



Second Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

36th Yukon Legislative Assembly

Child and Family Services in Yukon

August 2026

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Kate White, MLA

Takhini

Chair

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Clerk to the Committee

Volume 41



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

36th Yukon Legislative Assembly

August 11, 2026

Hon. Yvonne Clarke, MLA
Speaker
Yukon Legislative Assembly

Dear Speaker:

On behalf of the members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, appointed by order of the 36th Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have the honour to present the committee's Second Report.

Sincerely,

Kate White
Chair

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Preface

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts

The basic purpose of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public spending. The committee's authority is derived from Standing Order 45(3) of the *Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly*, which says

At the commencement of the first Session of each Legislature a Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall be appointed and the Public Accounts and all Reports of the Auditor General shall stand referred automatically and permanently to the said Committee as they become available.

On December 10, 2025, the Yukon Legislative Assembly adopted the following motion:

THAT Kate White, Patti McLeod, Doris Anderson, Tyler Porter, Adam Gerle, Justin Ziegler, Linda Moen, and Debra-Leigh Reti be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts established pursuant to Standing Order 45(3);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee. (Motion No. 6)

The committee first met on January 7, 2026. At that meeting, the committee elected Kate White as Chair and Adam Gerle as Vice-Chair.

This report

On March 4, 2026, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada presented a report entitled *2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon*, to the Hon. Yvonne Clarke, the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. The Speaker then authorized the report's distribution to Members of the Legislative Assembly and once members had received their copies, the report became a public document. On the same day, Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly had the opportunity to ask officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada questions during an in-camera briefing.

The Public Accounts Committee discussed the audit report at its meetings on March 4 and 27, May 6 and 25, June 26, and July 16, 2026.

To assist with its consideration of the Auditor General's report, the Public Accounts Committee solicited feedback from the following organizations:

- Carcross/Tagish First Nation,
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations,
- First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun,
- Kluane First Nation,
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation,
- Liard First Nation,

- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation,
- Ross River Dena Council,
- Selkirk First Nation,
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council,
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Council,
- Teslin Tlingit Council,
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation,
- White River First Nation,
- Daylu Cēna Council,
- Council of Yukon First Nations,
- Yukon First Nations Education Directorate,
- Child and Youth Advocate,
- Yukon Women's Coalition,
- Yukon Foster Parent Association,
- Kaushee's (Yukon Women's Transition Home),
- Help and Hope for Families Society,
- Victoria Faulkner,
- Sally and Sisters,
- Dawson Women's Shelter,
- Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council,
- Skookum Jims Friendship Center,
- Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, and
- Yukon Status of Women Council.

The written submissions that the committee received in response have been appended to this report.

At its meeting on March 27, 2026, the Public Accounts Committee adopted the following motion:

THAT the Standing Committee on Public Accounts hold a public hearing on Child and Family Services in Yukon on Monday, May 25, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. and that witnesses from the Office of the Auditor General and the Department of Health and Social Services be invited to appear before the committee.

The committee collectively drafted questions for the public hearing and agreed to provide the questions to the Department of Health and Social Services and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to facilitate the witnesses' preparations.

The public hearing took place in the Legislative Assembly Chamber on Monday, May 25, 2026. The following witnesses from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada appeared: Marjolaine Guay, Assistant Auditor General, Markirit Armutlu, Principal, and Sean MacLennan, Director. The following witnesses from the Department of Health and Social Services appeared: Matt King, Deputy Minister Health and Social Services, Stephen Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Services, Bobby Prematunga, Senior Program Strategist, Tim Darling, Family and Children's Services Manager, and Tanya MacKenzie, Director of Family and Children's Services. The transcript of the hearing is appended to this report.

The Auditor General's report, transcripts of the public hearing, committee meeting minutes, documents submitted to the committee, and this report may be found on the committee's web page at: <https://yukonassembly.ca/committees/pac>



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

36th Yukon Legislative Assembly

Second Report

Child and Family Services in Yukon

August 2026

Audit Findings

1. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada released *2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon* on March 4, 2026. The actions of the Department of Health and Social Services were examined. In conducting the audit, the Office of the Auditor General

focused on whether the Department of Health and Social Services provided timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families.¹
2. The audit found serious gaps across a range of services, from the department's response to reports of suspected harm to completing investigations and following up on the safety and well-being of children in care, and determined that the department failed to provide timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect vulnerable children and their families.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Findings

3. The Public Accounts Committee is an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly with a mandate to examine the administration of public programs and services and to promote accountability. Through its reviews, the Committee considers whether government departments and agencies are implementing policies effectively, delivering services as intended, and responding appropriately to recommendations made by the Auditor General. The Committee's role is not to debate government policy, but rather to assess how that policy has been implemented and whether the department has taken appropriate action to address identified concerns. The results of the

¹ 2026 *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon* (March 4, 2026), page 2.

Committee's deliberations and recommendations are reported to the Legislative Assembly.

4. The Committee recognizes the importance and sensitivity of the subject matter under review, which concerns the delivery of services to children and families in Yukon.
5. The committee accepts and endorses the recommendations made by the Auditor General.
6. Based on the evidence provided by the witnesses during the public hearing and in the written submissions received, the committee is not convinced that the Department of Health and Social Services has adequately considered the Auditor General's recommendations and must urgently undertake significant corrective action to address the areas of concern identified.

Areas of Concern

7. In this report, the Public Accounts Committee would like to draw attention to seven critical areas of focus: group home policies, staff training, staffing shortages, critical incident reporting, challenges in smaller communities, data collection, and monitoring outcomes.

Group Home Policies

8. The Auditor General's report recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services "review and update all group home policies" and states:

This update should ensure full alignment with current legislation while also specifically addressing the diverse care and supervision needs of all residents, with particular attention to younger children and those living with disabilities²
9. When asked at the public hearing to identify key messages that the public and decision-makers should take away from the report, the Assistant Auditor General noted the importance of "addressing safety risks to children placed in group homes by updating group home policies so they reflect the needs of children residing there."³
10. In the response to the recommendations by the Auditor General, the Department of Health and Social Services has stated that the group home policy updates will be completed by March 2027.
11. The committee has significant concerns, and notes the concerns expressed in the written submissions, about the length of time required to complete the policy updates while children continue to live in the group homes.

² 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 14.

³ [Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026, page 2-3.](#)

12. The committee would like to see steps taken to review and update the group home policies in line with the recommendation made by the Auditor General and therefore recommends:

Recommendation No. 1: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by October 23, 2026, a timeline to update group home policies and, once complete, provide a copy of the updated policies to the committee.

Staff Training

13. The audit found that social workers and group home staff did not consistently complete mandatory training. It noted that:

[...] 95% of social workers received training related to their delegation of authority to deliver child welfare services under the Child and Family Services Act. However, the department could not provide us with evidence that more than half completed other health and safety and Indigenous awareness training.⁴

14. Concerns were also raised in the written submissions received by the committee from Yukon First Nations. Kwanlin Dün First Nation wrote:

Family and Children Services Staff who are not currently in mandatory safety or Yukon First Nation cultural training should not be working directly with our children until training is complete.⁵

15. Similarly, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation wrote:

Considering that 93% of the children in the departments care are indigenous, the lack of training in the areas of Yukon First Nations 101, Introduction to cultural safety and Residential School awareness is beyond acceptable. This requirement should be the bare minimum.⁶

16. The committee believes that urgent improvements are needed to staff training and recommends:

Recommendation No. 2: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services work on providing mandatory training as part of onboarding before new hires start working with vulnerable sector clients.

Recommendation No. 3: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services, in order to meet the mandatory training requirements going forward, develop flexible staff training plans that provide accommodations and multiple options for individuals to access training, including online, self-paced, and in-person formats.

⁴ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 20.

⁵ Kwanlin Dün First Nation written submission dated April 15, 2026, page 2.

⁶ Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation written submission dated April 29, 2026, page 1-2.

17. At the public hearing, the committee asked if the first comprehensive training and compliance report will be shared and if it will be made public. The department's response was "As we work to develop this comprehensive training compliance report, we will also work to determine how best to share those results."⁷
18. The committee expects the department to share its comprehensive training compliance report once it is completed and makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation No. 4: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services notify the Standing Committee on Public Accounts once it has provided the comprehensive training compliance report to the minister as required by the *Child and Family Services Act* and provide a copy to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by the end of February 2027.

Staffing Shortages

19. The Auditor General found poor management of staffing in Child and Family Services resulted in significant staffing shortages and an increase in payroll costs as a result of overtime and casual staff spending which rose by more than 75% from April 2022 through March 2025.
20. The audit report states that "the Family and Children's Services branch operated at 81% capacity, with 282 of 348 positions filled" and notes:

Critically, only 62% (36 of 58) of Whitehorse and regional social worker and supervisor positions were filled, leaving the department significantly understaffed in key front-line roles. This shortage impacts the department's ability to meet child protection requirements and ensure the health and safety of children and families.⁸

21. The Auditor General's report includes the following recommendation regarding staffing:

The Department of Health and Social Services should rigorously and regularly assess the financial and human resources required to deliver services under the *Child and Family Services Act*. This assessment should include analyzing the department's data on staffing levels, vacancy rates, turnover, and attrition to inform and tailor its recruitment and retention efforts, in particular for front-line positions needed to deliver services.⁹

⁷ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-13.

⁸ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — *Child and Family Services in Yukon* (March 4, 2026), page 18.

⁹ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — *Child and Family Services in Yukon* (March 4, 2026), page 19.

22. The committee agrees with the recommendation made by the Auditor General and further recommends:

Recommendation No. 5: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a staffing assessment for Child and Family Services by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 6: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report on workload analysis for social workers by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 7: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by March 4, 2027, with a retention and hiring strategy including a timeline for Child and Family Services to have all social worker positions filled.

Recommendation No. 8: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an updated report on targeted hiring of First Nation social workers by March 4, 2027.

Critical Incident Reporting

23. The audit found that there were significant gaps in how critical incidents involving children in care were responded to by Family and Children's Services, in particular, meeting reporting requirements.
24. The *Child and Family Services Policy Manual* notes that a serious incident "requires medical treatment and/or involves a moderate risk of harm but does not result in a child's death or anticipated long-term impairment" while critical incidents "result in or may cause a child's death or long-term impairment, require major medical treatments, or involve an allegation of mistreatment or high risk of harm"¹⁰
25. The Auditor General's report found that a majority (10 out of 12) of critical incidents that required an outcome report did not have one completed.¹¹
26. The committee has significant concerns regarding the required reporting not being completed and is therefore recommending:

Recommendation No. 9: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an updated report on how critical incidents are being managed by October 23, 2026.

¹⁰ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — *Child and Family Services in Yukon* (March 4, 2026), page 12.

¹¹ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — *Child and Family Services in Yukon* (March 4, 2026), page 13.

Challenges in Smaller Communities

27. The audit found that communities outside of Whitehorse faced unique challenges related to staffing which impacted the department's ability to provide care noting that "at least 2 smaller communities lacked a permanent social worker for over a year, impairing the department's capacity to respond to urgent matters."¹²
28. The committee has serious concerns about the availability of safe places in rural communities and in Yukon First Nations given the department's capacity limitations.
29. At the public hearing, the committee asked:

If I may follow up — so, this question came from outside of Whitehorse — so rural Yukon predominantly, in First Nation communities — about whether or not there was a willingness for Yukon Government to work with the nation to establish a safe place within a community — so, not necessarily identifying foster homes but working with the community to identify a separate plan. We just want to know that there's a willingness to work at other solutions or to work with nations and communities, for example, to find alternative solutions.¹³
30. The department officials indicated in their response that "Yes, absolutely, there is a willingness to do so."¹⁴
31. Therefore, the committee is making the following recommendation:

Recommendation No. 10: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an update on the work done to establish safe places within communities outside of the foster and group homes system in partnership and consultation with Yukon First Nations, where applicable, by March 4, 2027.

Data Collection

32. At the public hearing, the committee asked if the department collected data on "whether parents of children currently in care were themselves previously in government care, attended residential schools, or have a documented history of abuse".¹⁵

¹² 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 18.

¹³ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-9.

¹⁴ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-9.

¹⁵ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-15.

33. The department's response was:

This data is collected; however, it's not collected in a way that can be easily used by social workers out of the case management system in a larger data set. This information is collected from more personal trauma-informed conversations with individual family members and is contained within case notes, family trees, visual family mapping tools, and assessment narratives that are created when examining intergenerational impacts for children and youth whose caregivers attended residential school or experienced trauma as children. Paper-based files that predate the current electronic case management system also may contain some of this information, but it's not fully integrated into the system as yet, so we recognize that this is a gap.¹⁶

34. The committee believes that this is a gap that should be addressed and is therefore making the following recommendations:

Recommendation No. 11: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services update the case management system to clearly reflect and make accessible whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse.

Recommendation No. 12: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services make improvements to the case management system so that caseworkers and social workers are provided with a clear summary of cases that are transferred to them including whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse; and include what supports, interventions etc. have been previously provided by caseworkers and social workers to the family.

35. Also at the public hearing, Stephen Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, referred to a meeting between the Department of Health and Social Services and Yukon First Nations:

We are in the process of coordinating a day-long event with Yukon First Nations — as many as can attend — prior to summer — you know, prior to everybody sort of scattering to the wind in the summer months, which we are hopeful that Kwanlin Dün will attend, and I do believe that they have accepted.¹⁷

36. The committee is interested in receiving information on this event.

Recommendation No. 13: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a

¹⁶ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-15.

¹⁷ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-15.

summary of the daylong event with Yukon First Nations referenced by the department during the May 25, 2026 public hearing.

37. The Auditor General's report includes the following recommendation:

The Department of Health and Social Services should:

[...] establish a robust and continuous system for monitoring group home accommodations and child-to-staff ratios. The results of this monitoring should be regularly reported to senior management to enable evidence-based adjustments, thereby facilitating the safe and healthy living and care environments needed for children to thrive¹⁸

38. The committee asked about the staff-to-child ratios at the public hearing and expressed concern about the lack of a formal ratio at the time of the audit.

39. In the response from the department, the Deputy Minister stated

The department is undertaking an analysis to determine the appropriate staff-to-child ratio, as noted, to meet the timelines in the Auditor General management response, which is end of June, in order to inform budget decisions for 2027-28.¹⁹

40. The committee is interested in viewing this analysis and is therefore recommending:

Recommendation No. 14: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Account with the analysis that was done to determine staff-to-child ratios and the staff-to-child ratios going forward by October 23, 2026.

Monitoring Outcomes

41. The Auditor General's report includes the following recommendations regarding monitoring of outcomes:

The Department of Health and Social Services should:

- establish a robust mechanism for tracking and analyzing compliance with key requirements of the Child and Family Services Act and its policies and use the information from the analysis to make improvements, including implementing targeted training for staff to address non-compliance with child welfare standards²⁰ [...]
- establish a robust and continuous system for monitoring group home accommodations and staff-to-child ratios. The results of this monitoring

¹⁸ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 29.

¹⁹ Yukon Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Public Proceedings: Evidence, May 25, 2026 page 2-8.

²⁰ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 29.

should be regularly reported to senior management to enable evidence-based adjustments, thereby facilitating the safe and healthy living and care environments needed for children to thrive.²¹

42. The committee appreciates the importance of follow-up analysis for determining the effectiveness of government policy implementation but found that significant improvements to monitoring and reporting are required and is therefore making the following four recommendations:

Recommendation No. 15: THAT during future reviews, the Department of Health and Social Services make efforts to involve clients, families, and caregivers so their perspectives and experiences are meaningfully incorporated, including consideration of how concerns have, or have not, been addressed since the previous review.

Recommendation No. 16: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services engage with former caregivers to understand their experiences and the department communicate the format, the outreach plan, and the questions asked to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by December 2026.

Recommendation No. 17: THAT the information collected during the engagement process with former caregivers be communicated to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by December 2027.

Recommendation No. 18: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services establish by October 23, 2026, clear timelines for reporting progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Auditor General and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, including regular reporting to the minister and a plain-language progress report available to the public.

43. In its written submission, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office stated:

Any action plan put forward by [the Government of Yukon] must incorporate the experiences of children and youth themselves, and [the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office] is prepared to support that work, and to provide opportunities to amplify the voices that too often go unheard.²²

44. The committee hopes to see improvements and recommends:

Recommendation No. 19: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts its workplan and plan for engagement with the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office.

45. In its written submission, the Yukon Status of Women Council stated:

²¹ 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Child and Family Services in Yukon (March 4, 2026), page 29.

²² Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office written submission dated April 29, 2026, page 4.

Because it has been over a decade since the 2014 Audit, and no publicly available report has been released on the status of the department's 2014 commitments that we could find; we believe that reviewing the department's ability to follow-through with the 2014 recommendations and responses is fundamental to assessing the department's commitments and ability to execute the 2026 report's recommendations and responses with transparency and in a timely fashion.²³

46. The committee shares the concerns of the Yukon Status of Women Council regarding the 2014 audit and is therefore making the following recommendation:

Recommendation No. 20: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services revisit the recommendations of the *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly—2014 — Yukon Family and Children's Services—Department of Health and Social Services* and include addressing those recommendations in its upcoming work and reporting processes.

Conclusion

47. The committee would like to thank the officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada for their work on the performance audit report and for the assistance offered to the committee.
48. The committee would also like to thank the officials from the Department of Health and Social Services who appeared as witnesses before the committee at the public hearing.
49. The committee would further like to thank everyone who provided a written submission.
50. In this report, the Committee makes 20 recommendations:

Recommendation No. 1: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by October 23, 2026, a timeline to update group home policies and, once complete, provide a copy of the updated policies to the committee.

Recommendation No. 2: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services work on providing mandatory training as part of onboarding before new hires start working with vulnerable sector clients.

Recommendation No. 3: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services, in order to meet the mandatory training requirements going forward, develop flexible staff training plans that provide accommodations and multiple options for individuals to access training, including online, self-paced, and in-person formats.

Recommendation No. 4: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services notify the Standing Committee on Public Accounts once it has

²³ Yukon Status of Women Council written submission dated April 30, 2026, page 1.

provided the comprehensive training compliance report to the minister as required by the *Child and Family Services Act* and provide a copy to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by the end of February 2027.

Recommendation No. 5: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a staffing assessment for Child and Family Services by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 6: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report on workload analysis for social workers by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 7: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by March 4, 2027, with a retention and hiring strategy including a timeline for Child and Family Services to have all social worker positions filled.

Recommendation No. 8: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an updated report on targeted hiring of First Nation social workers by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 9: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an updated report on how critical incidents are being managed by October 23, 2026.

Recommendation No. 10: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an update on the work done to establish safe places within communities outside of the foster and group homes system in partnership and consultation with Yukon First Nations, where applicable, by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 11: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services update the case management system to clearly reflect and make accessible whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse.

Recommendation No. 12: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services make improvements to the case management system so that caseworkers and social workers are provided with a clear summary of cases that are transferred to them including whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse; and include what supports, interventions etc. have been previously provided by caseworkers and social workers to the family.

Recommendation No. 13: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a

summary of the daylong event with Yukon First Nations referenced by the department during the May 25, 2026 public hearing.

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Recommendation No. 19: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts its workplan and plan for engagement with the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office.

Recommendation No. 20: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services revisit the recommendations of the *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly—2014 — Yukon Family and Children’s Services—Department of Health and Social Services* and include addressing those recommendations in its upcoming work and reporting processes.

51. The Public Accounts Committee expects to see further progress on addressing the issues highlighted by the Auditor General’s report. The committee’s follow up on the implementation of its recommendations and the recommendations contained in the Auditor General’s report may include holding further public hearings in the future.

Summary of Public Accounts Committee Recommendations

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Recommendation No. 9: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an updated report on how critical incidents are being managed by October 23, 2026.

