation on the report's findings. Prior to the meeting, the members reviewed a report on rural transportation in Northern B.C.

Violence against Indigenous women was an agenda item for the meeting. Members discussed possibilities of collaboration with various organizations focusing on this issue and how YACWI could support them. Afterschool childcare and the City of Whitehorse's Official Community Plan were also discussed.

September 21, 2022

The council's September 2022 meeting focused largely on safe transportation. The members discussed the [Yukon Community Travel Project Final Report](#) as well as the issue of taxi safety in Whitehorse. The authors of the report presented findings to members. Afterschool childcare was also an agenda item for this meeting. The members discussed a letter from the Early Learning and Childcare Unit, Department of Education, with a departmental representative.

January 20, 2023

Jeanie McLean, Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, provided an update that changes to the YACWI Act were expected for the spring of 2023. The changes are outlined in the year-in-review section of this annual report. At this meeting, the chair shared YACWI priorities for the year ahead, which include:

- rural transportation between communities;
- ending violence against Indigenous women; and
- childcare for school-aged children.

March 8, 2023

The meeting started with a presentation by Queer Yukon's Executive Director Mona Luxion. Further collaboration and future partnerships between both organizations were discussed. After that the focus shifted to items related to YACWI's mandate and operations. The members discussed Bill 22, the *Act to Amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, and the mandate and operational changes it is going to bring.



## Members as of March 31, 2023

### Tracy Thomas, Chair

Tracy brings her passion for equity and women's safety to the table, with a healthy dose of lived experiences. Originally from northern Ontario, she has been north of 60 for over 20 years, first in Nunavut and then from 2008 onwards in the Yukon. Her career at the executive level has spanned health and social services, wellness, training, mining, First Nation governance and development, and now municipal government, always with an eye to improving the quality of life of the local population. Her children have grown up in the Yukon and now are raising the next generation in the territory as well. She is thrilled to be a part of this council and working with like-minded people to both effect and affect positive change that will benefit women in all walks of life but with a special emphasis on the vulnerable.

### Judy Hartling

Judy Hartling has lived in the Yukon since 1992. She practised criminal law and is now retired. Presently she is the chief adjudicator for the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. She has a keen interest in gender equity which began when learning there was a quota of 10 per cent women permitted in her law class. She has continued to speak out for women and their rights and encourage gender equity. She has developed policy concerning diversity and inclusivity, and she has worked with and coached women to provide opportunities to overcome barriers of discrimination.

### Rowan MacPhail

Rowan moved to the Yukon in 2019 and has worked for the Yukon Human Rights Commission, as a private practice lawyer at a local firm, and currently works for a union. Rowan is committed to advocating for women's equality and is appreciative of the opportunity to sit on the council with such a passionate group of women and advocates.

### Zara Soukoroff

Zara is a born and raised Yukoner, and a mom of two. She has worked in a communications specialist role for various organizations in the territory. Zara's passion for gender equity began early in her life but was bolstered by her experience with postpartum depression and the healthcare system in 2014. Since then, she has founded the Facebook page 'Whitehorse Babies and Kids Social,' which allows parents to easily find information to support themselves and their families.

## Administration

### 2022-23 expenditures

Travel: \$2,086

Honoraria: \$2,344

Contracts: \$270

Catering: \$1,167

Venue rental: \$690

**Total expenditures: \$6,557**

## Contact us

For more information about YACWI, email the Women and Gender Equity Directorate at [wged@yukon.ca](mailto:wged@yukon.ca) or phone 867-667-3030, toll free in the Yukon 1-800-661-0408, extension 3030.

