



April 22, 2024

Dear Minister McPhee,

I am writing to you regarding Yukon Insured Health Services', review of gender affirming care (GAC), facial feminization surgery (FFS) procedures. I understand that as part of this review, contracted plastic surgeons specializing in FFS are being invited to give their professional advice.

Yukon Insured Health Services Policy B14: Gender Affirming Surgery, came into reality in March 2023 for Yukoners and gives Yukon trans-women unique access to GAC, not seen elsewhere in Canada, but for a few unique exceptions. For Trans-women, FFS is a gateway to living a full life without the stigma that they otherwise face, or the mirror of gender dysphoria.

It is ironic that when we consider gender affirming surgery, our minds jump to genital surgeries, otherwise referred to as bottom surgery, and for obvious reasons. Yet socially that is not how we introduce ourselves in society, it is with our faces.

If we reach adulthood without access to puberty blockers, testosterone, and somatotropin (Human growth hormone or HGH) leave their mark upon the cranial bone structures, sculpting characteristics that we are socialized to identify as masculine. The same hormones also create masculine soft tissue features. In comparison, estrogens and HGH create smoother facial bone structures, adipose tissue evenly and densely distributed. These hormones result in collagen and hyaluronic acid which alters cell structures and dermal structures. Creating more elastic and plump skin. For trans-women, some of this is achieved through hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and

can take up to a couple of years for full effect. Somatopause can reduce some of these positive therapeutic effects in older patients.

It seems well accepted that cranial bone reconstruction is a standard part of FFS. But soft tissue surgical procedures are scrutinized by the medical industry under the schema philosophy as being, 'cosmetic'. Yet for trans-woman soft tissue surgeries are part of GAC, many would find the term, 'cosmetic', invalidating.

Yukon Insured Health Services Policy B14 was based upon World Professional Association for Transgender Health Guidelines (WPATH), which the document refers to. Under WPATH standards of care 8, S136 is a chart listing all gender affirming surgical procedures, this document includes FFS for both bone and soft tissue surgeries.

FFS is extremely important for many trans-women, just as bottom surgery is. Not only do the procedures align a person with their identity and eliminate gender dysphoria, these procedures allow us to pass as ourselves. FFS can greatly improve self-confidence and reduce the high incidence of suicide ideation, which is statistically above average, at 48%, with some 7% of those leading to actual self-death. FFS also reduces the risk of addiction problems, anxiety, and depression.

It is my understanding that the guidelines for gender affirming surgery are already set. Policy B14 references WPATH guidelines. The question posed is cost and benefit. The benefits I have outlined in brief. The Insured Health medical director and chief medical adviser, need trust in the practitioners that make up Yukon's trans-healthcare team to make the decisions that are best for their patients.

Yukoners are a tough, diverse people and trans-people are part of that community. The true cost is in losing Yukoners that do not receive the care they like any other patient deserve. Social prejudice makes for violence. Assaults, murder, and suicide are all too real for the trans-community. Gender affirming surgeries reduce the harms otherwise encountered in the lives of trans-women.

Gender affirming surgeries are not cosmetic, but life improving and lifesaving.

Thank you for reading this letter,

Sabin

Cc: Kate White, Leader of the Yukon NDP and MLA for Takhini-Kopper King