Recommendation No. 10: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with an update on the work done to establish safe places within communities outside of the foster and group homes system in partnership and consultation with Yukon First Nations, where applicable, by March 4, 2027.

Recommendation No. 11: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services update the case management system to clearly reflect and make accessible whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse.

Recommendation No. 12: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services make improvements to the case management system so that caseworkers and social workers are provided with a clear summary of cases that are transferred to them including whether caregivers of children currently in care were themselves in government care, attended residential schools, or have a history of abuse; and include what supports, interventions etc. have been previously provided by caseworkers and social workers to the family.

Recommendation No. 13: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a summary of the daylong event with Yukon First Nations referenced by the department during the May 25, 2026 public hearing.

Recommendation No. 14: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide the Standing Committee on Public Account with the analysis that was done to determine staff-to-child ratios and the staff-to-child ratios going forward by October 23, 2026.

Recommendation No. 15: THAT during future reviews, the Department of Health and Social Services make efforts to involve clients, families, and caregivers so their perspectives and experiences are meaningfully incorporated, including consideration of how concerns have, or have not, been addressed since the previous review.

Recommendation No. 16: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services engage with former caregivers to understand their experiences and the department communicate the format, the outreach plan, and the questions asked to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by December 2026.

Recommendation No. 17: THAT the information collected during the engagement process with former caregivers be communicated to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts by December 2027.

Recommendation No. 18: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services establish by October 23, 2026, clear timelines for reporting progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Auditor General and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, including regular reporting to the minister and a plain-language progress report available to the public.

Recommendation No. 19: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services provide to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts its workplan and plan for engagement with the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office.

Recommendation No. 20: THAT the Department of Health and Social Services revisit the recommendations of the Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly—2014 — Yukon Family and Children’s Services— Department of Health and Social Services and include addressing those recommendations in its upcoming work and reporting processes.

Appendices

Transcript of public hearing on May 25, 2026

Written Submissions:

- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation
- Yukon Child and Youth Advocate
- Yukon Status of Women Council



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Issue 2

36th Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Public Proceedings: Evidence

Monday, May 25, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Chair: Kate White

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Chair: Kate White
Vice-Chair: Adam Gerle

Members: Linda Moen
Patti McLeod
Justin Ziegler
Doris Anderson
Tyler Porter

Clerk: Logan Ockenden, Clerk of Committees

Witnesses: **Office of the Auditor General of Canada**

Marjolaine Guay, Assistant Auditor General
Markirit Armutlu, Principal
Sean MacLennan, Director

Department of Health and Social Services

Matt King, Deputy Minister
Stephen Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Services
Tanya MacKenzie, Director, Family and Children's Services
Tim Darling, Manager, Family and Children's Services
Bobby Prematunga, Senior Program Strategist, Family and Children's Services

EVIDENCE**Whitehorse, Yukon****Monday, May 25, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.**

Chair: I will now call to order this hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Public Accounts Committee is established by Standing Order 45(3) of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. This Standing Order says: “At the commencement of the First Session of each Legislature, a Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall be appointed and the Public Accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand referred automatically and permanently to the said Committee as they become available.”

On December 10, 2025, the Yukon Legislative Assembly adopted Motion No. 6, which established the current Public Accounts Committee. In addition to appointing members to the Committee, the motion stipulated that the Committee shall — and I quote: “Have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods.”

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 45(3) and Motion No. 6, the Committee will investigate the Auditor General of Canada’s performance audit report on child and family services in Yukon. I would like to thank the witnesses from Health and Social Services for appearing. They are: Matt King, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services; Stephen Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Services; Tim Darling, Manager of Family and Children’s Services; Tanya MacKenzie, Director of Family and Children’s Services; and Bobby Prematunga, senior program strategist. Also present are officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. They are: Marjolaine Guay, Assistant Auditor General; Markirit Armutlu, Principal; and Sean MacLennan, Director.

I will now introduce the members of the Public Accounts Committee. I am Kate White, Chair of the Committee and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Takhini; to my left is Adam Gerle, who is the Committee’s Vice-Chair and Member for Porter Creek South; to their left is Justin Ziegler, Member for Riverdale South; to their left is Tyler Porter, Member for Southern Lakes; to their left is Linda Moen, Member for Mountainview; behind me is Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake-Ross River-Faro; to their left is Doris Anderson, Member for Porter Creek North; and finally, Debra-Leigh Reti, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, is joining us virtually.

To begin today’s proceedings, Marjolaine Guay will make an opening statement on behalf of the Office of the Auditor General. Matt King will then be invited to make an opening statement on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services. Committee members will ask questions that the Committee has devised collectively. The questions each member will ask are not just their personal questions on a particular subject but those for the entire Committee.

Before we start the hearing, I would like to remind the Committee members and witnesses to wait until they are recognized by the Chair before speaking and to remind those joining us in the gallery that you are welcome to take notes, but please do not use electronic devices.

So, we will now proceed with the opening statement from the Office of the Auditor General.

Marjolaine Guay: Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee to discuss the Auditor General’s report on child and family services in Yukon, which was tabled in March.

I would like to begin by respectfully acknowledging all of the Yukon First Nations and recognizing that we are meeting on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council.

I am accompanied today by Markirit Armutlu, Principal, who is responsible for the audit, and Sean MacLennan, who led the audit team.

The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for managing and administering the *Child and Family Services Act* and protecting children from abuse and harm. Protecting and supporting children is among the most critical responsibilities of any government.

The audit examined whether the department was providing child protection services in accordance with legislative requirements and established standards. We found serious gaps across a range of services, from the department’s response to reports of suspected harm to completing investigations and following up on the safety and well-being of children in care.

Overall, we concluded that the department failed to provide timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect vulnerable children and their families. In 37 percent of the reports of children at risk of harm, the department did not assess the need for protective intervention within the required 24-hour period. Of the cases that required further investigation, 41 percent were not completed within the required 30 days.

We also found that the department did not meet key screening and monitoring requirements when children were placed with extended family members or in foster homes. For example, criminal record checks were not completed for adults in extended family homes in 22 percent of the cases examined.

The audit also identified significant shortfalls in required face-to-face contact. In 74 percent of the cases involving children in the department’s care, the department did not meet the minimum requirement for monthly contact, with gaps extending up to 14 months. For young adults receiving support services for independent living, the department did not maintain monthly face-to-face contact in any of the cases reviewed.

In group homes, which are primarily intended for children aged 12 and older, we found that about one-third of the children were under the age of six and that many were living with disabilities. These children require more supervision. Given that the ratio of children to caregivers was based on children being 12 years of age and older, this made it harder for staff to provide effective supervision and it increased safety risks for all children. In addition, many group home staff did not complete or update training in areas such as Indigenous awareness and health and safety, including non-violent crisis intervention. The Department of Health and Social Services’ responsibility to provide for at-risk Yukon children and families also depends on effectively managing financial and human resources.

We found that the department had not completed a comprehensive assessment of the resources needed to deliver services under the *Child and Family Services Act*. As of March 2025, only 62 percent of social worker and supervisor positions were staffed, resulting in significant shortfalls in key front-line roles. Finally, we found that although the act requires the department to report to the minister every three years on its compliance with child and family services, it had been 10 years since a report was provided.

Compliance gaps pose ongoing risks to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families. Considered together, these findings point to systemic weaknesses in governance, oversight, and service delivery. They reflect a child and family services system that is not effectively protecting the young people who depend on it most. The Department of Health and Social Services must take concrete and sustained actions to strengthen its support for the safety and well-being of children, youth, and their families in Yukon.

Madam Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We would be pleased to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

Matt King: Thank you, Chair. Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, good afternoon. I too would like to recognize that we are on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today regarding the Auditor General's report on child and family services in the Yukon.

I acknowledge the work of the Office of the Auditor General in conducting this audit and thank our staff, First Nations, Indigenous partners, Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office, and other stakeholders who have contributed to this process with a focus on the well-being, safety, and rights of children and youth in the Yukon. The findings in the Auditor General's report are serious. The department accepts the findings and the recommendations of the Auditor General. The operational gaps detailed in the report, from concerning delays and safety assessments, missing face-to-face wellness visits, documentation backlogs, and criminal record checks for foster placements are unacceptable. The children, youth, and families who rely on our services deserve a system that is protective, reliable, adaptive, and centred on children, youth, families, and caregivers in need of support and intervention. The Auditor General's report identifies that the department failed to consistently deliver that standard of care, and as deputy minister, I take full systemic responsibility for the administrative, structural, and oversight shortfalls that led to these outcomes.

I want to give this Committee our assurance that our team is committed to system-level and operational improvements as we work to address the findings and the recommendations by the Auditor General. The audit covered operations up to March 31, 2025, and since that time, the department has made some progress. This includes attention to immediate actions related to caregiver screening requirements and reviews. Reviews of active caregiver files have been completed and work is underway to address identified gaps and complete outstanding requirements.

The department has updated and clarified policies related to child protection intake, contact standards, plans of care, and

supports for young adults transitioning from care while continuing to strengthen monitoring and consistency across practice areas. Additional work is underway to strengthen monitoring and compliance processes through improvement to the case management system, development of internal reporting tools, enhanced supervision processes, and branch-wide training and policy review work.

In response to concerns regarding group homes and supports for younger children and children living with disabilities, the department has begun work to review policies, assess staffing and supervision requirements, strengthen training oversight, and implement recommendations from external subject matter experts.

Additional staffing supports have also been added within transitional support services to support child development planning, staff training, and policy development for group homes. The department is also working to improve training oversight and accountability through the adoption of a learning management system to better track and monitor completion of mandatory training requirements.

Critically, we committed to reforming our models through collaborative partnerships with Yukon First Nation governments and the Council of Yukon First Nations so that systemic reform is inclusive, culturally appropriate, and structurally sound — specifically highlighting the importance of cultural continuity, connection, and culturally appropriate planning and supports. The department has continued discussions with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and out-of-territory Indigenous governing bodies to establish processes for the completion of cultural plans for children in care. This work remains ongoing and will continue to require partnership, collaboration, and sustained effort.

The department also recognizes that public confidence in child welfare services depends not only on policies and systems but on the experiences of children, youth, families, caregivers, and communities interacting with these services. That includes ensuring children and youth are safe, supported, heard, connected to their culture and community, and able to access appropriate services within a timely and consistent way.

Some of these issues are long-standing and reflect broad challenges that are not unique to the Yukon, including workforce shortages affecting child welfare systems across Canada, caregiver shortages, increasing complexity of care needs, and the ongoing impacts of colonial systems on Indigenous children, youth, and families. Those realities are challenges we must face in order to improve outcomes for children and youth in the Yukon. The department remains committed to working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations, Indigenous governing bodies, service providers, caregivers, oversight bodies, and community partners to strengthen our services and improve accountability and outcomes. Our dedicated front-line professionals work under immense pressure, and we appreciate their efforts as we focus on structural and policy improvement, recruitment and retention, and provide staff with the conditions they need to succeed.

I want to thank and acknowledge the important contributions and dedication of our staff across Family and Children's Services, transitional support services, and partner organizations who

continue to work in highly complex environments with the realities of workforce instability.

We would be pleased to answer the Committee's questions.

Chair: Just a reminder to witnesses, if you could just raise your hand or just give me some kind of visual cue, I will identify you in response.

Adam Gerle: My first are general questions for the officials of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. The first is: Can you provide a brief overview of the audit process?

Marjolaine Guay: Performance audits are planned, performed, and reported in accordance with professional auditing standards and policies of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Audits are conducted by qualified auditors who establish audit objectives and criteria. They gather evidence; they report both on positive and negative findings; they conclude against the established audit objectives; and they recommend improvements where there are significant differences between criteria and assessed performance. Finally, performance audits do not question the merits of government policies; rather, they examine government's management practices, controls, and reporting system based on its own public administration policies and their best practices.

Adam Gerle: Could you summarize the key findings of your report and what you see as the most urgent issues?

Marjolaine Guay: The key findings of our report include: assessing the need for protective intervention within the mandated 24-hour window for all child protection cases; meeting minimum contact requirements for children in care and young adults receiving support services; and completing criminal record checks for all adults in extended family and foster homes where children could be placed.

Adam Gerle: Could you outline the scope of this audit and what was included?

Markirit Armutlu: The audit involved an examination of the actions of the Department of Health and Social Services following key areas of child and family services. So, these include, for example, the meeting of responsibilities for the protection and support of at-risk children, youth, and young adults and families in compliance with the *Child and Family Services Act*. In addition, it looked at collaborating with Indigenous partners to promote culturally appropriate services for Indigenous youth, children, and families involved in the Family and Children's Services branch. Finally, it also looked at managing human and financial resource capacity, including staff training, meeting reporting requirements, and information systems and data needs.

Now, the audit work itself included a review and analysis of five types of case files. These included child protection, children in care, foster homes, extended family homes, and files of young adults receiving post-care support services from the department. The audit basically took a representative sampling of these files in its conclusions. The audit period itself covered a period from November 30, 2022 to March 31, 2025. Our conclusions in our report address the activities within that period.

Adam Gerle: If there are a few key messages you want the public and decision-makers to take away from this report, what would they be?

Marjolaine Guay: Thank you for the question. The key messages of our report include: improving the management of human and financial resources to fill key front-line social worker and supervisor positions; addressing safety risks to children placed in group homes by updating group home policies so they reflect the needs of children residing there and ensuring group home staff have completed all required training; and meeting reporting requirements in compliance with the act to the minister.

Adam Gerle: My next few questions are for the Department of Health and Social Services, so for the officials.

My first is regarding the October 2025 policy change. The auditors noted that the department removed the requirement for young adults to participate in education or employment and replaced mandatory monthly contact with an individual-specific circumstances standard. The audit had already found 100-percent failure on monthly contact and 93-percent failure on monitoring participation in their sample.

On what evidence or consultations was this decision based? How does removing a standard the department was already failing to meet represent an improvement in service delivery?

Matt King: In 2022, in consultation with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations, Family and Children's Services removed the requirement that young adults participate in education or employment in order to receive services. In 2022, Yukon Government amended the *Child and Family Services Act* to expand eligibility criteria and services provided under post-care agreements. During discussions about legislative amendments and subsequent policy development, Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Department of Health and Social Services acknowledged that most vulnerable young adults who leave the child protection system are not always ready or able to engage in employment or education. By having this as a requirement, we may further marginalize the most vulnerable; therefore, we collectively made the choice to remove this requirement. Similarly, during the policy development process, officials arrived at the conclusion that we can't treat all young adults in the same way, that their needs and capacities vary and we must meet each young adult where they are at.

Previously, Family and Children's Services policy required that workers contact young adults to monitor their compliance with post-care agreements within reason but at least biweekly phone contact and monthly face-to-face contact. When the policy was amended in 2022, the program moved away from contact every two weeks by phone and monthly face-to-face contact because it was meant to determine if the young adults were in school or at work. When the Office of the Auditor General reviewed the Family and Children's Services policy manual, they discovered that the branch had not removed reference to biweekly phone contact and monthly face-to-face contact. In response, Family and Children's Services removed the outdated policy and further emphasized that workers are expected to establish contact standards tailored to the needs of each young adult.

Adam Gerle: The new contact standard is based on individual circumstances. What mechanism ensures that this is

applied consistently, and who is accountable when the contact is insufficient?

Stephen Doyle: Consistence is provided through the post-care agreement's need assessment and the case plan, which specifies the frequency of contact needed. Family and Children's Services has taken several steps to ensure that staff maintain face-to-face contact with young adults. In January 2026, Family and Children's Services developed resource materials and delivered information sessions to help workers understand what is considered face-to-face contact and how often contact must be made with young adults.

Based on the Office of the Auditor General's recommendations to better use our electronic case management system, Family and Children's Services is in the process of fine-tuning an electronic report that displays whether caseworkers are meeting the contact standards. Moving forward, Family and Children's Services' internal compliance reviews will include post-care cases for young adults.

The department has added a supervisor to the team of caseworkers responsible for post-care agreements in Whitehorse to give guidance and support caseworkers in meeting legal and policy requirements. We are also working to hire another caseworker. Ultimately, the department is accountable when contact is insufficient. We are hopeful that the training, electronic reporting, supervisor and caseworker hires, and internal compliance reporting provide increased safeguards against insufficient contact standards.

Adam Gerle: My next question relates to paragraph 21 in the *Child and Family Services in Yukon* report. \$125,000 was paid to eight young adults with no post-care agreement in place for periods of two to 18 months. My multi-part question to this is: What was the timeline for these payments? Who had authority to approve these payments, and why did existing financial controls not flag them? What were these payments intended for? How were they distributed, and why only to these eight young adults?

Matt King: When providing specific services to children, youth, and families under the CFSA, best practice is to follow process that involves first assessing for need and then case planning around the identified need and finally creating a service agreement to capture case-plan items that require specific services and/or funding requirements or commitments. While the act does allow for services and associated payments to be provided in the absence of an agreement, best practice is to have an agreement in place that represents a shared understanding between the department and the individual or family receiving the services. The timeline for these payments made without an agreement is from September 2023 to February 2025. Payments entered in the electronic case management system must be reviewed and approved by supervisors and managers depending on the payment amount. The payments in question were approved by supervisors and managers with the appropriate signing authority levels prior to funding being released. The electronic case management system does not allow payments to go out otherwise, as those signing authority limits are built into the system to ensure compliance.

These payments were for essential expenses such as rent, utilities, groceries, and health and medical needs. All payments were distributed by cheque or direct deposit. The financial controls did not flag an issue, because agreements are not required for the director to provide the services. During the legislative review, it came to light that administrative tasks associated with the agreements under the *Child and Family Services Act*, such as renewing agreements in a timely manner before an agreement expires, could be a barrier to service and result in individuals not receiving those services because they were unable to meet with a social worker in order to sign the appropriate documentation. In response, the *Child and Family Services Act* was amended to give the director the ability to deliver services before entering into an agreement.

In recent policy revisions, Family and Children's Services has removed the requirement for a young adult to meet with their social worker in person to sign an agreement, and they can instead confirm in other ways through other electronic means, like text or e-mail, if they wish to enter a subsequent agreement until they are able to meet with the worker in person. Agreements were in place for the remaining 23 young adults in the sample when they received the payments.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I'll continue on with questions for the department. What support was provided to these youth related to the funding?

Tanya MacKenzie: In general, the caseworker is expected to support the young adult with budgeting and ensure that funding is spent appropriately. As part of the support, the caseworker can also help the youth get to appointments associated with the funding. The caseworker does have the ability to send funding directly to service providers instead of directly to the young adult to pay for these services the youth is receiving if there are any concerns with the money directly going to the youth.

Debra-Leigh Reti: What was done since to make sure the system is improved and better tracking and approval systems are in place?

Tanya MacKenzie: Updated training has been delivered to the team responsible for delivering these services to ensure there is a greater emphasis on the need for assessment, case planning, agreements, and processes; however, the director requires the ability to deliver these services to young adults in certain circumstances when the young adult is not easily available to meet with their caseworker to sign such agreements.

The appropriate supervisor and manager approvals were already in place for these payments. We do acknowledge that the director's powers to deliver services without agreements should be used sparingly. Again, we are hopeful that by including post-care agreements in future internal compliance reviews and reports, it will allow us to better track our rate for completing agreements with young adults when services are being delivered.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have a couple of questions in regard to accountability for the department. In paragraph 65, the last compliance report submitted to the minister was in 2016. The law requires one every three years. Who was responsible for

producing these reports, and why was this obligation not met for nearly a decade?

Matt King: The director, according to section 185(2) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, is responsible for producing the reports. From 2010 to 2016, the department hired an external consultant to help complete the annual internal compliance reports which were submitted to the minister at that time. In 2016, the department elected to hire in-house quality assurance staff and build internal capacity to conduct these reviews. Due to recruitment and retention challenges, Health and Social Services did not have qualified analysts in place at that time to complete the reports, and the plan to bring that in house was not realized.

