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Currie Dixon, Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Yukon Legislative Assembly
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

November 18, 2022

Re: Action Plan in Response to Auditor-General's Report

The Yukon Women's Transition Home Society was pleased to receive the invitation to comment on the Yukon Government's Action Plan in response to the Auditor-General's report on Yukon housing. We would like to offer the following comments for your consideration.

First and foremost, there are a number of positive actions found in the action plan jointly prepared by the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services.

Secondly, it is also terrific that the two entities are working together, which will hopefully fill some of the gaps that our service users and others have encountered through the years. For example, one of the comments of the Auditor-General that we find astonishing is the inordinate amount of time it takes to find housing for the alleged priority group of women and children fleeing violence—much higher than non-priority groups, in fact. We cannot seem to find any identified reasons for this, which raises the question of whether the solutions will actually fix the problem.

Thirdly, the Auditor-General's recommendations seem to be based on best practices for large governments and organizations. Unfortunately, issues of size and value of implementing some of the recommendations are not discussed. We have a number of concerns about the impact of some of the recommendations and the corresponding items in the action plan, as outlined in the attached analysis. We hope our concerns are considered as the Yukon Government moves forward with its action plan, to avoid 'letting the perfect drive out the good.'

Finally, we want to commend the Public Accounts Committee for reaching out beyond the confines of the government for comment. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JP Pinard, President
Yukon Women's Transition Home Society

Auditor-General's Report on Social Housing 2022

The Yukon Women's Transition Home Society (YWTHS) provides shelter and support to women and children resisting violence. Two shelters are owned and operated by the society: Kaushee's Place and Betty's Haven. The Department of Health & Social Services (H&SS) is the major government funder for operational costs, and Yukon Housing Corporation (YHC) for acquisition and building, with some grey areas.

Access to safe, affordable, and suitable housing is of critical importance to these women and children. The report reveals a number of areas of concern. Wait times for social housing for allegedly-prioritized victims of violence¹ exceed those for non-priority YHC clients, averaging 195 days compared to 141 days. Thirty percent of tenant evictions from 2012 to 2017 were victims of violence. No analysis is provided on the reasons.

The report comments on issues around maintenance, estimating annual maintenance costs per unit at \$6013 given the age of the facilities. This is an issue that YWTHS encounters on an ongoing basis, amplified by a seeming disagreement between H&SS and YHC about who is responsible for funding maintenance costs (let alone energy efficiency).

Recommendations of possible concern from the Auditor-General

31. Review of rent assessment – we are concerned that any moves to tighten eligibility may negatively affect women and children in need of safe and suitable housing that the private sector may not have available.

64. Submitting reports – H&SS conducted an evaluation of YWTHS in 2020. There were a number of recommendations made which YWTHS has been implementing without additional funding. The society commissioned an analysis of the data required in the evaluation and the funding agreements and found a significant lack of systems, personnel, and financial capacity to implement these. The Society does timely reports as required by the funding agreements, but implementing the evaluation findings is not possible without additional support. We would note that YHC is hiring a permanent analyst position to help implement the AG's recommendations. (see also recommendation #87 regarding housing partners improving info systems).

91. Conduct regular evaluations of housing providers to assess and report on achievement of desired results - Evaluations can reveal positive insights and ways ahead for improvement of service to the people we serve². However, the impact of these evaluations on managerial and staff time can be significant, both in terms of participation and implementation. Recommendations are rarely costed or funded, and

¹ Terminology used by the Auditor-General and Yukon Government

can add to the stress of an organization already stretched through external events like COVID, the new Societies Act, changes to WCB regulations, and difficulty with staff retention and recruitment given disparity in wages/benefits with the Yukon Government.

Also found under 91 – establish targets and outcome measures in funding agreements – see comments under recommendation #64.

YHC and H&SS Action Plan

31.1, 31.2 – YWTHS hopes that the review of rent assessment and eligibility, and prioritization requirements, will have some form of consultation with housing partners.

31.3, 31.4 – the capacity of partners to participate must take account of the resource requirements of said partners.

40 and 48 – government may want to include ‘housing partners’ in identifying their capital/maintenance needs.

64 – it would be nice if partners could see the independent consultant review of H&SS agreement management processes, particularly if it affects partners.

91.2 – H&SS enhancing performance monitoring through funding agreements will require additional support/funding for the YWTHS.