Most recently, on April 30, 2026, the department submitted an internal compliance review for fiscal year 2022-23 to the Minister of Health and Social Services. We are in the process of ensuring that we can complete this work for the internal compliance reviews for 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 for submission to the minister. That would likely be through a combination of consultant services with in-house staff capacity.

Debra-Leigh Reti: In paragraph 65, internal non-compliance checks covering 2017 to 2021 were completed but shared only with the branch director; the minister never saw them. Who made the decision not to escalate these findings to the minister and why?

Matt King: We do not have the documentation for the rationale as to why that decision was made at that time for the period from 2017 to 2021. Going forward, Family and Children's Services will meet its obligations and plan to ensure that the minister receives the reports in a timely way.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for those answers.

I do have some questions for the Auditor General. On page 26, the formal October 2025 notification to "... senior management within the Department of Health and Social Services of the need to take immediate action to address those important concerns, including the lack of monitoring of children in care and those receiving child protection services; the increased numbers of younger children and a large portion of children living with disabilities in group homes; and poor compliance with mandatory safety training for front-line staff" is described as arising from concerns identified early in the audit that, in the OAG's view, increased the risk of harm to children. This is not standard procedure.

What is the threshold for such a notification, and what does it use here tell us about the severity of what you found?

Marjolaine Guay: When the OAG identifies risks during our audit work that, in our view, require immediate attention from the department, we provide formal notification in advance of tabling the report. This is so that the department can take the required actions to address these risks while the audit work is being finalized.

For this audit, based on the gaps we identified in case management and ongoing contact, we were concerned that there were children and youth who did not receive the protection and services that they needed and were entitled to

under the *Child and Family Services Act* and that these children and youth could be at risk.

Debra-Leigh Reti: What was the rationale behind the list of areas scoped out of the audit in regard to: (a) child and family services delivered by Yukon First Nations, Indigenous governing bodies, and other partners and interested parties, including those funded by Indigenous Services Canada; (b) grants and contributions provided by the department to third-party service providers; (c) adoptions; (d) youth justice programs; and (e) professional practices of social workers?

Markirit Armutlu: I will very briefly address each one of those five areas that you listed.

For the area in relation to the child and family services delivered by Yukon First Nations, Indigenous governing bodies, and other partners and interested parties, including those funded by Indigenous Services Canada, the OAG mandate is to conduct audits of the territorial Government of Yukon. The OAG does not have the authority to audit programs and services delivered by Yukon First Nations, Indigenous governing bodies, or other partners and interested parties. Through its mandate to audit federal government departments, the office could examine programs and services delivered by Indigenous Services Canada in future reports.

Regarding grants and contributions provided by the department to third party services providers, according to the financial information provided by the Department of Health and Social Services during the planning phase of the audit, 90 percent of grants and contributions provided by the department to third party service providers were to support caregivers and children in out-of-home care. So, while we did conduct extensive examination of caregiver homes and child-in-care files, we did not examine the compliance with financial authorities for these payments.

The question around adoptions — now, here, according to the information provided by the department during the planning phase of our audit, the number of adoptions that occurred in Yukon between 2014 and 2024 was 21. This amounts to about two adoptions annually. Further, 20 of the 21 children who were adopted remained in Yukon and the remaining child was placed in adoption with extended family in another province. Given the relatively very low number of adoptions occurring in Yukon annually, we decided to focus the scope on other areas of risk. I hope that answers that one.

With youth justice programs, while the program is under the responsibility of the Family and Children's Services branch, it was scoped out in this audit to focus on child protection, children in care of the department, young adults receiving post-care services, and other core child and family services programs. Youth justice programs may be considered for future audits of child corrections. That is something that we could certainly consider in the future.

Finally, with regard to professional practices of social workers, the OAG examines the government's management practices, controls, and reporting systems based on its own public administration policies and on best practices. We do not question the professional judgment and decisions of social workers when they were taken in compliance with these

requirements. Now, at the time of our audit, the Government of Yukon was also contemplating creating a regulatory body to oversee social worker registration, licensing, and adherence to professional standards in Yukon. Where this was a policy decision, we did not include the process in the scope of our audit.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for those answers.

I have a question for the department. What concrete actions were taken in the days and weeks following that notification?

Matt King: Following the notification of the five areas that were flagged as requiring urgent attention, the department put in place several measures to address these gaps.

The first area requiring urgent attention was with respect to foster homes that were not meeting the minimum screening requirements. In response, the department began to review all screening requirements for both active foster caregivers and extended family caregivers. Family and Children's Services completed this review in March 2026, and work is currently underway to have these screening requirements put into the filing system. As of May 14, 2026, 42 of the 154 caregivers, or 27 percent, do not have their minimum screening requirements on file. The team at Family and Children's Services continues this work and plans to meet our October 2026 target to have all of the minimum requirements completed and on file.

The second area was with respect to group homes operating at overcapacity while caring for very young children and children living with disabilities, with many staff lacking the mandatory safety training. In 2026-27, the budget for Health and Social Services includes an increase to help offset the rising costs and offer 24 two-year term positions to auxiliary-on-call workers as of May 21, 2026. Offers have been made to 18 individuals and the department is working to fill the remaining six term positions. We will continue recruiting auxiliary-on-call workers to alleviate some of this pressure. In April 2026, the department hired two child development support workers with expertise in regulating childcare centres to help group home workers care for young children, including building skills training and policy development as well as to help implement child plans from the Child Development Centre for children under the age of five.

A third area is with respect to child protection, children in care, and transitional support services and how there was minimal or no monitoring of the well-being of children, youth, or young adults to ensure their safety or check-ins with families.

In October 2025, the department updated policies related to these contact standards. In January 2026, the program built on these policy updates by creating resource materials and delivered information sessions to help workers meet their contact standards. We have started to develop an interactive electronic report based on case management systems that reports and tracks which children, youth, young adults, and families are receiving the appropriate contact from their workers.

The fourth area was with respect to the lack of processes and tools to enable the completion of cultural plans for Indigenous children. In 2022, when the department developed our policy and processes on cultural plans with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations, officials agreed that Yukon First Nations-led cultural plans for children

in care is the best practice, with support and collaboration from our Family and Children's Services social workers. Staffing and capacity barriers have delayed developing cultural plans for some Yukon First Nation children to address the gap. We sought permission from Yukon First Nations to hire the Council of Yukon First Nations to help develop cultural plans.

As of April 14, 2026, the department has agreed-upon processes with 11 Yukon First Nations and four out-of-territory Indigenous governing bodies to complete the cultural plans. For fiscal year 2025-26, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the department worked together to develop and implement cultural plans for 52 children in out-of-home care from five Yukon First Nations and three out-of-territory Indigenous governing bodies.

The fifth area was with respect to the lack of tri-annual reporting to the minister. On April 30, 2026, the Family and Children's Services director submitted an internal compliance report for fiscal year 2022-23 to the minister. This will be a compliance and accountability priority going forward, building from the Office of the Auditor General's audit period, with our next three-year report covering the years from 2025-26 to 2027-28.

Justin Ziegler: My next questions are going to be about group homes. The report states in paragraph 31 — and I quote: "We found that the majority of departmental policies that applied to group homes were outdated, having been approved in 2007. These policies had not been reviewed or updated by the department to align with the *Child and Family Services Act*, which was adopted in 2010 or with the 2022 amendments."

Why were these group home policies not updated to match current obligations?

Stephen Doyle: We acknowledge that many of our group home policies are outdated and need significant updates. Over the years, the department has made efforts to update the group home policy manual but has not been able to complete this work due to competing priorities.

Based on the Office of the Auditor General's findings and the increase of young children in the group homes, the department has identified the group home policies as a top priority. Policy work, resources, and subject matter experts have been identified internally to support this work. We are also exploring contracting some of this work to ensure that we can complete this manual as quickly as we possibly can.

Justin Ziegler: About paragraph 32 — quote: "The amendments to the act contributed to some group homes caring for children significantly younger than contemplated in approved policies, potentially straining resources and increasing risk ... We found that as of March 31, 2025, there were 41 children living in group homes, of which 61% (25) were under 12 years old, and 29% (12) were less than 6 years old. The youngest child was 18 months old and had been placed at a group home with siblings."

What additional measures were put in place to ensure that children under 12 were safe in facilities designed for those 12 and older?

Tanya MacKenzie: To address the increase in children under the age of 12 in group homes, we've implemented the following measures: In 2024, we introduced settle shifts, which is an additional shift that increases the minimum number of staff

in the group homes to three from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. This allows support during busy periods in the homes when children return from school and through to bedtime. Additional staff are also assigned to homes on an as-needed basis, especially when certain children need a worker specifically assigned to them.

Home staff assigned to homes with younger children receive Handle With Care training, which is designed to help parents and caregivers with managing challenging behaviours in young children from birth to age six. All group home staff are also required to complete Safe Sleep training, which teaches safe sleep practices for infants between birth to age two.

Whenever possible, we reassign children to certain homes based on their ages to ensure that younger children with similar developmental needs are placed together and staff with specialized training are assigned to these children.

Over the course of last summer, a childcare centre subject matter expert conducted assessments of group homes to determine if they were appropriate for the children's developmental needs. We are in the process of implementing these recommendations currently and plan to have them completed by October of 2026.

Justin Ziegler: Do you know if the group home policies were updated to reflect these changes?

Tanya MacKenzie: The minister has determined that Family and Children's Services policies will be publicly available upon request and that we will be making them available online. We are currently updating the policy manual as we speak and working with our specially assigned policy team that works to support these updates right now.

Justin Ziegler: I guess you already answered my next question, which was: Is there a commitment to ensure that policies governing group home placements going forward are publicly available? I believe that the answer is yes.

I will move on to the next question. How long was management aware that infants and toddlers were being placed in facilities designed for teenagers, and why were policies never updated before that?

Stephen Doyle: Management is always aware anytime an infant or toddler is placed in a group home, since the decision to place any child in a group home must be approved by a manager. This issue is reflective of capacity issues as opposed to a policy issue. Policy 13.12.1 of the *Child and Family Services Act* policy manual states that children under 10 years of age are not to be placed in group homes except in exceptional circumstances where an extended family caregiver or a foster caregiver is not available and that even after placing the child in a group home, staff must continue to find an alternative caregiver as quickly as possible. However, the Yukon, like many provinces and territories across the country, is dealing with a caregiver shortage. In the absence of extended family caregivers and foster caregivers, our only remaining option is to place children in group homes.

Our legislation and policies identified that group homes are the last resort. We are legally obligated to explore all options with the extended family caregivers and individuals in the community before group homes. Our intention is to work with Yukon First Nations and caregivers to update the community caregiver program to make it more appealing to prospective and

current caregivers and thereby take pressure off of the group homes.

Justin Ziegler: I guess you already answered this one, but I would like to still ask the question: What has been done since?

Stephen Doyle: To reduce the number of children in group homes, the department requires that staff regularly connect with extended family members to find individuals suitable to care for these children. Additionally, we have ongoing caregiver recruitment initiatives such as hosting community visits with Yukon First Nations and social media and radio ads to find foster caregivers.

Recently, the department changed the occurrence of meetings to review children in group homes from biweekly to weekly to increase oversight on case planning and find community placements for these children.

In the coming weeks, the department plans to meet with Yukon First Nation government leadership to discuss creative community-based solutions for these children in group homes.

Chair: If I may, a follow-up to that — given the fact that it has been identified that there is a shortage of caregivers, what work is being done by current and past caregivers — so, folks who have been within the foster family — how are you going to engage and survey them? Because, as you can imagine, folks have a lot of opinions about what has worked and what hasn't worked. So, how will you make sure that folks who aren't currently in that system have an opportunity for feedback, and how will that feedback change recruitment or processes or supports going forward?

Stephen Doyle: We intend to directly engage with community caregivers. We acknowledge that we haven't done significant engagement as of yet, but that is next on our agenda after meeting with Yukon First Nation leadership to ensure that community caregivers, current and potentially past, have a voice so that we can hear their perspectives, as they are the folks on the ground delivering these services, so that we can work to improve the system. As noted earlier, we are intending to review the community caregiver program effectively from top to bottom and see if there are ways that we can improve the services that are delivered for all parties.

Chair: Just to follow up, I think it's important to note that targeting past caregivers — so, folks who did go through the process, who did care for children but who have chosen to opt out of the process — is an important one. I note here that I believe that there should be targeted outreach to folks who were involved either in the foster or in the extended family care and who are no longer there. I will note that in hopes that there is a targeted outreach.

Stephen Doyle: Yes, I would agree with that — that it would be part of the engagement plan with community caregivers.

Justin Ziegler: Now, about paragraph 34 and the department response to recommendation 42, which is on page 29 of the report — no formal staff-to-child ratio exists. The informal one-to-four ratio was never reassessed despite much younger children and children with disabilities now living in these homes. The department's own response promises a ratio analysis by June 2026, which is one week from now, but describes nothing being done in the meantime.

My question is: What is being done right now to protect these children while the review is ongoing?

Matt King: The department is undertaking an analysis to determine the appropriate staff-to-child ratio, as noted, to meet the timelines in the Auditor General management response, which is end of June, in order to inform budget decisions for 2027-28. Meanwhile, the branch continues to assign additional staff to the homes based on identified needs, especially during busy periods. Family and Children's Services has introduced the additional shift to increase the minimum number of staff in the home to three from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to support busy periods in the home when children return from school and until bedtime. Additional staff are also assigned to homes as needed based on children's needs and the requirement for specialized workers.

Two child development support workers are expected to help train the group home workers to meet the needs of young children with disabilities as well as to support group home staff to implement individual case plans for young children from the Child Development Centre. Our goal is to further enhance safety and promote healthy development of the children by implementing the recommendations from the assessments conducted by the Child Development Centre subject matter expert.

Chair: Just to follow up on that, when we talk about the increase of caregivers, can you give us an example? For example, if we are talking about children under 12, can you give us an overview? If there's one house, can you give us the number of children and the number of caregivers so that the ratio is better understood — so how that works out?

Tanya MacKenzie: I will give you an example of one of our homes currently. It is called Haskap Place. We have a large sibling group that is currently living in that home. The number of children is six. Ages — I would have to reflect back to my colleague. I believe that they are under the age of eight. He will just double-check to confirm.

What we have done in that home is that we have assigned a minimum of three staff at all times for those children. We have also increased our capacity to be able to do individual case planning and identification through needs assessments for each of those children. So, for children in that specific home — for the younger children who may need more one-on-one support, we have added in those additional shifts for when the infants are awake, obviously. We have additional staff added to the complement of three during the day. We also have a supervisor who is on staff and a case manager who is on staff during the day upwards of 5:00. So, at any one time with those specific six children in Haskap Place, during the day, there is often upwards of five adults in the home, and then in the evenings and nighttime, we have the settle shift with three — and I can confer, but I believe that there are two individual adult staff on overnights, but that would start at about 11:00 p.m. I'll just confirm with my colleague here.

I am confirming the ages of the children. Actually, the children's ages are two, four, six, seven, nine, and 12.

My response still stands correct in terms of the number of adults in the home at that time.

So, that is sort of one of our current homes. We obviously have a number of homes with a variety of numbers of children and ages in those homes. But we definitely have worked really

hard over the last year, I would suggest, to ensure that we are looking at the individual child's case planning needs and addressing the needs of the individual child through increased staffing to be able to respond to their needs.

So, that is just one example.

Chair: To follow up on that, for the very small infants — for example, early childhood education is important for socialization and learning. Do children within Family and Children's Services in group home situations have access to early learning? So, are they going to daycares or early childhood education centres?

Tanya MacKenzie: The answer to that is yes. They do have access to those depending on the age of the child. So, most of the children over the age of one, typically, are engaged in early learning centres. Just like Deputy Minister King has highlighted, we are very lucky to have experienced early learning and childcare inspectors who have historically worked for us monitoring childcare centres and working very closely with the Child Development Centre. We are using their expertise to help, in addition, to supplement the training that is offered to the staff who are specifically working with these younger children. So, the answer to that question is yes.

Justin Ziegler: About paragraph 38 of the report now: "During our audit period, we found that the department identified 37 serious and 14 critical incidents involving children in out-of-home care. We examined all the records of these incidents included in the department's incident management system and found that while the initial safety of the children involved was confirmed by the department, it failed to meet other important incident management requirements. For example, we found that 12 of the 14 critical incidents required outcome reports; however, 10 of the 12 outcome reports, designed in part to identify areas for improvement, were not completed." And this is in the report.

My question is: Assuming that these reports are required today, who is responsible for making sure that they are done?

Stephen Doyle: The Family and Children's Services' lead investigator responsible for an incident investigation and the manager assigned to oversee the incident management are responsible for completing the requirements, including submitting any outcome reports to the director. The director is responsible for reviewing and approving the outcome reports.

In November 2025, the department assigned the Family and Children's Services' intake and assessment manager to oversee incident management and report progress to the director. We are hopeful that by assigning a single manager to track the incident management, we can identify which incident management tasks are not completed in a timely manner and put in place the appropriate resources to support the lead investigator and an assigned manager.

Tyler Porter: I do have some questions to ask the department, one — starting with community-based care homes: How can the department expand extended care agreements and support the development of community-based care homes in remote and rural communities so that children, youth, and vulnerable individuals can remain connected to their families, culture, and communities instead of being relocated to group homes outside of the community?

Tanya MacKenzie: We recognize the importance of extended family members and the pivotal role that they can play in ensuring that children remain close to family, community, and culture as we work with their parents to address whatever led to the children not being able to live with their parents.

The department's efforts in increasing supports to family caregivers from 2017 to 2019 to bring them to parity with foster caregivers resulted in a significant decrease in the number of children in government care. Reviewing the compensation model for caregivers is on our agenda. As mentioned earlier, when we engage with Yukon First Nation leadership, this will be a key topic of discussion. We welcome input from communities and Yukon First Nations on what they require from us to ensure that children and youth will remain in their community.

We have ongoing caregiver recruitment initiatives, such as hosting community visits with Yukon First Nations and social media and radio ads, to find caregivers. These community visits are opportunities for us to engage with the community, share information, dismiss myths and misconceptions around caregiving, build relationships, and show our commitment to keeping children in their community. We are hopeful that a more comprehensive caregiver training program than what is delivered currently will give individuals the skills required to care for children involved in the child protection system.

We are working to schedule consultants to visit Whitehorse this summer and train our FCS staff to deliver a caregiver training program that is widely used across the country. This training helps caregivers meet the needs of children who are placed in their home. Following the training, our staff will then train and work with caregivers, including extended family members who are interested in caregiving.

Chair: If I may follow up — so, this question came from outside of Whitehorse — so rural Yukon predominantly, in First Nation communities — about whether or not there was a willingness for Yukon Government to work with the nation to establish a safe place within a community — so, not necessarily identifying foster homes but working with the community to identify a separate plan. We just want to know that there's a willingness to work at other solutions or to work with nations and communities, for example, to find alternative solutions.

Stephen Doyle: Yes, absolutely, there is a willingness to do so.

Tyler Porter: I am going to jump to the recommendations in the report, starting with recommendation 1, which references protective services, foster homes, and group homes. That is cited in paragraphs 11 to 14, 27 to 29, and 31 to 34.

It was reported that over one-third of harm reports were not assessed within 24 hours, 41 percent of investigations were not completed within 30 days, criminal record checks were missing in 22 percent of extended family homes, 58 percent of foster homes were missing annual reviews, and group home policies from 2007 were never updated. The department response promises a compliance tracking plan by December 2026, foster and family home screening completed by October 2026, group home policy updates by March 2027, and a ratio analysis by June 2026.

My question is — the department promises a compliance tracking plan by December 2026, nearly half a year from now. Given that children are in these homes today, what specific steps are being taken between now and December to address the screening gaps already identified?

Stephen Doyle: Following conversations with the Auditor General and consultation within our own legal services, we changed our policy based on section 23 of the *Child and Family Services Act* in 2025 to ensure that assessment must start and finish within 24 hours of receiving a child protection report. Prior to that date, our interpretation had been different.

Until the compliance tracking plan is implemented, we are using alternative methods to ensure that criminal record checks are in place for all foster caregivers and extended family caregivers. We have reviewed all active caregivers to determine which ones are missing the minimum screening requirements, which include criminal record checks. Workers reviewed each case manually and discovered that 42 out of 150 caregivers — which is 27 percent — do not currently have their minimum screening requirements. We are working with these caregivers to complete these requirements and have them on file by October 2026.

Similarly, we have reviewed all active foster caregiver files by hand to determine that 38 out of 75 foster caregivers — 50 percent — do not have their annual reviews up to date; however, work is underway to complete these annual reviews by October 2026.

We have put in place several interim measures to support the group homes until policies are updated. These measures include: a budget increase to hire additional staff and retain auxiliary-on-call staff; settle shifts, as mentioned before, and additional staff assigned to group homes based on children's individual needs assessments to gauge the safety and appropriateness of the homes for the healthy development of children; and hiring two child development social workers to support group home staff with caring for young children and children with disabilities, including supporting staff training to be better suited to supporting children in those age groups.

Tyler Porter: The foster home annual review backlog states that 58 percent have not been completed. It is supposed to be cleared by October 2026.

How many of those overdue reviews have already been completed since the audit ended in March 2025, and what is the current completion rate?

Tanya MacKenzie: Out of the approximately 75 foster caregivers in the Yukon, 38 do not have an up-to-date annual review, meaning that 50 percent are not done. In October 2025, the Office of the Auditor General shared an early draft of their report with us. Since then, we have been able to have completed 17 additional foster home annual reviews that were overdue, and we are currently on track to complete the remaining 37 by October 2026.

Tyler Porter: Group home policies haven't been updated since 2007, yet infants are living in these facilities today. A policy update is promised by March 2027. Why does updating a policy take two years, and what interim measures protect younger children in the meantime?

Matt King: The policy development obviously requires research and consultation, but a key component of that is engagement with Yukon First Nations both internally within the department as well as with other external organizations and stakeholders. There is a significant amount of work that needs to be completed with respect to this policy development. The department has now hired a project lead who is focusing our efforts to complete this work and to scope out the parameters of this engagement along with a full suite of actions related to the recommendations and findings to allow us to then prioritize our resources accordingly.

As with all of the recommendations, I can say that we will strive to complete the work ahead of schedule wherever that is possible. The department is in the process of contacting Yukon First Nations to scope the full project plan and partnership. We intend to develop a project oversight committee that will provide advice and guidance to the team as we receive regular updates and reports on progress. This will allow for adequate time to engage properly with Yukon First Nations in the updating of our policies and procedures.

Interim measures in place to protect young people in the meantime include a budget increase to hire the additional staff mentioned earlier, the addition of the settle shifts and additional staff assigned to group homes based on children's individual needs, and assessments to gauge safety and appropriateness of the homes for healthy living for the children, including the hiring of two child development support workers to support group home efforts to care for young children and children with disabilities.

Tyler Porter: The ratio analysis for group homes is promised by June 2026. If that analysis concludes that the current 1:4 ratio is inadequate for young children, what is the plan and the budget to change it?

Matt King: We have a high rate of vacancies, so we're not certain if it's a lack of funding or how we are using the resources that we have. That will come out through the analysis that we do. Of course, group care is a last resort and our preference is to support kids and youth to remain in communities with extended family members, foster caregivers, or to be reunited with their parents. We will continue with efforts to engage with Yukon First Nations to find community-based solutions for children in group homes, additional training and support for caregivers, caregiver recruitment efforts, on top of social workers searching for extended family caregivers, and potentially reunifying children in group care with families.

If these efforts are successful, it could ultimately enable a reduction in the number of groups homes required and the potential redeployment of staff to help increase ratios across the system.

Chair: If I may follow up on that — noting the high rate of vacancies within group homes and group home staff, what is the department's plan to engage again with past employees? We hear lots from people that it's important work and it's work that they care about, but they also leave the system. What is the department's plan to engage with folks to find out what additional supports would be required to make those positions successful?

Stephen Doyle: I think that, across Family and Children's Services, understanding what is leading to our recruitment and

retention issues is a key component of all parts of the business that we need to do an analysis on, so we will be working to determine the best path to ensuring we get that information from the folks who work there and from the folks who have worked there in the past so that we can better understand. I do believe that this is an important component of figuring out our recruitment and retention strategies.

Tyler Porter: Jumping to recommendation 2 that references cultural plans for Indigenous children mentioned in paragraphs 45 to 46 — and the department's response found on page 30 — cultural plans have been legally required since 2022, but 90 percent of Indigenous children in care still have none. The department has committed to completing cultural plans for all children in care by March 2027. The department targets March 2027 to have cultural plans for all children in care, which is five years after the legal requirement came into force. What is the plan to achieve this ahead of the March 2027 target?

Stephen Doyle: This is an area that requires partnership and consensus with Yukon First Nation governments and other Indigenous government bodies that have children in Yukon Government care. We work with those parties to ensure that the cultural plans are getting done. Any plans to complete cultural plans for children in care must include them for input. All Yukon First Nations have indicated a need to be directly involved in the creation of cultural plans for their children as opposed to non-Indigenous social workers.

We continue to work closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, and Indigenous governing bodies to advance this work and coordinate ways to meet the targets.

Tyler Porter: A cultural plan is only meaningful if it's kept current. What process will ensure that plans are regularly updated, and who will be accountable to keep them up to date?

Tanya MacKenzie: Ultimately, the department is responsible for ensuring that cultural plans are regularly updated. According to the legislation and cultural plan policy co-developed with Yukon First Nations and CYFN, the cultural plans must be reviewed and updated every six months at least. At this time, we provide any Yukon First Nation government or any organization tasked with developing cultural plans by a Yukon First Nation government \$2,500 per child per year to develop and update these cultural plans.

We will continue to work with Yukon First Nation governments to create cultural plans while respecting their choice to lead the creation of these cultural plans for their children.

Tyler Porter: I have a final question. Who is responsible for ensuring that the cultural plan policy document sets Yukon Government social workers up for success when they go into communities? As noted, it has been stated that First Nations 101 does not go deep enough into the cultural differences of Yukon First Nations.

Tanya MacKenzie: Based on direction from Yukon First Nation governments, the department's social workers do not develop cultural plans for Yukon First Nation children. Instead, Yukon First Nation governments have chosen to create the cultural plans themselves or also work with CYFN to develop these plans on their behalf. This is a critical area for

strengthening partnerships in the interest of children, youth, and families.

Linda Moen: I would like to continue with the same question. How is the department going to work with rural communities and Yukon First Nations to ensure that children remain in the community whenever possible?

Tanya MacKenzie: The department works closely with Yukon First Nations and families in rural communities to find solutions to keep children in their community. Our legislation and respective policies require us to notify and collaboratively plan with Yukon First Nations to ensure that children remain in their communities.

We have taken steps to further operationalize these legislative provisions and our policies with Yukon First Nations through memorandums of understanding. As stated before, we are planning to meet with Yukon First Nations in the coming weeks to have targeted discussions with their leadership on what is required for specific children in the current group homes to be able to return to their communities as soon as possible. We believe that this will result in concrete actions together.

Linda Moen: Recommendation 3, staffing and financial resources, paragraphs 53 to 57: “We found that the department did not complete a comprehensive assessment of the financial and human resources required to deliver services under the Child and Family Services Act. For example, the department did not complete an assessment of staffing, including workload analysis, to develop strategies to manage capacity.”

“We also found that the department did not assess whether its financial resources were sufficient. Our analysis showed payroll costs rose from 60% to 63% of total spending from April 2022 to March 2025, with overtime and casual staff spending increasing 75% during the audit period. These increases were consistent with staffing vacancies we identified in our analysis.”

No workload analysis was ever done — 62 percent of social worker positions filled, overtime costs up 75 percent, no assessment of whether financial resources are sufficient. Department response promises a first comprehensive assessment by October 2026.

My first question is: How long has management been aware of these shortages, and what prevented a workload analysis from having been completed?

Stephen Doyle: Departmental management has been aware that child protection social work positions in Whitehorse and in communities have been hard to fill for several years. The health human resources strategy in 2023-24 provided additional recruitment marketing for these hard-to-fill positions using social media and a LinkedIn recruiter to help boost the recruitment advertisements. We have more work to do in this regard and, recently, to focus renewed system-level health and human resources planning to increase focus on social workers and child protection workers, support for social worker education, and bursaries.

The department will be exploring options to complete a workload analysis as a continuous improvement exercise.

Chair: If I may just follow up on that — in speaking about the workload analysis, it's fine to say that there are efforts to go

out to recruit, but if there is not a recognition that we're asking social workers to work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and not taking that into what the workload analysis is, it's going to be hard to backfill those positions. So, what work is happening now to identify, for example, the requirements? Having a social worker arrive at the office at 8:00 in the morning but knowing that they are going to go and do a home visit at 8:00 p.m., how is the department going to look at that analysis ahead of time? How are we going to make sure that what we're asking people to do is human — that they will be able to complete it?

Stephen Doyle: I think that there are probably a number of ways that the department can do that, and there have been some initiatives that have already been done to alleviate some of that pressure on social workers. A child and family services social worker — a child protection social worker — is a delegated position; however, we have been doing some internal analysis to determine what parts of those roles require a delegated social worker and where we can alleviate some of the pressure with other positions.

Over the last year, we have created a social services worker position which is designed to help alleviate some of that strain. We are actively looking at how we manage our on-call piece of work, because that is a significant strain on social workers as well, and there will be other analyses of it. One of the things that we really recognize as well is ensuring that our systems are efficient so that social workers are spending their time focused on the areas of child protection rather than focusing too much on administrative tasks and trying to provide them with the appropriate tools to be able to work efficiently — but there's more to come as well.

Linda Moen: The first staffing assessment is promised by October 2026. This is the first such assessment in the department's history by your own admission. How will you establish your assessment process?

Stephen Doyle: We intend to work internally throughout the department — alongside our human resources, our finance, and other branches within Health and Social Services — as well as within the government, such as the Public Service Commission — to undertake an assessment to inform decisions related to future budget cycles.

Linda Moen: How are staffing and budget decisions being made right now without that analysis?

Stephen Doyle: Family and Children's Services works closely with our human resources supports to determine a recruitment approach, timing, and options to fill positions prior to a program submitting a staffing action request form. Part of that may look like ongoing ads and things like that. Until we have a workload analysis completed, the department will continue to make staffing and budget decisions based on caseload size and number of children, youth, families, and young adults that we are supporting to ensure that we are keeping appropriate levels of supports in place.

Linda Moen: The response commits to analyzing vacancy rates and recruitment trends. Two communities have been without a permanent social worker for over a year. What is the specific plan and the timeline to fill those positions? Will there be targeted recruitment of Yukon First Nation and Indigenous candidates?

What strategy will be implemented to increase retention and diversify hiring methods to enlarge the pool of candidates?

Stephen Doyle: There are currently three job postings on the Yukon Government job board for Family and Children's Services child protection social workers, regional, for Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Old Crow. These postings are "until filled" competitions, so they're posted for extended periods of time. In that type of scenario, we interview as resumes come in. Additional marketing recruitment is also being utilized to promote and attract eligible candidates.

Yukon Government's Indigenous hiring preference gives preference to qualified candidates who self-identify as Yukon First Nation or other Canadian Indigenous ancestry. Competitions are open to all candidates, but this initiative gives preference to Indigenous applications on all posted competitions.

The department relies on benefits afforded to social workers through the collective agreement to increase retention, such as averaging-hour arrangements and the LOU F Regional Social Workers and Supervisor, Regional Services Allowance, in the collective agreement. At this time, there is no overall strategy to increase retention or diversify hiring methods, but we recognize that this is a significant gap and we intend to work toward a strategy.

As an update, the current vacancy rate for social worker positions as of May 2026 is 60 percent, which is a slight decrease from the audit findings percentage. We have, however, been successful in hiring six additional non-bachelor of social work case manager positions that are able to take on most of the duties required of our social worker positions outside of their delegated duties. These are currently term positions in place while the overall workload analysis continues.

Doris Anderson: I just had a question. You referred to hiring Indigenous potential candidates. Would it be Yukon First Nation and Indigenous? There is definitely a difference. "Yukon First Nation" refers to all Yukon First Nations; when you refer to "Indigenous", it is the rest — everyone else. That needs to be clear.

Stephen Doyle: It is Yukon First Nation first; then it is other Indigenous Canadians.

Chair: If I may follow up on that, has there been any work or any partnerships established with Yukon University with their social work program? Recognizing that a person who grows up in rural Yukon is going to be more adapted, for example, to living in Pelly Crossing than, for example, someone from British Columbia — so has there been any work with Yukon University to fill some of these positions?

Stephen Doyle: We continue to engage with the Yukon University to try to ensure that students from that program are coming into our systems and working across Health and Social Services as social workers. I am a graduate of that program, as is Director MacKenzie, and so we believe strongly in ensuring that those students are being afforded opportunities within our services — absolutely.

Linda Moen: Overtime and casual costs rose 75 percent over three years. Will the staffing assessment include a recommendation on whether current spending is sustainable, and will that recommendation be made public?

Matt King: Yes, the department will evaluate overtime and needs through the staffing assessment, including whether the personnel allotment is adequate or sustainable. Determining how best to share the results of the staffing assessment will be part of the process, but generally speaking, as a budget item, it would likely be debated in the Yukon Legislative Assembly through the budget process.

Linda Moen: My final question is: What is the plan to break this cycle?

Matt King: The department will look at the organizational structure and our front-line resource needs and consider the optimal balance of human resources to meet the program and service requirements. This will include the analysis to determine if there are strategic investments that can be made to help reduce pressures in areas like overtime, for example — as well, emphasis on finding more that we can do to attract community caregivers to help defray the costs associated with the group homes and, even more important, of course, the outcomes for the children and youth in care.

Findings from these assessments will inform our decision-making and allow us to put in place what we need to deliver services in a more proactive way going forward.

Patti McLeod: My questions to start with are going to deal with exhibits 5 and 6 particularly: 95 percent of group home staff had not completed safe transportation or suicide intervention training; 89 percent lacked residential school awareness training; 72 percent of social workers had not completed Yukon First Nations 101; the department relied on staff self-reporting compliance. The response from the department promises a learning management system by November 2026 and a full training compliance report by February 2027.

Until the learning management system is in place in November 2026, how is the department tracking whether staff complete mandatory training given that self-reporting was already found to be inadequate?

Tanya MacKenzie: Until the learning management system is in place, the department will continue to track mandatory training completion manually by collecting training completion certificates and by tracking attendance of staff taking the training.

Chair: Just to follow up, why isn't training mandatory, like onboarding, before someone gets put in a position? Why isn't the training required in order to go into that position?

Tanya MacKenzie: So, the mandatory training — in an ideal world, I think we would be able to offer the mandatory training in advance of the staff member starting the training. What we have done in the interim — as you have heard, it has been a challenge to hire staff and to get them in place in the group homes, and so we are doing our best to encourage the mandatory training — the individual to come in with that training prior to working. But in times when that is not possible, we do mentorship and support those staff on-site until the training can occur. We have created some contracts recently to be able to front-end that training when a staff member is hired prior to them going on the floor. We have created a new position for a former supervisor in TSS homes to be able to do intensive supports and intensive small-group training offered

very quickly when we're doing intentional sort of mass hiring, if you will, until the additional training can be offered.

So, I think that's for some of the questions around the struggles that we've had with onboarding individuals coming into the TSS homes.

Chair: Just a follow-up on that — other departments require, for example, safety training as part of paid learning before they go into that position. Why has the department not looked at, for example, three days to complete these required 10 courses? Why is there not, for example, three days or five days or whatever the requirement is to make sure that those courses are completed prior to working with a vulnerable population?

Tanya MacKenzie: Thank you for the question. Yes, I think that's definitely something that we could look into — so, if individuals are coming without the prior training, to be able to create, as you're illustrating, a number of days where they're receiving the support in terms of funding to receive the training and then move into the positions. We will take that into consideration for sure.

Chair: Just one more before I pass it over. Recognizing the failure rate, which is the 95 percent who haven't completed it, at what point in time does the department make the decision that there will be paid training days to ensure that mandatory training courses are held before they're with vulnerable populations? If the audit now shows the, to be honest, dismal numbers, at what point in time does the department consider that paying people to take the training makes sense?

Tanya MacKenzie: I was just conversing with my colleague. Part of what I had stated previously about a supervisor that we put into that position for the year is, in fact, actually doing exactly what you're saying. So, we have hired her to be able to offer paid training days for those new staff who we've recently hired. That is new in the last couple of months.

Patti McLeod: I just want to go back a bit to the 95 percent of group home staff who have not completed suicide intervention training. These staff are, of course, working with vulnerable children right now, so what is the plan to get that training done immediately without waiting for a new system?

Tanya MacKenzie: We absolutely understand the importance of suicide intervention training for group home staff working with vulnerable youth and are prioritizing securing this training for staff through a contract to be able to offer that, and that is one of the goals of the individual whom we just spoke of. She is creating an opportunity to bring those contractors in to offer that training right away. So, that is something that we have done in the number of months, so we understand the importance of that.

Patti McLeod: The first comprehensive training compliance report is promised for February 2027. Will that report be shared with this Committee, and will it be made public?

Tanya MacKenzie: As we work to develop this comprehensive training compliance report, we will also work to determine how best to share those results.

Patti McLeod: How is the department going to ensure that these training programs are completed ahead of starting as a new employee in a vulnerable sector? I know that the witness

has touched on this briefly, but if she can expand, I would appreciate that.

Tanya MacKenzie: Just to expand on what I had spoken of, to ensure that mandatory training is completed before group home workers start caring for children, the department recently hired the professional development coordinator on April 1, 2026 for a one-year term. Their primary role is to coordinate and facilitate all in-person and online training for TSS staff or to bring in those individuals who are experts in those areas. The in-person training that they are coordinating are Food Safe, Risking Connections three-day basic training, Crisis Prevention Institute's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training, Online training that they are coordinating includes: Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems 2015 training, or WHMIS; TSS health and safety management systems training; Your Health and Safety Rights at Work training; ATIPP act, level 1, level 2 access, and level 2 privacy training; HIDWA and HIPMA training; Respectful Workplaces; and the Yukon Government's Violence and Harassment Policy training; Medication Administration Refresher training; Understanding Finance training; safe transportation of all clients in cold weather training; Understanding the Values and Ethics Code; and the STITCH model, which is our instant reporting system for workplace injuries.

As of May 2026, all new hires must complete this training during their orientation period before their first shift in the group home. Again, that is paid training that is offered.

Many of the workers had trouble securing spots in the Yukon First Nations 101 training organized by the Public Service Commissioner for the Government of Yukon employees because, as you know, it is in very high demand. So, the department has secured additional spaces in Yukon First Nations 101 courses directly with the branch and Yukon University. These spots are specifically reserved for Family and Children's Services staff and so we are able to get that training offered more regularly.

Patti McLeod: I would like to move on now to recommendation 5, which has to do with compliance reporting and data use.

I am quoting from the report: "The Child and Family Services Act requires that reports on the Department of Health and Social Services' compliance with the act's standards for child and family services be submitted to the Minister every 3 years. This is intended to result in improved services to vulnerable children and families..."

Further on, it says: "In 2021, the department implemented the Family Case Management system to collect child and family services case file information and report on programs and services. The implementation of a case management system was in response to a portion of a recommendation from our 2014 audit report. The new system was intended to increase departmental data capacity, monitor outcomes of children and their families, provide data to Indigenous partners, and improve compliance with child welfare standards and reporting ... We found that a report on the Department of Health and Social Services' compliance with the Child and Family Services Act was last provided to the Minister in 2016, despite a requirement to submit this report every 3 years."

I know that we touched on this briefly earlier today, but no compliance report to the minister since 2016, internal checks

completed but never escalated, case management systems implemented in 2021 but used only for basic reporting — no outcome analysis and no compliance tracking. The department response commits to submitting a partial compliance report for 2022-23 by March 31, 2026 and a full three-year review to the minister in March 2029. The next full three-year compliance review won't reach the minister until March 2029. Given that the last one was in 2016, the minister will have gone 13 years without a complete compliance report. Is there any plan to accelerate this?

Stephen Doyle: On April 30, 2026, the minister received an internal compliance report summarizing findings from the compliance standards for fiscal year 2022-23, as was mentioned. Since the Auditor General's audit covered November 30, 2022 to March 31, 2025, the department has decided not to conduct compliance reviews for that period, utilizing the OAG report as such.

The department is hiring a contractor to complete annual reports for fiscal years 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 to ensure that they are provided in a timely manner to the minister.

Chair: Just to follow up, the audit will be viewed as the compliance report to the minister for the years that were missed — 2022 to 2025? The audit report will be viewed as sufficient for that gap?

Stephen Doyle: It will be viewed as a report that will help us move forward. We want to make sure that we are ensuring that we get ourselves on track for the next set of reports and ensure that we are making sure that current standards are being reported on. Whereas the OAG report has identified significant gaps, as we have discussed in our current compliance, we would like to put our energies toward ensuring that we can improve for the next set of reports.

Patti McLeod: The case management system has been in place since 2021. The audit found that it was used only for basic service delivery reports, so no outcome tracking and no compliance analysis. What specific data capabilities will be activated and by when?

Tanya MacKenzie: Work to improve our data reporting capabilities has been ongoing, so one example of specific data capability activated following the Office of the Auditor General's audit is reporting on whether workers are making the necessary face-to-face contact with children, youth, and young adults. The department will determine additional data outputs from the case management system. We want to use the system to create data reports that speak to departmental-wide gaps noted by the Office of the Auditor General's findings.

The department is taking steps to integrate business intelligence tools within the case management system while also giving access to the case management system data tables to quality assure staff. These measures will help to improve our ability to extract specific data from reports from the case management system. We are also taking steps to ensure that the correct information is entered into the system so it's accurate.

Patti McLeod: Thank you and I thank the department for their answers. I do have a question for the Auditor General.

The department agreed to all recommendations, but deadlines range from 2026 to 2029. The full compliance review won't reach

the minister until March 2029. The policy manual update is promised for November 2027. The question is: Are these timelines consistent with the urgency of the child safety risks that were identified by the Auditor General?

Markirit Armutlu: We do recognize that implementing audit recommendations, particularly those requiring systemic changes, inherently takes time. We are encouraged that some of the more operational actions, such as the initial reviews of foster and extended family caregiver screenings, are expected to be completed in the near term. These are crucial steps. We do look forward to seeing their full and diligent execution; however, these actions alone are not "said and done" solutions. The department must ensure that it is consistently reviewing and monitoring the safety and well-being of children and youth on an ongoing basis.

When it comes to comprehensive policy reviews, the establishment of a robust compliance tracking mechanism, and subsequent staff training, these timelines appear to be a long way out. Ultimately, our key focus — our unwavering focus and our expectation — is on what truly helps to protect and safeguard children.

Doris Anderson: This question is for the Auditor General on recommendations and responses, pages 29 to 32. What specific indicators would you recommend this Committee monitor at the 12-month mark to assess whether real progress has been made?

Marjolaine Guay: To assess whether real, tangible improvements have been made, this Committee could consider specific information from the department. The department would be able to provide you with information about the progress on these matters either in writing or by appearances before this Committee. In our view, there are specific areas that will provide concrete evidence of whether the department is translating its commitments into actions that directly enhance the protection and well-being of children.

We have a few examples to share, and I will pass it over to my colleague, if you will allow, to give you those examples.

Markirit Armutlu: Some of these examples are: Reports on suspected harm were assessed and screened within the 24 hours of receiving the report, as required. A few others would be, for example: the required minimum contacts were met, and these are for children in care, young adults receiving support services, and children residing with families where child protection cases remain open; plans of care were completed and updated for all children in care of the department; cultural plans completed and updated for all Indigenous children in care of the department; criminal record checks and child welfare system background checks for all adults residing in foster and extended family homes are completed; annual reviews of all foster and extended family homes are completed; and now, from a staffing perspective, recruitment, retention, vacancy rates of social workers working in child protection; and the completion of mandatory training — so, these are really some of the key indicators that we suggest.

Doris Anderson: This question is for the department with reference to intergenerational data. The preamble to the *Child and Family Services Act* states: "The Government of Yukon acknowledges the legacy of the Indian residential school

system and the ongoing systemic barriers and racism, and the ongoing intergenerational trauma and harm to Indigenous peoples and individuals that must be considered when looking at child welfare policies and practices...”

The case management system has been in place since 2021. The audit found that it is used only for basic service delivery — no outcome tracking, no family history analysis.

Does the department collect any data on whether parents of children currently in care were themselves previously in government care, attended residential schools, or have a documented history of abuse? If not, why not, given that this is precisely the intergenerational dynamic that the act itself names as a foundational concern?

Matt King: This data is collected; however, it's not collected in a way that can be easily used by social workers out of the case management system in a larger data set. This information is collected from more personal trauma-informed conversations with individual family members and is contained within case notes, family trees, visual family mapping tools, and assessment narratives that are created when examining intergenerational impacts for children and youth whose caregivers attended residential school or experienced trauma as children. Paper-based files that predate the current electronic case management system also may contain some of this information, but it's not fully integrated into the system as yet, so we recognize that this is a gap.

Doris Anderson: The act requires the department to measure outcomes for children and families. Would the department commit to adding intergenerational indicators — parental history in care, residential school family history — to the data it collects through its case management system as part of implementing the final recommendation?

Matt King: The data is being collected. The department and Family and Children's Services will explore the possibility of adding those indicators that you have mentioned into the data that's collected through the case management system to ensure that it reflects the full picture of the children in care.

Doris Anderson: The written submission from KDFN: “While KDFN maintains a respectful working relationship with Family and Children's Services (FCS), formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement, it is deeply concerning that no direct engagement or outreach was made to KDFN leadership following the release of this report. Given the significant and disproportionate impact on KDFN children and families, this lack of communication is unacceptable and inconsistent with the intent of that agreement.”

Why did the department not reach out to KDFN based on the memorandum of agreement? Will the department take steps to adhere to the memorandum of agreement?

Matt King: On behalf of the department, we regret not having reached out to Kwanlin Dün First Nation and acknowledged that this should have been done. We are invested in working in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Yukon First Nation governments to complete the recommendations as well as perform a full review of the services. The ADM mentioned earlier the work that is happening as far as creating an oversight body, and we think that there is a role there

potentially for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as well as through the Council of Yukon First Nations and other First Nations that have an interest in helping to guide this work.

Doris Anderson: Family and Children's Services staff who are not current in mandatory safety or Yukon First Nation cultural training should not be working directly with our children until training is complete. How do you respond to this point by KDFN?

Tanya MacKenzie: We understand the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's position and the rationale behind it. We will do our best to ensure that Family and Children's Services staff working directly with Indigenous children, youth, young adults, and families have completed the necessary safety and cultural training. We have hired a professional development coordinator to guarantee that all group home staff have the mandatory safety training before orientation is complete and they attend their first shift. We have also created additional opportunities for staff to complete Yukon First Nations 101 training through Yukon University when the Yukon Government training is full.

We look forward to connecting with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation to explore their concerns and find solutions together that increase their trust in our staff's ability to care for their children in a culturally appropriate and safe manner.

Chair: The Kwanlin Dün First Nation responded to a request for a written submission, and it's dated April 15, and it's up on the website of the Public Accounts Committee today. When is it the intention of the department or officials to meet with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation based on the concerns around the memorandum of agreement?

Stephen Doyle: I believe that we intend to meet with them as soon as practical. We are in the process of coordinating a day-long event with Yukon First Nations — as many as can attend — prior to summer — you know, prior to everybody sort of scattering to the wind in the summer months, which we are hopeful that Kwanlin Dün will attend, and I do believe that they have accepted. And we will be reaching out to offer one-on-one meetings as well with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

Doris Anderson: “Compliance reports required under the *Child and Family Services Act* should be shared with Yukon First Nation leadership or made publicly available to ensure accountability.” How does the department respond to this?

Matt King: We are absolutely open to sharing the findings through our compliance reporting in order to improve accountability and transparency.

Doris Anderson: “The review and update of the *Child and Family Services Act* Manual is not expected until November 2027. KDFN expects to be meaningfully engaged in this process, including opportunities to provide input, co-develop improvements, and participating in cross-training initiatives with FCS staff.” How will the department respond to this expectation?

Stephen Doyle: As mentioned before, the department is in the process of coordinating with Yukon First Nations, including KDFN, to scope the overall project plan for not only the Auditor General recommendations but for a future reform of our services. Alongside the 2027 act review, we intend to work with all Yukon First Nations to be able to get through that process.

Chair: First of all, I will apologize to the witnesses from the Department of Health and Social Services. We sent you the quotes but not the entire letters. That was an oversight on our part. Apologies — they are available and we can make them more available. I note this as I get into the next question.

The submission from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate was extensive, so this is about points between pages 9 and 11. The YCAO flags that the OAG audit only examined cases that FCS had already screened in. Since the 2022 amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, FCS has significantly narrowed its mandate and is screening out a growing number of cases involving children with clear risk indicators, such as chronic absenteeism, youth homelessness, abuse by a non-parent, children with disabilities, and high-conflict parenting situations. In these cases, there is often no risk assessment, no referral, and no follow-up. How does the department respond to this assertion?

Stephen Doyle: As mentioned before, we intend to work very closely and collaboratively with Yukon First Nations to review and improve our services in partnership with the project oversight committee, which includes Yukon Government, Yukon First Nation health directors, Council of Yukon First Nations, and the federal government. The intent behind that is to identify areas of priority to work on, including the OAG audit recommendations plus any other areas that this group determines to be priorities. We have very much heard this concern from Yukon First Nations as well, and I highly suspect that this will be one of the early areas of priority.

We do intend to work closely with the Child and Youth Advocate Office during the review process and on an ongoing basis, recognizing the importance of the efficacy in this work and recognizing that this is a system-wide issue that does need a lot of attention.

Chair: Based on extensive engagement, the YCAO states that FCS increasingly tells families that FCS does not provide prevention services, FCS does not investigate child abuse when the alleged perpetrator is not a parent, and services for children with disabilities have been repealed. Is this an accurate description of current FCS practice, and if so, who made these policy decisions and when?

Stephen Doyle: So, Family and Children's Services does provide some prevention services. These include providing prenatal services to at-risk expectant parents to reduce child protection concerns that may arise when a child is born. Other prevention services are geared toward preventing children in need of protective intervention from being separated from their families. The *Child and Family Services Act* gives the director the ability to provide supports to parents to address the child protection concerns while the children to continue to live with the parents.

By working with the parents to create safety, we prevent separating children from their families. Family and Children's Services also provides universal prevention services to families that do not have child protection concerns through the family resources unit. That being said, we acknowledge that there are challenges and gaps in the system and that improvement needs to be made and that we cannot make meaningful and impactful change on our own. We are looking forward to working collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments, the

Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Child and Youth Advocate Office to better meet the needs of Yukon children and youth and families in this area.

Chair: Just to follow up on that question, I think the challenge is that this was how families and children felt that they were being responded to by Family and Children's Services. They are made in broad statements, but the reality is that these are many families and many individuals over time who have felt that they have been turned away. So, what plan or how will you engage with the Child and Youth Advocate Office to start to change that conversation? It is fine to list what happens now, but if a person feels that they have approached for support and it doesn't exist, how will the department respond to that gap?

Stephen Doyle: We intend to work closely with the Child and Youth Advocate Office to try to find interim solutions — you know, on a case-by-case basis as best as we can — and the work that we want to do with Yukon First Nations, and creating this as a high priority really does speak to the idea of addressing the system gap. While I did acknowledge that there are services offered by Family and Children's Services, I think it is fair to say that there are also system gaps that in a number of ways could potentially be mitigated. So, we look forward to working with all parties very much, including the Child and Youth Advocate Office, in ways that we can mitigate some of these system gaps that do exist.

Chair: This next question is for the Auditor General. The audit examined 55 screened-out cases but only to count them, not to assess whether screening decisions were appropriate. The YCAO recommends a comprehensive audit of all screened-out cases. Why did the OAG decide not to audit the screened-out cases?

Sean MacLennan: To clarify, we did examine the 55 screened-out cases, so we did select a representative sample of 48 child protection files. In those 48 files, there were 134 reports of suspected harm. That included the 55 screened-out cases. We did look to examine whether the department responded to those reports of harm within the required 24 hours. We found that the department did, in all 134 cases, use a structured and risk-based approach to assessing those reports of harm, but we did not question the risk ratings assigned by social workers and then reviewed and approved by supervisors to inform the screening decisions. However, we did report that 37 percent of the cases in our sample were not assessed and screened within the 24 hours as required.

Chair: Building on that question — so, this is a question for the department: Will the department commit to reviewing those cases, and if not, why not?

Stephen Doyle: As mentioned before, we acknowledge that improvements are needed and commit to taking action to change the way that we work. The department will be reviewing all aspects of our service provision alongside of our partners, including the Child and Youth Advocate Office, and we'll consider this as part of the broader comprehensive review that we are doing. We will be seeking input from the Child and Youth Advocate Office on an ongoing basis, and we'll be working together to try to address these gaps.

Chair: In the YCAO submission, pages 13 and 14, the YCAO currently receives information about children in care through a single FCS policy liaison rather than through direct access to case files or front-line staff. Some Canadian jurisdictions give their advocate direct access to case management systems. The question: Is the single policy liaison model the department's intended long-term approach to working with the YCAO, and is there openness to reviewing it?

Stephen Doyle: Yes, the department is open to reviewing our long-term approach to working and our partnership with the Child and Youth Advocate. My position is Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Services. I am now meeting with the Child and Youth Advocate Office on a monthly basis to ensure that there is a direct line of communication at my level. We will be working directly with the Child and Youth Advocate Office to determine what the best approach is for us to be working closely together to ensure that the Child and Youth Advocate Office is getting information in a timely way and in a way that works well for them.

Chair: The Committee also received a written response from the Yukon Status of Women Council. In their submission on pages between 1 and 3, the YSWC pointed out that virtually every problem identified in the 2026 audit was also identified in the 2014 audit and that the department made commitments in 2014 that it demonstrably failed to keep. So, who was accountable for the 2014 commitments, and what accountability mechanism exists to ensure that the 2026 commitments do not follow the same path?

Markirit Armutlu: The requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act* to report on compliance with the act standards every three years is intended to be a mechanism to support improved services to vulnerable children and families who are involved with the child welfare system. This is because the compliance report permits the minister to identify challenges and areas in need of additional support. Accountability in the department would be at the deputy minister level.

Chair: Is there a response from the department at all?

Matt King: Following the 2014 audit, regular updates were made to senior leadership, including quarterly reports from the director and the assistant deputy minister. The last update to senior leadership on these commitments was made in August of 2023. So, we will go back and revisit and ensure that the actions required under the 2014 audit are also continually scoped in and followed up through this process.

Chair: In the YSWC submission, pages 4 and 5, in March 2026, the YSWC interviewed 35 parents with lived experience of FCS involvement. These are quotes: "Participants expressed feeling that the process of offering little to no supports or resources preventatively, then imposing supports or resources upon them after the children being removed is backwards and leaves parents feeling judged and unsupported by the department."

"Participants identifies that accessing formal supports and resources were barriers that prevented either having their children removed, or reunification with their children for extended periods of time."

"Participants expressed feeling like they were put into impossible situations."

"100% of the participants spoke about being confused about the process."

"The majority of the participants stated that, if there was a case plan that was completed, it was never updated. This left them in a state of perpetual unknowing and confusion. Many stated they felt like every time they completed what they often referenced as one of the 'requirements' the department put in place ... the department would then add on more expectations to be met without providing any clear timelines for the family to be reunified."

So, 100 percent of parents interviewed by YSWC in March 2026 said that they were confused about what they needed to do to get their children back. The audit found that 47 percent of the plans of care were missing or out of date. These two findings together suggest that families are being expected to work toward reunification without a clear, current written plan. How is reunification being facilitated ahead of care plans?

Tanya MacKenzie: Case plans and plans of care are not required to start working toward family reunification, and this is always our goal. In the absence of these plans and when families are ready to start the journey toward reunification, we meet with them as well as any other involved supports to discuss the child protection concerns and figure out ways that they could be addressed to create safety for their children. In circumstances where safety concerns remain, we also will strive to communicate these concerns with parents and their support people and advocates and plan together around how to mitigate these concerns to ensure that family reunification is always the goal. The department does not stop the family reunification process because there is no written plan; however, we do acknowledge the importance of a written plan and creating any way to create clarity for these families.

Chair: I'll note that these were interviews that were done in March 2026 — so, months ago — where families have said that they feel like there are barriers being put in place for unification regardless of what has just been said about care plans. So, understanding that two months ago, families said that the department — or Family and Children's Services were putting in barriers to reunification, how does that change — how does the department change this? These aren't historic; these are 35 families interviewed in March 2026 saying that they feel that the department is hindering their ability to reunify with their children. Not that I expect an answer here, but I will note that this is not a past practice; this is a current and ongoing practice that has been identified by 35 individuals who are accessing Family and Children's Services.

Tanya MacKenzie: I watch those concerns — absolutely — and I think that we are trying to increase clarity and transparency of why we are involved with families as soon as we can. I think that part of the work that we're doing is to increase the capacity of our workers and have workers available to immediately meet with families as soon as we have a concern reported to us and become involved. We're also — in having additional workers hired, our ability to reach out to any supports that families indicate, is that someone who they would like to be a part of our involvement with them right at the onset, so — absolutely — transparency, clarity, ongoing engagement, working with families right from the onset is our goal. And I think that is something that we are really trying to increase those collaborative efforts right

from the onset of our involvement. In doing that, human capacity has been a big concern for us, and that is something in our work to create those additional resources, like case management positions, to allow for that face-to-face, immediate contact with families to identify the concerns right from the onset, to create that clarity and transparency, to build a case plan together to have children return home is our goal. So, I do acknowledge and hear those concerns, and we really are trying to increase the supports and the clarity for families to know that.

On top of some of the things that the ADM and the DM have indicated, I think that our work with Yukon First Nations and looking at how we bring community, extended-family caregivers together right from the onset — I think that the goal, like you said, is to create the opportunity for kids to be able to go back into their community right from the beginning and perhaps maybe never come into our care and have reunification work between community, family, and parents right from the beginning. This is another goal that we're working toward, I think. So, I do hear the families' concerns. I do acknowledge your concerns as well and it's something that we are really working toward providing that transparency, clarity, but I do acknowledge those concerns.

Chair: One thing to follow up on a question from a previous colleague, when we talk about the data collection for history, there's a power imbalance between the government office and the family. To be frank, it sounds a lot like revisiting atrocities from the past when a child is removed. There's a power imbalance between representatives of the Yukon Government and a family that is working toward reunification or has had the intervention.

When we talk about a system being put in place that is trauma-informed that recognizes — this also goes back to questions around making sure that social workers going into communities understand the communities that they're going into. Without that understanding, more harm can be done even if they're not part of the cultural plan. Reading this, on top of that, we can all understand that this entire performance audit has been very hard to read. I recognize the work done by the Office of the Auditor General and, of course, the folks within Family and Children's Services. That final one really brought that home.

In that same breath, these parents reported that more resources were offered after children were removed than were available before removal. The YCAO separately notes that FCS has significantly reduced prevention and early intervention services since 2022. Is prevention within the current FCS mandate? Has funding for prevention moved to First Nation governments and organizations? What coordination exists to ensure families who are not connected to a First Nation have access to prevention supports and early intervention services?

Stephen Doyle: As discussed earlier, the department does still provide prevention services, but also, as discussed earlier, this is an area of significant concern that we have heard from many parties, including within this audit. We do intend to identify what the gaps and barriers are within that and collectively try to find ways to improve this part of the system.

The Government of Canada does fund Yukon First Nation governments and other organizations to deliver prevention programming. However, they, like us, are not alone in this. This needs to be a system-wide look at how we are dealing with the prevention side of things and, when calls are coming our way and they are screened out, those families still likely need supports and likely need things offered to them. While there are pieces in place, I do believe that, when we work with Yukon First Nations to collectively identify priorities — based on the conversations that we have already had — it will be an area of significant focus on how the system better responds to those types of cases, ensuring that prevention — because, in a perfect world, children are never coming into care. I think that we can collectively work to reduce the number of children who are coming into care — or families that do need support prior to that are receiving it.

Chair: We have reached the end of our questions. I will ask my colleagues: Are there any other questions for the witnesses?

Would the witnesses like to make closing remarks?

Before I adjourn this hearing, I would like to make a few remarks on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. First of all, I would like to thank the witnesses from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Transcripts of this hearing and documents provided by the departments will be available to the public to consult on our webpage, yukonassembly.ca/committees/pac. Today's hearing does not signify the end of the Committee's consideration of child and family services in the Yukon. The Committee will follow up with the departments on implementation of the commitments made in response to the recommendations of the Auditor General and to the Committee itself. The Committee has come a long way since 2014 and we will be following up.

With that, I would again thank all those who participated in and helped to organize today's hearing.

I now declare this hearing adjourned.

The Committee adjourned at 3:19 p.m.



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April 15, 2026

Attention: Standing Committee on Public Accounts

As Chief of Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN), I am writing in response to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' request for comments regarding the recommendations arising from the 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Child and Family Services in Yukon.

The findings of this report are deeply concerning. The conclusion—that Yukon's Department of Health and Social Services did not provide timely, effective, or inclusive services to protect children and youth—reflects what KDFN has experienced for many years.

Kwanlin Dün First Nation currently has the largest number of Yukon First Nation children in care of the Director. Additionally, KDFN children account for 38 of the approximately 100 children and youth placed in Extended Family Care Agreements (EFCA) or Community Caregiver homes. While we strongly support placement within family and community, the Auditor General's findings regarding gaps in screening, monitoring, and oversight raise serious concerns about the safety of our children in these placements.

We have also experienced situations where very young KDFN children have been harmed in group home care. The report's findings - that group homes are operating beyond capacity, caring for children far younger than intended, and lacking appropriate staffing ratios and training - are unacceptable and align directly with our concerns. This lack of engagement undermines the principles of government-to-government relations and respect for KDFN's jurisdiction.

While KDFN maintains a respectful working relationship with Family and Children's Services (FCS), formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement, it is deeply concerning that no direct engagement or outreach was made to KDFN leadership following the release of this report. Given the significant and disproportionate impact on KDFN children and families, this lack of communication is unacceptable and inconsistent with the intent of that agreement.

KDFN continues to experience gaps in case planning, coordination, and communication:

- Plans of Care remain inconsistent or incomplete, despite being a legislated requirement.
- KDFN is not consistently included in case planning processes or caregiver check-ins, particularly in long-term EFCA placements.
- Communication regarding child safety, placement stability, and planning is inconsistent and often reactive.

These gaps limit our ability to support our children and families and undermine our role as a self-governing First Nation.

Kwanlin Dün First Nation is actively advancing our own child welfare jurisdiction, including strengthening prevention programming, building family capacity, and supporting healing within our community. We are managing a significant number of prevention files and continue to expand these supports; however, some of our most vulnerable families still face circumstances where children cannot safely remain at home. In these situations, difficult decisions must be made with the child's safety and well-being at the centre.

When this occurs, it is reasonable for KDFN and our families to expect that our children will be safe and well cared for. The findings of this report raise serious concerns about whether that expectation is being met. This work requires strong, transparent, and consistent collaboration with Family and Children's Services. Trust, coordination, and shared accountability are essential to achieving better outcomes for our children and families.

We are also concerned with the timelines outlined in the Government of Yukon's response to the Auditor General's recommendations:

- Targeted staff training is not scheduled for completion until November 2027. Given the serious gaps identified, this timeline does not reflect the urgency required. At minimum, phased progress updates must be provided to Yukon First Nations.
- The review of screening requirements for foster and extended family caregivers was to be completed by March 2026. We request confirmation on whether this work has been completed and whether Yukon First Nations have been informed of the outcomes.
- Updates to group home policies and staff training are not expected until March 2027. Given the risks identified, this delay does not reflect the urgency required to ensure child safety.
- The review and update of the Child and Family Services Act Manual is not expected until November 2027. KDFN expects to be meaningfully engaged in this process, including opportunities to provide input, co-develop improvements, and participate in cross-training initiatives with FCS staff.

We also note that key analyses referenced in the Government's response - including assessments of group home capacity, staffing ratios, and the implementation of recommendations from subject matter experts - have not been shared with Yukon First Nations. Transparency with Yukon First Nations must be treated as a foundational requirement, not an afterthought.

KDFN emphasizes the following priorities:

- Family & Children Services Staff who are not current in mandatory safety or Yukon First Nation cultural training should not be working directly with our children until training is complete.
- Compliance reports required under the Child and Family Services Act should be shared with Yukon First Nations leadership or made publicly available to ensure accountability.

In closing, while the Government of Yukon has agreed with the Auditor General's recommendations, agreement alone is not sufficient. While work may be underway, the timelines, combined with a lack of

transparency, coordination, and clear communication, do not reflect the urgency required to protect our vulnerable children.

Kwanlin Dün First Nation calls for accelerated implementation of critical safety measures, improved transparency, and meaningful partnership with Yukon First Nations at all levels of planning, decision-making, and oversight.

Our children deserve better. We are prepared to work collaboratively toward solutions, but this work must be grounded in urgency, accountability, and respect for Kwanlin Dün jurisdiction and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a smaller, more complex flourish.

Chief Sean Uyenets'echia Smith
Kwanlin Dün First Nation

CC:

Brad Cathers, Minister of Health and Social Services, Yukon Government

Kate White, Leader of the Official Opposition, Yukon Legislative Assembly

Logan Ockenden, Clerk to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Yukon Legislative Assembly

Ben Chief, Executive Director, Kwanlin Dün First Nation

Terri Cairns, Director of Justice, Kwanlin Dün First Nation



Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation

Together today for our children tomorrow.

April 29, 2026

To: Kate White, Chair Standing Committee on Public Accounts via email: kate.white@yukonassembly.ca
From: Chief Blackjack, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation

Re:2026 Auditor General Report- Child and Family Services in Yukon

Good day,

LSCFN has completed a review of the 2026 Auditor General Report on Child and Family Services in Yukon. The results of the report are extremely disturbing and as such we would like to provide comments on the recommendations and responses found in the report. LSCFN is also requesting that an update be provided to the Nation as the recommendations are met.

We agree with each of the recommendations outlined in the report and were happy to see that the responses by the department were accepting of this information and there was a willingness to make the necessary changes. However, it is concerning that given the timelines for completion of each of these recommendations there is an additional period of time where the Yukon's children are in a vulnerable place.

Specific Comments

42. In this recommendation it states “conduct a thorough and immediate analysis of all active foster and extended family care homes. This analysis should verify the completion of all screening requirements and annual reviews. Any identified deficiencies should be promptly addressed to validate the ongoing safety of these environments for children. “In the response the department states “In October of 2025, the Department started to review all screening requirements for active foster and extended family caregivers to be completed by March 2026. Work is also underway to complete any gaps in screening requirements by October 2026 to validate that these are safe caregivers and children are in safe environments.” LSCFN would like confirmation that the review was completed by March 2026. We also have concerns that the deadline to complete any gaps in screening requirements will not be completed until October of 2026. This is an additional 6 months that children could potentially be in an unsafe environment. Validating that these are safe environments should be of the highest priority to the department and it is unacceptable that this was not already the case.

49. Cultural Plans- LSCFN is happy to see this recommendation. Connection to one's self, and culture is the foundation of identity. It is how children see themselves and the absence of these plans and the implementation of them has likely caused severe damage in those children living in homes where they had not connection to culture. We do feel the timeline for completion in the response does not match the severity of the damage that the lack of these plans is likely causing. We understand that work like this takes time however considering that this was a requirement the work should have already been completed.

62. Mandatory Training- The findings that lead to this recommendation are unacceptable. Considering that 93% of the children in the departments care are indigenous, the lack of training in the areas of Yukon First Nations 101, Introduction to cultural safety and Residential School awareness is beyond acceptable. This requirement should be

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the bare minimum. In a health care system where, systematic racism has run thick for so many years and continues to exist this training is so important to ensure that not only children are free from racism but also families that have CFS involvement. How do you create a safe environment free from racism, discrimination and prejudice where the staff are not required to understand the children and families they are working with? LSCFN believes that the timeline on completion of this recommendation is not acceptable.

LSCFN believes that there is a recommendation missing from this report in regards to the findings starting on page 7 regarding **“There were gaps in administering supports and maintaining contact with young adults preparing for independent living”**

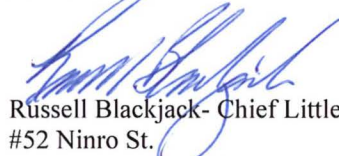
In section 24. It states **“In October 2025, about 6 months after the end of our audit period, the department removed the requirement for young adults to participate in recognized development work, education, employment, or formal training and updated its policy for minimum contact with young adults receiving support services to be based on each young adult’s specific circumstances.”**

It is our understanding from this statement that the department could not meet this requirement so instead of doing the work to ensure they were meeting this requirement they lowered the bar to a place where they are in compliance. This is an appalling practice and we are concerned that this will be a practice that they fall back on when the review of their policies under the recommendations takes place.

As mentioned previously systematic racism has run deep since the establishment of these systems. Nations have been given a false sense of comfort in laws, policies and requirements being established to ensure that the children that are removed from their homes are protected, provided cultural connection and that the individuals charged with caring for them have screening and requirements that have to be met to ensure this. It is very clear from this report that this is not the case, and that our children continue to fall victim to a system that has little to no care for their safety or wellbeing.

In closing I would like to emphasise the distaste this report has left in the mouths of our Nation. Children that are removed from care have been deemed by the department to be receiving inadequate care in their family home. Removing them and failing to offer the adequate care they require is unacceptable. In many of these situations the negative impacts are likely higher considering that the care they are receiving results in a disconnect from their family, culture and self-identification as an indigenous person. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation is asking that the Yukon Government provide a direct response to us on our review of this report.

Mussi Cho,



Russell Blackjack- Chief Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation
#52 Ninro St.
Carmacks YT Y0B 1C0
867-863-5576 ext 251
chief@lscfn.ca

cc: Tanya Silverfox- Director of Health and Wellness LSCFN tanya.silverfox@lscfn.ca
Nina Dickson- Assistant Director of Health and Wellness LSCFN nina.dickson@lscfn.ca
Logan Ockenden- Clerk to the Committee logan.ockenden@yukonasassembly.ca
Brad Cathers- Minister of Health and Social Services GY- brad.cathers@yukon.ca
Jeremy Harper- Chief SFN- chief@selkirkfn.com
Roberta Hager- Deputy Chief NNDFN chief@nndfn.ca



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April 29, 2026

Kate White, Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
36th Yukon Legislative Assembly
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2C6

Re: 2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly – Child and Family Services in the Yukon

Thank you for your letter dated April 2, 2026, requesting comments from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office regarding the recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the response from Yukon government's department of Health and Social Services.

Additionally, I accept your offer to be in attendance in person at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 25, 2026, at 1:00 pm.

Through our individual and systemic advocacy, we have a unique understanding of child and youth service systems, including the scope of services provided by designated services, such as Family and Children's Services. We look forward to ongoing conversations that support the transformation of systems. We have summarized our perspective in themes similar to the report and are recommending the following response by Health and Social Services.

Summary of recommendations:

- Address Staffing Instability and Its Impact on Children
- Strengthen Workforce Retention Analysis and Feedback Mechanisms
- Audit of Screened-Out Cases
- Review of Legislative and Policy Definitions
- Incorporate Proactive Oversight Mechanisms
- Strengthen Information Sharing With YCAO, and Provide Access to YCAO to Children Connected to Family and Children's Services
- Mandatory Notification to YCAO of Critical Incidents and Death
- Establish a Child Death Review Process
- Strengthen Incident Review and Learning Processes
- Enhance Post-Care Supports
- Strengthen Child and Youth Participation and Representation
- Expand Supports for Caregivers and Strengthen Prevention

We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and welcome the opportunity to discuss them further. Strengthening services for children and their families is an investment in our community's future, and we are committed to working towards meaningful, lasting improvements for the young people we serve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annette King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Annette" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "King".

Annette King
Child and Youth Advocate

Encl. YCAO Report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts Committee

cc. Logan Ockenden, Clerk of the Committee
Matt King, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services



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Report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

This report provides the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate's comments on the March 2026 Report of the Auditor General on Family and Children's Services in Yukon, and the Government of Yukon's response.

Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office
April 2026



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Land Acknowledgement

The Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (YCAO) respectfully acknowledges that we work and live on the traditional territories of the 14 Yukon First Nations. Colonial government policies have caused long-lasting impacts to Indigenous children and youth, and we commit ourselves to working alongside Yukon First Nations by integrating traditional knowledge and culture for the safety and wellbeing of children throughout the territory.

About YCAO

The YCAO is an independent office of the Yukon Legislative Assembly mandated by the *Child and Youth Advocate Act (2009)* to represent the rights, views, and preferences of children and youth who are eligible for, or currently receiving, government services and programs. The YCAO provides services to young people: under 18 years of age under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*; under 19 years of age under the *Child and Family Services Act*; under 21 years of age under the *Education Act*; and between the ages of 19 and 26 that are eligible or receiving services under section 17 and 18 of the *Child and Family Services Act*. YCAO is a part of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) and operates from a children's rights framework as informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – Appendix B.

Introduction

The Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) released its audit report regarding Family and Children's Services (FCS) in March 2026, concluding that "*Yukon Health and Social Services did not provide timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect the safety and well-being of at-risk children and young adults.*" The Standing Committee on Public Accounts has requested that the YCAO provide perspective on these findings and to the response from Health and Social Services (HSS) included in the audit report.

The OAG audit covered the period November 30, 2022, to March 31, 2025. The audit examined the FCS branch of HSS to assess whether it:

- Met its responsibilities under the *Child and Family Services Act* to protect and support at-risk children (under 19), young adults (19–26), and families;
- collaborated with Indigenous partners to deliver culturally appropriate services to Indigenous children, youth, and families; and
- effectively managed human and financial resources, including staff training, reporting requirements, and information systems/data needs.

The audit examined:

- 48 child protection files (covering 134 reports of suspected harm);
- 39 children-in-care files;
- 32 foster home files;



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- 38 extended family home files; and
- 31 young adult (post-care) files.

It also examined the training records for 37 group home staff and 26 social workers on required health/safety and Indigenous awareness training, and a complete review of all 14 critical incidents and 37 serious incidents reported during the audit period, assessing compliance with incident management policies.

What makes the OAG's findings particularly alarming is that they are based on a limited scope, examining only children already in care and investigations that FCS intake had screened in. YCAO is well aware that the full picture of unmet needs is significantly broader.

Children have an inherent right to meaningful participation in matters that affect them. Children have a right to be protected from abuse, to be raised by their parents if it is safe to do so, and to maintain connections to their family and culture if they cannot live with their parents. Children who live in out-of-home care have a right to have their living arrangements reviewed periodically to ensure their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing is supported. Children's best interests, including their views and cultural rights, must be considered in all decisions made about them (UNCRC Articles 3, 6, 9, 12, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 30, 31, 33, 34, 39). These rights are also articulated in s. 88 of the *Child and Family Services Act*.

As an independent oversight body representing the rights and views of children and youth, the Advocate welcomes this opportunity to share our perspective. We do so with a clear purpose: to support enhancement of service delivery for the Yukon's most vulnerable young people.

These findings are not new

The OAG's conclusions echo concerns the Advocate has raised through both individual and systemic advocacy over many years. The following YCAO reports, provided to HSS, outline similar gaps in service delivery:

- *Child Rights Impact Assessment on Bill No. 11, Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*
- *Systemic Issue Report on Extended Family Care (2020)*
- *Systemic Issue Report on Permanency Planning (2020)*
- *Systemic Issue Report on Prevention (2020)*
- *Systemic Issue Report on Youth Homelessness (2020)*
- *Empty Spaces Caring Connections – The Experiences of Child and Youth in Yukon Group Care (2019)*
- *Systemic Issue Report on Ageing Out of Care (2019)*



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The issues identified by the OAG align with what we continue to hear directly from children, youth, and families navigating the FCS system. The persistence of these concerns, despite repeated recommendations, is deeply troubling.

The stories not told

The experiences of children in care are often invisible to the public. These are sensitive, confidential matters, and young people involved with FCS, many of whom are quite young, rarely have opportunities to share their perspectives publicly. In our annual reports, we identify themes emerging from individual advocacy, but the children themselves remain largely voiceless in public discourse.

A path forward

The Advocate has met with FCS managers, directors, the Assistant Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister, and Minister to share these concerns directly. We approach this work hoping to strengthen our relationship with the department, beginning with senior leadership. Our approach is not intended to be adversarial. We maintain constructive working relationships with other Yukon government (YG) departments, and we seek the same collaborative foundation with FCS.

We aim to find common ground and a shared commitment to the well-being of children. The children served by FCS are among the most vulnerable in the territory. Since the OAG's audit's review period, we have become aware of critical injuries and death among children in care. The consequences of inaction are not theoretical; they are immediate and profound, with long-term implications for community safety, health outcomes, and the life trajectories of young Yukoners.

Any action plan put forward by YG must incorporate the experiences of children and youth themselves, and YCAO is prepared to support that work, and to provide opportunities to amplify the voices that too often go unheard. We were aware the OAG was undertaking this review, and we were anxiously awaiting it as we knew it would inform our assessment of FCS's progress toward recommendations we have made in YCAO's systemic reports.

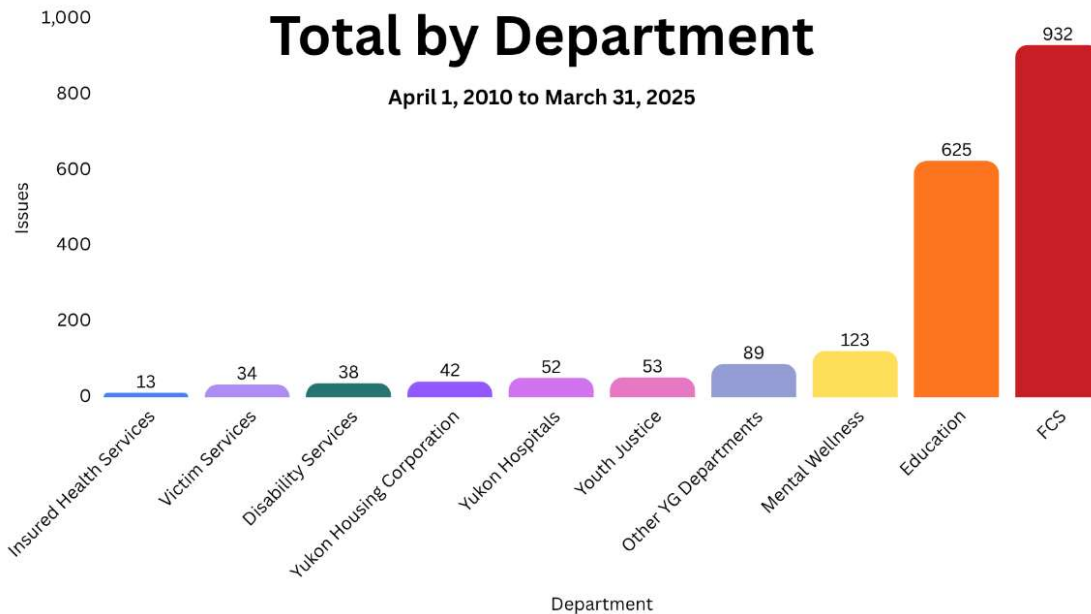
This audit represents a rare moment of public accountability for this department. It offers a window into the reality facing children and youth who are too often disempowered and unheard. The OAG's findings underscore why independent oversight matters, and why the experiences of young people must remain central to any conversation about reform.



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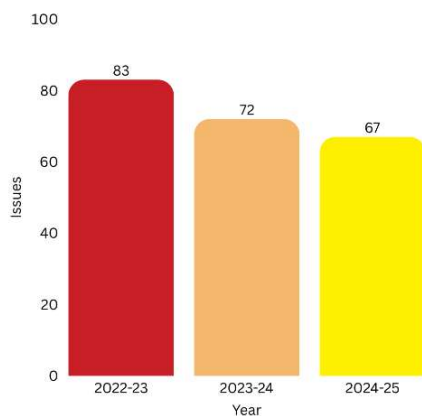
YCAO Summary of Data

YCAO 15-Year Individual Advocacy Issue Total by Department

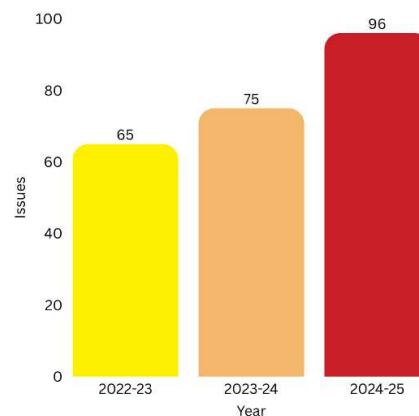


Of the 1850 individual advocacy issues referred to YCAO between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2025, 932 have been with FCS.

YCAO Individual Advocacy Issues With FCS During the OAG Review Period



YCAO Informal Issues During the OAG Review Period



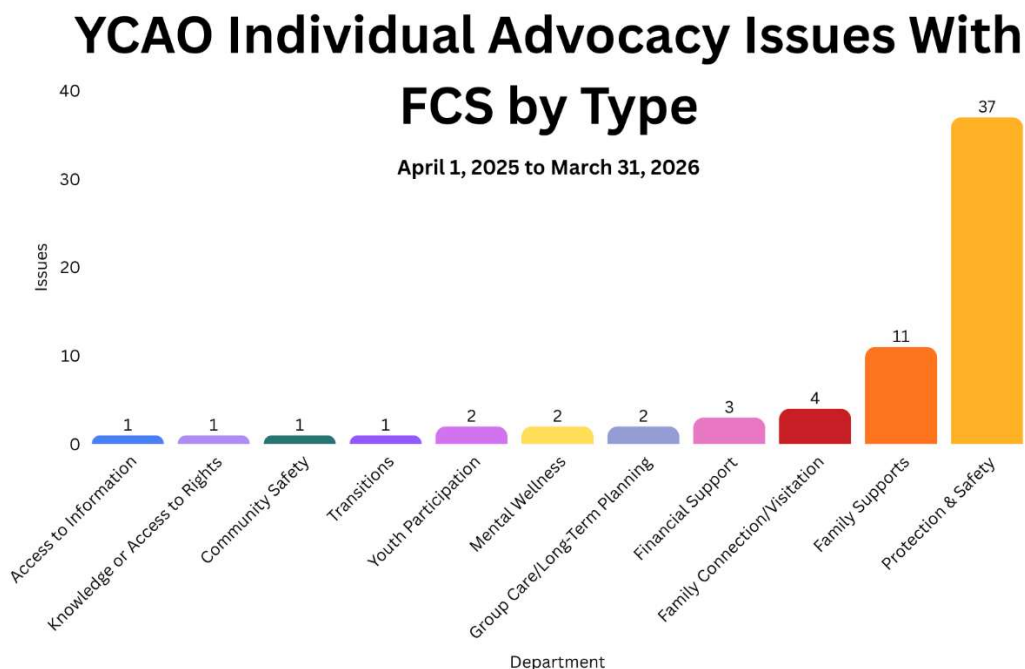


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While there appears to be a modest reduction in the number of individual advocacy cases involving FCS since the OAG announced its review, this does not necessarily reflect a corresponding decrease in the number of children and youth requiring advocacy in relation to FCS. Rather, it reflects a shift in FCS intake practices: following the 2022 amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* and related funding changes, FCS has more frequently screened out cases on the basis that their mandate has since narrowed. Many of these referrals involve individuals who clearly required FCS support but were screened out by FCS for reasons detailed later in the section *Service Gaps Outside the Report's Scope*.

The concurrent increase in YCAO's informal advocacy cases over the same time frame reflects YCAO's understanding of FCS's narrow mandate. For example, we receive numerous referrals from parents concerned about their children being exposed to high conflict parenting following separation but there is not currently a designated YG department that intervenes in this matter. Instead, families are told to protect their children by taking the matters to court. YCAO does not have authority to represent children and youth in court and must advocate without interfering or impeding in a court process.

When issues are referred to YCAO but do not fit within our mandate, we provide informal advocacy by making referrals to the appropriate services or informing relevant YG departments of the issue. This communication is usually done at a higher level between the Advocate or Deputy Advocate and the relevant YG Managers, Directors, Assistant Deputy Ministers or equivalent. In these cases, YCAO cannot direct YG to act, but we can make sure that there is attention brought to the issue(s) and that the information and concerns are shared with the appropriate people.





Preliminary YCAO data for 2025-26 shows there were 65 new individual advocacy cases involving FCS opened between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026, which is immediately following the OAG audit review period. When these new individual advocacy files involving FCS are categorized by issue, the predominant issue arising is regarding protection and safety.

HSS and FCS have stated that there have been many improvements in service delivery since the OAG review period ended. However, YCAO data and experience does not support an appreciable change in the outcomes for children. Alarming, among the YCAO cases post-OAG review, there has been a death of a child in care. Further, even on cases screened in, YCAO has found that FCS often moves too quickly to close files without adequately addressing protection concerns.

Staffing Pressures and Impacts on Service Delivery

The OAG's report identified persistent staffing challenges within FCS, including difficulties with recruitment, retention, and maintaining sufficient qualified personnel to meet service demands.

YCAO acknowledges that FCS has faced sustained workforce pressures over several years. Through engagement with FCS managers, as well as senior leadership at the Director and Assistant Deputy Minister levels, it is clear that staffing shortages are both longstanding and widely recognized within the system. However, the impacts of these shortages on children and youth are significant and concerning. In practice, we have observed:

- Children not knowing who their assigned social worker is.
- Extreme turnover in staff, where children have had multiple social workers in short time periods.
- Gaps in case management and continuity of care.
- Limited oversight in active files, increasing the risk that emerging concerns are not identified or addressed in a timely manner.

These challenges directly affect the consistency, quality, and reliability of services provided to vulnerable children and families.

YCAO Recommendations

Address Staffing Instability and Its Impact on Children

Children need to know who the people are taking care of them. Staffing challenges were identified by the OAG as a key factor affecting service delivery. Consistently, high turnover and workforce instability disrupt relationships and undermine consistent care.

We recommend that FCS:

- Implement immediate retention strategies to stabilize the workforce, including workload management and support for frontline staff;
- prioritize continuity of relationships with significant staff for children and youth to minimize disruption caused by frequent staff changes;



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- ensure all staff meet mandatory training requirements, using existing systems rather than delaying improvements pending new platforms (e.g., YGLearn can be linked to the HRMS system to track training completion); and
- as part of accountability measures, track and report publicly on staffing levels, turnover rates, and training completion.

Children and youth are directly impacted by instability in staffing, particularly when they are required to repeatedly build trust with new workers. This is exceptionally challenging for children and youth who have experienced harm and have had to adjust to living with numerous caregivers in out-of-home placements.

Strengthen Workforce Retention Analysis and Feedback Mechanisms

To better understand and address the root causes of staffing instability, we recommend that FCS:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing exit interview data to identify systemic issues contributing to staff turnover;
- establish mechanisms to gather feedback from former social workers who may not have participated in formal exit processes, including those who have left the jurisdiction or profession;
- take action toward recruitment of First Nations employees; and
- use this information to inform targeted retention strategies, workplace improvements, and workforce planning.

Failure to Protect Children and to Support Wellbeing – Screening Child Abuse Referrals and Assessing Risk

The OAG found significant deficiencies in how FCS screens reports of suspected harm, assesses risk, and responds to children in need of protection.

Key findings include:

- Delayed response times, with over one-third of reports of suspected harm not assessed within the required 24-hour period;
- incomplete interventions, where required steps to ensure child safety were not consistently carried out; and
- failures to meet basic investigation standards, including requirements that all household members be interviewed and that children be seen in person to verify their safety.

These gaps are critical, as failure to complete these steps may result in children remaining in unsafe environments without adequate assessment or protection.

Within the OAG sample:

- 55 reports were screened out;
- 33 were directed to an alternative response; and,
- 46 were screened in for investigation.



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While the OAG findings raise serious concerns within the investigation process, our data and advocacy experience indicate broader systemic issues affecting children's safety, particularly in areas that were not fully within the audit scope.

Since amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* and FCS policies in 2022, FCS has narrowed its operational focus primarily to investigations that meet a high threshold for screening in, and services for children already in out-of-home care. This shift has resulted in a significant reduction in prevention, early intervention, and family support services provided by FCS. As a result, YCAO has observed:

- Increased concerns regarding children's wellbeing in situations that do not meet the current threshold for investigation;
- a growing number of cases where families are screened out without meaningful follow-up or facilitated connection to supports; and
- limited participation by FCS in collaborative, culturally safe, wraparound approaches to care.

The audit did not examine s. 10 of the *Child and Family Services Act* and the role of the Family Resource Unit, which historically contributed to prevention and early intervention. YCAO hears from FCS that funding for prevention services has moved to First Nation governments and organizations but the absence of these functions in FCS practice represents a critical gap in the continuum of care provided by FCS.

Screened-In Cases: Ongoing Concerns

Even where cases are screened in by FCS, YCAO has identified ongoing concerns through follow-up advocacy, including inconsistent investigations, limited or delayed contact with children, gaps in alternative measures, risk assessment and safety planning. These findings align with those of the OAG and reinforce concerns about whether children's safety is being adequately verified.

Screened-Out Cases: Emerging Risks

Concerns are particularly acute in screened-out cases. YCAO has received numerous referrals involving children whose situations raise clear wellbeing and safety concerns but do not meet FCS's current threshold for intervention. In these cases, there is often no formal assessment of risk, families may receive little to no support, and responsibility is effectively shifted to other systems, such as the Department of Education, First Nation governments, or community organizations. However, referrals are not typically facilitated by FCS. Youth are often left on their own to navigate supports.

This approach increases the likelihood that risk will escalate over time, potentially resulting in more serious harm before intervention occurs.

Service Gaps Outside the Report's Scope

While the OAG's report identifies key systemic issues, our advocacy work indicates significant gaps in areas currently considered by FCS to be out of scope for their intervention. We are increasingly supporting children and families who are unable to access services despite clear indicators of risk.



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These include cases where:

- Abuse is alleged by a non-parent, such as another child, educator, or step-parent, and is not investigated by FCS.
- Chronic absenteeism and mental health challenges in children or a parent are present, but referrals are screened out despite clear underlying risk factors.
- Youth homelessness occurs, including situations where youth refuse to return home, yet no direct engagement, family mediation or housing supports are offered.
- High-conflict parenting following separation can involve risk, such as coercive control or exposure to unsafe caregivers, but they are not investigated when one parent is deemed “protective”. Families are then redirected to the courts to amend parenting orders, rather than supporting the child’s right to safe access to both parents.
- Children with disabilities are no longer eligible for FCS supports following the repeal of s. 13 services in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Families are frequently turned away with explanations such as:

- *FCS is not a mental health facility or program.*
- *FCS does not provide prevention services.*
- *FCS no longer has the funding for prevention.*
- *FCS does not have a role in telling parents to send their child to school – absenteeism is not a protection concern.*
- *Prevention services are voluntary.*
- *FCS does not provide supports to youth refusing to go home due to safety concerns unless there is evidence of harm and the parents agree to FCS supporting the youth.*
- *Services for children with disabilities have been repealed.*
- *Custody disputes should be resolved through the courts.*
- *When there is one protective parent, FCS does not have a role.*
- *FCS does not investigate child abuse when the alleged perpetrator is not a parent.*

Many of these concerns are included in the systemic review YCAO is currently compiling on the impacts on children in high conflict family separation matters.

These service gaps raise important concerns regarding the current interpretation and application of key concepts such as “parent” and “protective parent.” In practice, these definitions limit intervention in situations where children are exposed to harm outside of a primary caregiver relationship or across multiple caregiving environments.

In response to these gaps, other service providers, including education and community-based programs, are increasingly attempting to fill the void. However, siloed service delivery continues to create barriers to coordinated care. The education system, in particular, has recently absorbed a disproportionate share of unmet needs, creating a whole new division called Student Wellbeing and Inclusion, an expansion of the existing Student Support Services.



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We have observed over the last few years that FCS has, in some cases, declined participation in interagency responses, including school-based wellness supports and multidisciplinary risk assessment processes (e.g., complex case committees and violence threat risk assessments). This lack of engagement undermines collective efforts to manage risk and provide comprehensive support to families.

As a result, YCAO's advocacy services are experiencing a significant increase in demand across all areas falling outside the narrow interpretation of the FCS mandate. We are currently advocating for an increasing number of non-Indigenous children and youth being denied intervention by FCS. This, combined with the extraordinarily high number of Indigenous children placed in out-of-home care by FCS leads to additional questions about the families who are screened out of receiving FCS services and programs.

Families who are already struggling have the added burden of navigating services. Some families can access alternate services if they belong to a larger First Nation with family support and prevention resources or they are eligible to access Family Preservation programming at the Council of Yukon First Nations, or wrap around supports at the First Nation Education Directorate. However, YCAO also hears directly from First Nation service providers who are struggling to get intervention from FCS for the families they work closely with.

YCAO Recommendations

Audit of Screened-Out Cases

Conduct a comprehensive review of all cases screened out by FCS to assess:

- Whether screening decisions appropriately accounted for potential risk in children's living environments.
- Whether the views and experiences of children and youth were considered in the decision not to intervene.
- Whether referrals to alternative services were meaningfully facilitated.
- Whether risk escalated following initial screening, including repeat reports.
- Whether families who are screened out for intervention have access to First Nations services.

Review of Legislative and Policy Definitions

Re-examine the definitions of "parent" and "protective parent" to ensure they reflect the full scope of children's lived realities and do not inadvertently exclude situations of harm.

Checking in on Children in Care

Regular, meaningful contact with children in care and effective case planning are foundational to ensuring their safety and wellbeing. The OAG found significant gaps in these core responsibilities within FCS.

Under policy, a Plan of Care must be completed within 30 days of a child entering care and reviewed at least annually to assess progress and adjust supports. The audit found that these requirements were not



consistently met, limiting FCS' ability to monitor children's wellbeing, track outcomes, and ensure appropriate services are in place.

The OAG also identified concerns with regular contact between social workers and children in care, including instances where required visits were not completed. Without consistent, direct engagement, there is an increased risk that changes in a child's circumstances, including safety concerns, may go unnoticed.

The OAG found that over a third of children living in group care were under six years of age, often in an attempt to keep siblings placed together. The OAG found that FCS has improved collaborations with Indigenous governing bodies but that cultural plans were not developed for most children living in out-of-home placements. The OAG reaffirmed that children should be placed with extended family members or within their community where possible, consistent with policy and best practices. However, the OAG audit identified significant weaknesses in how these placements are assessed and monitored.

In particular:

- Screening requirements for caregivers were not consistently completed, including key safety checks;
- annual reviews of community caregivers and extended family placements were not reliably conducted; and
- there were gaps in verifying whether all required documentation and approvals were in place to support safe placements.

While it is essential and encouraging that children are maintaining belonging and connection by being placed with siblings and extended family members, these findings raise serious concerns about whether all children in out-of-home care are living in environments that have been properly assessed, are receiving adequate support, and are subject to ongoing oversight.

The audit also pointed to deficiencies in ensuring that all relevant information about caregivers is appropriately considered and documented. This underscores the need for robust, consistent screening and monitoring practices, particularly in extended family care arrangements, where oversight requirements must be equivalent to other placement types.

Concerns related to caregiver screening, support, and oversight have also been raised in previous Yukon reviews, including those examining the quality and safety of out-of-home care, further highlighting that these are long-standing and unresolved issues.

Supports for Children in Care

Children and youth living in out-of-home placements are entitled to consistent oversight, planning, and supports as set out under s. 88 of the *Child and Family Services Act*, as well as Article 25 of the UNCRC. These include regular visits, comprehensive case and cultural plans, and effective long-term planning.

However, the ability of FCS to consistently meet these obligations is significantly affected by ongoing staffing pressures. Gaps in service delivery, such as missed visits, incomplete case plans and cultural



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plans, and limited long-term planning, raise concerns about whether children in care are receiving the level of oversight and support to which they are entitled.

The OAG previously identified deficiencies in case management and record keeping in its 2014 audit. While a new case management system was developed, FCS has not fully implemented it. As a result, persistent challenges remain in tracking, monitoring, and ensuring accountability for the care of children and youth. Children cannot wait for administrative systems to be resolved before receiving consistent and appropriate care.

YCAO works to ensure that representation and oversight is in place for children and youth; however, our current model is primarily reactive. Advocacy services are typically provided only when a referral is made, most often by concerned adults or sometimes by a direct request from a youth. There remains a widespread misconception that YCAO is automatically connected to all children in the care of the Director.

At present:

- YCAO does not receive automatic notification when a child in care is injured, dies, or is involved in a critical incident – even when YCAO is actively advocating for the child or youth.
- Yukon does not have a formal child death review mandate, unlike other Canadian jurisdictions.
- There is no systematic mechanism to ensure that all children in care are aware of, or connected to, advocacy supports.

To address this gap, YCAO has undertaken public education efforts to increase awareness among children, youth, and caregivers. However, without formalized referral pathways, many children remain without the option to engage YCAO services.

Effective advocacy depends on timely and accurate access to information. Over the years, YCAO has made many attempts to find a process for information sharing that mitigates FCS's perceived adversarial interpretation of the advocacy role. The current process, identified by FCS, relies heavily on summaries provided by an FCS policy liaison to YCAO, rather than providing YCAO with direct access to case files through the FCS system, or consistent communication with frontline staff, managers, or the Director of FCS. This creates challenges in verifying information and limits YCAO's ability to review FCS decisions. YCAO has experienced delays or reluctance in sharing information, inconsistent support from FCS when requesting to attend case planning meetings to support or represent a child or youth, and inconsistent cooperation from FCS in providing formal records. In some Canadian jurisdictions, the Advocate has direct access to case management systems.

The lack of transparency is concerning, particularly given that YCAO must rely on FCS as the primary source of information while also serving an independent oversight function.



YCAO Recommendations

Incorporate Proactive Oversight Mechanisms

Implement automated alerts when key standards are not met, such as missed visits, incomplete or overdue care plans, or a lack of case activity over a defined period.

Strengthen Information Sharing With YCAO, and Provide Access to YCAO to Children Connected to Family and Children's Services

Ensure FCS staff are aware of responsibilities for sharing information and records with YCAO for the purposes of advocacy and continue to work with YCAO staff to support advocacy for children and youth through effectively and timely communication and sharing of information.

Mandatory Notification and Referral

Establish mandatory referral requirements to YCAO for all critical incidents involving children in care, including serious injury and death.

Establish a Child Death Review Process

Support implementation of YCAO's proposed child death review model. Until legislative amendments occur, this can be accomplished through a Ministerial referral of child deaths to YCAO under s. 15 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. Further, the *Coroners Regulation*, O.I.C. 2021/114, s. 4 may be amended to ensure the Advocate is immediately notified of the death of a child, in addition to the Chief Coroner.

Responding to Incidents Involving Children in Care

The OAG identified significant gaps in how FCS responds to critical and serious incidents involving children in care, particularly with respect to communication, accountability, and follow-up.

While the audit found that FCS generally responded to the immediate health and safety needs of children in the incidents reviewed, critical deficiencies were identified in how these incidents were managed afterward. In particular:

- Family members were not informed in 33% of critical and serious incidents, despite policy requirements.
- Indigenous partners were not notified in 23% of cases where notification was required.
- In more than half of the incidents reviewed, there was no evidence that families were informed at all.
- There was no consistent evidence that incidents were reviewed in accordance with policy to identify lessons learned and prevent recurrence.

These failures undermine transparency, erode trust, and limit the ability of a child's support network to respond appropriately and support the child's wellbeing.



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Despite the seriousness of these incidents, there is currently no formal mechanism to ensure independent oversight. YCAO is not automatically notified when a child living in out-of-home care is seriously injured, a critical incident occurs, or if a child dies. FCS has indicated that they would require direction if they were to formalize such automatic notification to YCAO.

The absence of a structured notification and review process is a significant gap. Unlike other jurisdictions, the Yukon does not have a mandated child death review model. This limits opportunities for accountability, systemic learning, and prevention of future harm.

S. 17 and 18 of the *Child and Family Services Act* contemplate supports for youth transitioning out of care. However, in practice, positive outcomes for youth are often linked not to formal systems, but to informal and community-based supports, including former caregivers, First Nation governments and community support. This raises concerns about the consistency and reliability of post-care planning and services provided through FCS. It is promising that the 2022 amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* increased eligibility for supports to age 26 but more needs to be done to ensure family and cultural connections and the development of skills for independence.

YCAO Recommendations

Mandatory Notification to YCAO of Critical Incidents and Death

As noted in the previous section.

Strengthen Incident Review and Learning Processes

Ensure all critical and serious incidents are reviewed in accordance with policy, with documented findings and clear actions to prevent recurrence.

Enhance Post-Care Supports

Strengthen implementation of s. 18 of the *Child and Family Services Act* to ensure all youth leaving care have access to consistent, reliable, and culturally appropriate supports.

YG's Response to the OAG Report

HSS has formally agreed with the findings of the OAG and has committed to a multi-year plan focused on improving compliance, training, policy, and system oversight. While this acknowledgement is important, the proposed response raises significant concerns regarding timeliness, scope, and reliance on internal processes, particularly given the severity and immediacy of the risks identified in the audit.

Extended timelines given the context of immediate risk

One of YCAO's central concerns with YG's response to the OAG recommendations is the extended implementation timeline. Key elements of the Department's response, which include full policy updates, training improvements, and case management system alignment, are not scheduled for completion until late 2027, with some compliance review cycles extending to 2029.



This approach is not commensurate with the urgency of the findings. The OAG identified failures in core protection functions, including delayed responses to reports of harm, incomplete investigations, and gaps in oversight of children in care. These findings represent immediate safety concerns.

Children cannot wait multiple years for systemic improvements while known deficiencies in service delivery persist. The absence of clear interim safeguards or accelerated actions to address high-risk areas raises concern that children may continue to be exposed to preventable harm during the implementation period.

Incremental approach to known and long-standing issues

Several commitments such as improving screening practices, ensuring contact with children, and completing Plans of Care and Cultural Plans, reflect core legislative and policy requirements that should already be consistently met. Similarly, issues related to staffing shortages and workforce instability, incomplete caregiver screening and annual reviews, and inconsistent compliance with group home standards, have been identified repeatedly over multiple years, including in prior audits. YG's response does not clearly demonstrate how this cycle of identifying and re-identifying the same issues will be broken.

Gaps in immediate accountability for children in care

HSS has committed to improvements in group home standards, cultural planning, and caregiver screening. While these are important, the timelines again extend into 2026-27, and in some cases rely on future budget and planning processes. There are also noticeable absences including immediate mechanisms to ensure that all children currently in living in out-of-home placements are safe and receiving required oversight. There is an absence of clear processes to ensure timely notification and response to critical incidents, and any concrete actions to address existing non-compliance in real time, rather than through future reviews.

Cultural planning and engagement with First Nations

HSS's efforts to engage Yukon First Nations and Indigenous governing bodies, and to complete cultural plans for children in care, are positive steps. However, progress is partial, with processes established for some, but not all, partners. There is also limited detail on how these plans will be implemented, monitored, or resourced.

Given the ongoing over-representation of Indigenous children in care, and the importance of cultural continuity to child wellbeing, delays in this area are significant and in opposition to the preamble and guiding principles in the amended *Child and Family Services Act*.

Additional YCAO Recommendations

Strengthen Child and Youth Participation and Representation

Children and youth must be meaningfully included in decisions that affect their lives. Current practice does not consistently reflect this principle, and there are ongoing concerns regarding the recognition of



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youth voice and the role of independent advocacy. Please see Appendix A for a small sample of views of young people.

We recommend that FCS:

- Establish mandatory processes to ensure children and youth are heard or represented in all key decisions, including care planning, placement changes, and case reviews.
- Ensure all staff are trained on child rights and participation, the role of independent advocacy and are aware of relevant systemic reports completed by YCAO.
- Ensure all FCS staff have orientation and awareness of the *Child and Family Services Act* and associated policies.
- Provide children and youth with accessible information about their rights and available advocacy supports.
- Formalize consistent processes for independent advocacy representatives to participate in meetings or convey youth perspectives.

Expand Supports for Caregivers and Strengthen Prevention

Community caregivers (formerly referred to as foster families), extended family placements, and group home staff, require consistent, proactive support to provide safe and stable care environments. The current system places responsibility on caregivers without sufficient guidance, training, and wraparound services. YCAO frequently hears frustration from caregivers about their needs for support, information, and timely decisions. They share that they are not valued as part of the care team, their concerns and perspectives are unheard and are often interpreted as unwelcome. Consequently, we are aware of caregivers who have chosen to not continue in the role due to these frustrations.

We recommend that FCS:

- Reinvest in collaborative prevention and early intervention supports for families and caregivers.
- Strengthen collaboration with First Nations and community partners to support culturally appropriate caregiving environments.
- Provide ongoing training, respite, and mental health supports for caregivers.
- Ensure equitable standards of support and oversight across all placement types, including extended family care.
- Address issues as they arise.



Appendix A

**"I don't think anyone
will even call me on
my birthday."**

**"NO [I DON'T SEE
MY SOCIAL
WORKER OFTEN]. I
DON'T REMEMBER
THE LAST TIME I
SAW HER."**

**"THERE ARE
HARDCORE
ADDICTS IN THE
HOUSE AND I'M
WORRIED ABOUT
MY SOBRIETY. IT'S
VERY TRIGGERING."**

YOUTH *Voice*

**"When I get out of here I am
going to go to the shelter.
But I don't know what I'll do
between 8 and 4. That's a lot
of time to fill when I'm not
allowed to be there."**

**"I DON'T WANT TO
BE SEPARATED
FROM HER [MOM].
I DON'T THINK
SHE'LL BE OKAY
WITHOUT ME."**

**"I don't want to
go with that
family. I only want
to see them
sometimes."**

**"I'm not
safe
there."**

**"I get why other kids
have to go to camp,
because their parents
are at work. But they
[group home workers]
are already at work, so
why do I have to go?"**

**"HIGHER UPS AT FCS MUST
THINK I'M OK AND NOT TO
WORRY ABOUT ME. I'VE
STOPPED CALLING AND
ASKING BECAUSE NOTHING
IS BEING DONE."**



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Appendix B





**Yukon Status
of
Women Council**

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April 30, 2026

Kate White, Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
% 36th Yukon Legislative Assembly
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Dear Ms. White,

Thank you for the invitation to provide our comments on the recommendations and responses in the *2026 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly - Child and Family Services in Yukon*, and to attend the public hearing on May 25, 2026. Please see our feedback below; and the YSWC staff is pleased to accept your invitation to attend the hearing. Some of us will be found in the galleries.

The Audit covered November 30, 2022, to March 31, 2025. We feel it important to include consideration of the last *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly - Yukon Family and Children Services - Department of Health and Social Services*, completed in 2014 by Michael Ferguson, SPA, CA in our feedback. Because it has been over a decade since the 2014 Audit, and no publicly-available report has been released on the status of the department's 2014 commitments that we could find; we believe that reviewing the department's ability to follow-through with the 2014 recommendations and responses is fundamental to assessing the department's commitments and ability to execute the 2026 report's recommendations and responses with transparency and in a timely fashion.

Case Plans and Plans of Care for Children

The 2014 report highlighted that, while the department did develop case plans for families and plans of care for children, it did not review and update the case plans or plans of care. It noted that the department was required to review case plans at least every four months and update them as needed; and that in some files, the plans were six years out of date. In their response to the 2014 recommendations, the department committed to ensuring, "compliance with standards...through active monitoring of files at the supervisory and management levels".

Information in the 2026 Auditor General report makes it clear that the department has continued to fail to meet its requirements to create and review plans of care for children. The report notes that as of March 31, 2025, 47% of the children in care either did not have a plan or they had one that was out of date, and that 74% of the plans of care that were 1 year old were not reviewed annually. The report further states that the department did not maintain critical monthly face-to-face contact for 74% of the children, with contact gaps extending up

to 14 months. The department also failed to maintain the required monthly face-to-face contact with **all** of the young adults preparing for independent living in the report's sample.

Requirements for Approving Foster Homes and Extended Family Care Homes

The 2014 Auditor General's report does state that the department met the requirements for approving foster homes and placing children in those homes. However, the report also states that the department was found to be failing at conducting the required annual reviews of the foster homes; having completed only 6.5% full reviews of the 20 foster homes at the time.

In comparison, the 2026 Auditor General report notes that the department failed to complete key screening requirements in 24% of the extended family care homes and 28% of the foster homes in the samples; including that criminal record checks were not completed for all adults in 22% of the extended family homes. In 10% of the extended family homes and 58% of the foster homes in the samples, the department did not complete the required annual reviews to verify that the homes continued to remain safe for the children.

In response to the 2014 Auditor General's report, the department committed to ensuring compliance with standards through active monitoring of files at the supervisory and management levels. Further, the department would continue to complete compliance reviews on an annual basis, and would initiate a project for the replacement of the Client Index System since the 2014 report also identified that the existing system was inadequate.

Also in response to the 2014 Auditor General report, the department implemented the Family Case Management System. As was noted in the 2026 Auditor General report, while there was a new system implemented, the department has not been utilizing the resource to track and analyze compliance with standards to produce reports for senior management, and there has been no overall analysis to determine whether the department was achieving its objectives for the children, young adults, or families.

It is extremely distressing to discover that the 2026 Auditor's report has again identified these as issues. This clearly highlights that the department has failed in their 2014 commitment to ensure compliance and reviews on an annual basis. Any further commitments made by the department to conduct compliance reviews on an annual basis must become even more formalized and embedded in the Annual Report to be tabled **annually** during a sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Over the last 12 years, the department has failed to demonstrate its ability to follow-through with its own commitments to conduct reviews, assess the findings and implement appropriate policy and procedure changes on a regular and ongoing basis. This has left the department in the position of neither being able to define, nor report to Senior Management and/or the Minister any gaps, challenges, or significant concerns when it comes to the department's ability to meet its own legislated mandate, including ongoing concerns of compliance. When it comes to the safety and well-being of our children, this is unacceptable.

Compliance Concerns and Improved Reporting

The 2014 Auditor General report findings included that the department was noncompliant with delivery of a number of service standards and/or legislative requirements in many areas including:

- reviewing and updating case plans within specific time-frames;
- developing and reviewing case plans for youth transitioning out of the department's care or custody within certain time-frames;
- ensuring that all children in its care or custody have annual medical and dental examinations;
- measuring the effectiveness of programs and services while continuing to expend valuable human and financial resources on these programs;
- maintaining monthly face-to-face contact with the children and/or young adults;
- conducting annual reviews of foster homes; and
- tracking compliance with legislative and policy requirements. Of note, the department responded with a commitment to develop and implement a plan to address the compliance issues that were to be identified in the 2012-13 compliance review.

The 2026 Auditor General report findings included that the department continues to be frequently noncompliant in a number of areas including:

- conducting assessments and screenings of reports of suspected harm within 24 hours of receiving the report;
- completing interventions, as needed, within 30 days;
- maintaining monthly face-to-face contact to ensure the ongoing safety of the children and/or young adults;
- completing family assessments within certain time-frames;
- creating and reviewing plans of care for children within specific time-frames;
- ensuring agreements are in place for young adults receiving support services;
- completing key screening requirements of the extended family care, and foster homes;
- completing annual reviews of the extended family care, and foster homes;
- identifying and addressing concerning policy gaps, and lack of risk assessment with respect to the 8 group homes currently operating;
- developing and updating cultural plans for the children;
- ensuring compliance with mandatory training for staff working in group homes; and
- completing comprehensive assessments of the financial and human resources required to deliver their mandated services.

Further, despite the requirement to submit a report to the Minister every 3 years on the Department and Health and Social Services' compliance with the Child and Family Services Act, the 2026 Auditor General report states that 2016 was the last year that one was provided by the department. That is 7 years past the date that the first report was to be submitted and 10 years since another has been completed.

Concerns Heard From Yukoners with Lived Experience of Departmental Involvement

In 2025, the YSWC undertook a project aimed at improving outcomes for Indigenous children and families who have involvement with Family and Children Services in the Yukon, funded by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation through their National Anti-Racism Fund. One of the project goals is the production of resources for front-line workers supporting parents involved with the department, and for parents in the Yukon whose

children have been removed; outlining parent's rights, the children's rights, Yukon child protection legislation, processes and timelines, and the resources that are available to them. The project relies heavily on information obtained through interviewing parents with the lived experience of involvement with the department while living in the Yukon. In total, 35 parents participated in interviews throughout the month of March 2026. The following is a list of things commonly heard from the participants about their involvement with this department:

- Participants frequently reported the experience of having the department put in place more supports and resources after children were removed than were offered prior to children being removed. Participants expressed feeling that the process of offering little to no supports or resources preventatively; then imposing supports or resources upon them after the children being removed is backwards and leaves parents feeling judged and unsupported by the department. Further, participants who did disclose that they had involvement with the department prior to the children being removed indicated that there was very little time between their first encounters with the department and when their children were removed; often less than one month. They expressed that this left them very little time in between the events for them to be able to process, and make the changes being required of them by the department in order to avoid having their children removed.
- Participants identified that accessing formal supports and resources were barriers that prevented either having their children removed, or reunification with their children for extended periods of time. They expressed that while the department placed expectations upon them, there was little to no assistance and a lack of understanding on the part of the department when the resources were inaccessible either due to extensive wait lists, or due to lack of supports and resources in the rural communities.
- Participants expressed feeling like they were put into impossible situations; that they were being expected to trust the same social worker and department that took their children from them to work with them to come up with a plan to get their children returned to them. They were expected to be open and honest about their personal and family situations with strangers, often of a different culture, unsure of how their words would be used as reasons to either remove their children, or prevent the children from being returned.
- 100% of the participants spoke about being confused about the process, about what they needed to do to get their children back, the length of time it would be before they could communicate with or see their children again, and/or when the children would be returned to them. This not knowing, understandably, made the families' situations even more stressful.
- The majority of the participants stated that, if there was a case plan that was completed, it was never updated. This left them in a state of perpetual unknowing and confusion. Many stated they felt like every time they completed what they often referenced as one of the "requirements" the department put in place, such as treatment, or a parenting program, in order for the children to be returned, the department would then add on more expectations to be met without providing any clear timelines for the family to be reunified. Many expressed that they eventually felt a sense of hopelessness and a feeling of wanting to "give up".

The 2014 Auditor General report emphasized the need for the department to deliver annual reports required under the Legislation to the Minister and on a timely basis. It noted that these reports should include more quantitative information about activities, services, performance, and outcomes, how these differ from expectations, and how the Department is planning to address any shortcomings. The 2024-2025 Family and Children Services Annual Report does include a significant amount of qualitative information. However, it does note that the two previous reports covered the periods from 2020 to 2022 and January 2023 to March 2024 respectively. What this means is that the department failed at meeting its legislated requirement to file its Annual Report consistently on an annual basis for the years 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. Furthermore, the Annual Report fails to provide any overall analysis to determine whether the department has been achieving its objectives for the children, young adults, or families that it is set-out to provide supports, resources and services to. We believe that the lack of including this type of analysis in their Annual Report is in direct correlation to the fact that the department, by its own admission as noted in the 2026 Auditor General report, has not been utilizing the new Family Case Management system to its full capacity; therefore, has not completed the analysis required and report the findings, as suggested as being needed in the 2014 Auditor General report.

Further, we strongly feel that the compliance reports must be either submitted to the department's Minister who can then report on the department's progress to the Legislative Assembly, or embedded into the department's Annual Report which should be required to be tabled annually during a sitting of the Legislative Assembly. We strongly believe that anything short of formalizing the department's requirement to report their ongoing progress in these areas to the Minister responsible, and to the Legislative Assembly will continually fall short of the community's strong expectancy that the department be held to higher standards of transparency, thus fail to re-build community trust in the department's ability to manage and administer the *Child and Family Services Act* by providing timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families.

Follow-up Audit Required Within 24 Months

In an interview that was published in the Yukon News on April 23, 2026, the Deputy Auditor General Andrew Hayes advised that, "his office would be watching the government's progress and could return with a follow-up audit in 18 to 24 months". This department is responsible for the care, safety, and well-being of some of the most vulnerable members of our society: at-risk children and young adults. Having had these critical short-comings publicly released must have made this department realize that it does not have the trust of this community to provide the community services that it is set-out to provide.

We feel it is imperative that a follow-up audit within 18 to 24 months be a requirement rather than a possibility. The community needs to know that the recommendations that the Auditor General has made and the commitments made by the department through their responses to the recommendations will not be a repeat to the 2014 Auditor's report. We need to **know** that, going forward, the department is going to be held accountable, and that changes are being implemented that will improve the outcomes for at-risk children, young adults and vulnerable families in the Yukon.

Overall, we do not feel that either the Auditor General's recommendations, or the department's responses will suffice. Based on the knowledge that the best predictor of

future behaviour is past relevant behaviour, the department's historic lack of follow-through to the commitments made in response to the 2014 Auditor General Report is quite telling. The department needs structural accountability and closer monitoring this time. It should be required to report on the status of the 2026 report's implementation to the Minister responsible and in the Annual Report which should be tabled during a sitting of the Legislative Assembly. It is our strong belief that these measures must be taken until such time as the department is able to restore public confidence. Yukoners must be able to feel confident in the department's ability to provide timely, effective, and inclusive services to protect the safety and well-being of at-risk children, young adults and vulnerable families. Furthermore, we need to know that the department is also capable of monitoring, assessing and implementing changes accordingly, and providing informative, timely, reporting on the matter.

We hope that you find our comments helpful and we do appreciate the opportunity to provide them.

Respectfully,



Shauna Clare, Family Violence Research Coordinator
Yukon Status of Women Council



Rae Lamache, Executive Director
Yukon Status of Women Council