

# YUKON POVERTY Report Card 2022

Campaign 2000 Update



**SPOILER ALERT:**

*We still have poverty  
in the Yukon.*

CAMPAIGN 2000  
END CHILD & FAMILY  
POVERTY



Yukon Anti-Poverty  
COALITION  
anti-pauvreté du Yukon

Compiled February 2023

## About the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition works to facilitate the elimination of poverty in the Yukon through awareness, education, advocacy, action, and community building. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition works on issues involving food, shelter, income and access to services with over 600 community members including representatives from non-governmental organizations, elected officials, and representatives from the business and faith communities.

The vision of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition is that all people in the Yukon live in an inclusive community free from poverty where diversity is respected and human rights are upheld. The official mandate of the organization is to:

- Foster strategies, actions, and partnerships with organizations to reduce and prevent poverty in the Yukon
- Identify gaps, support collaboration, and facilitate the development of solutions to deal with the effects of poverty
- Provide specific programming to alleviate the impacts of poverty on individuals and families
- Provide safe and welcoming spaces for new ideas and solutions to be incubated and supported
- Increase awareness of the causes of poverty and its impacts on Yukon people
- Provide factual information on poverty based on research and lived experience
- Coordinate actions and information regarding poverty within and outside the Yukon
- Advocate and support individuals and families to navigate current systems
- Advocate for positive systemic change with partner organizations

*For more information: [www.yapc.ca](http://www.yapc.ca) (867) 334-9317*

## About Campaign 2000

Campaign 2000 is a cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Campaign 2000 began in 1991 out of concern about the lack of government progress in addressing child poverty. Campaign 2000 is non-partisan in urging all Canadian elected officials to keep their promise to Canada's children. The Campaign 2000 coalition consists of 120 partners committed to addressing the issue of child and family poverty and believe that the federal government has a responsibility to honour the all-party resolution to end child poverty.

One accountability tool used by Campaign 2000 and its coalition partners is producing poverty report cards for Canada and the provinces and territories as a means of highlighting the challenges specific to each province and territory. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition is a partner in Campaign 2000 and produced this poverty report card for Yukon.

## 1.0 Introduction

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The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition released the first-ever Yukon Poverty Report Card in March 2021 as part of Campaign 2000's annual assessment of child and family poverty in Canada. The report provided an overview of current data regarding the prevalence of poverty in the Yukon as well as relevant indicators related to the housing crisis, food insecurity, and affordability. The report concluded with ten recommendations to reduce poverty and to improve the health and wellness of children, youth, and families throughout the territory.

This report provides a status update on the key issues identified in the first report including each of the recommendations and assigns a grade to each level of government responsible for implementing each recommendation. It also includes new recommendations to address ongoing and emerging issues relating to social assistance, the housing crisis, and transportation.

## 2.0 Poverty in the Yukon

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The Government of Canada released *Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* in August 2018 that:

- affirmed the Market Basket Measure as the official measure of poverty for Canada;
- set national targets for poverty reduction (a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020 and a 50% reduction by 2030 compared to 2015 levels); and
- established a National Advisory Council on Poverty to provide independent advice to the Government of Canada in relation to programs, funding and activities that contribute to poverty reduction.<sup>1</sup>

The Poverty Reduction Strategy is supported by the *Poverty Reduction Act*, enacted in June 2019, which entrenches the targets, Canada's official measure of poverty, and the National Advisory Council on Poverty into law.<sup>2</sup>

The Market Basket Measure establishes thresholds of poverty based upon the cost of a defined basket of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other items that reflect a modest, basic standard of living. To purchase the market basket, the household must have an income sufficient to: eat a nutritious diet; buy clothing for work and social occasions; house themselves in their community; and pay for other necessary expenditures such as personal care, household needs, furniture, telephone service, transportation, reading, recreation, entertainment, and school supplies. Any household with a level of disposable income lower than the cost of the basket for their region is considered to be experiencing poverty.<sup>3</sup>

From 2018 to 2020, the prevalence of poverty in the territory likely decreased from 10.7% to 8.8%<sup>4</sup> while the number of Yukoners experiencing poverty likely decreased from approximately 4,000 to 3,500.<sup>5</sup>

Those most likely to experience poverty include people under 18 years of age, people 65 years and older, and people not living in an economic family (i.e., living with people not related to them either by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship).

## The Northern Market Basket Measure

Recognizing that the defined basket of goods and services comprising the Market Basket Measure does not adequately reflect life in the North, Statistics Canada developed the Northern Market Basket Measure to measure poverty for the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The discussion paper *Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of Poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories*, released by Statistics Canada in November 2021, details a methodology for measuring poverty in Yukon and the Northwest Territories. This is based on the goods and services required for life in the territories, available data sources, and consideration of the logistical challenges associated with data sampling in the two territories while also adhering to the framework and principles outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

In response to feedback obtained through various engagement sessions, Statistics Canada is working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples to co-develop indicators of poverty and well-being that are more culturally relevant to help supplement the Northern Market Basket Measure and has developed a forward facing research agenda that will assess the feasibility of adapting the food component through the use of a different survey tool and looking at ways to incorporate country food and harvesting.<sup>7</sup>

In November 2022, Statistics Canada released a technical paper that included small adjustments to the methodology outlined in the discussion paper based on the findings of targeted engagement sessions with local experts, stakeholders, Indigenous organizations, and federal and territorial officials and statistical agencies. The technical paper also presented estimates of the prevalence of poverty in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories for 2018 to 2020 using the Northern Market Basket Measure.

The prevalence of poverty is higher in Yukon compared to national estimates. Statistics Canada reports 6.4% of Canadians lived in poverty in 2020, a reduction from 11.2% in 2018. According to Statistics Canada, the introduction of various income supports such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic helped offset lost employment income during the first year of the pandemic, thereby increasing the after-tax income of households and lowering income inequality and the proportion of the population in a low-income situation.<sup>8</sup>

Statistics Canada also produces the Low Income Measure, which serves as an additional indicator of low income that complements the Market Basket Measure. The Low Income Measure is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted household income, where “adjusted” indicates that household needs are taken into account. Adjustment for household sizes reflects the fact that a household’s needs increase as the number of members expands.<sup>9</sup>

Statistics Canada reported the Low Income Measure for Yukon for 2020. At that time, 3,380 or 8.9% of Yukoners were considered low income. Yukoners most likely to be considered low income based on the Low Income Measure include:

- Indigenous Peoples: 18.7%
- Lone-parent households: 18.0%
- Persons not in census families\*: 19.2%<sup>10</sup>

\* i.e., may live alone, with their married children, with a related or unrelated family, or with non-family people.

## 2.1 The Housing Crisis

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The enduring housing crisis, as exemplified by the high cost of private market rental housing and the lack of social housing, remains a major contributor to poverty and associated hardships such as homelessness, food insecurity, and affordability challenges. Significant action to alleviate the housing crisis is required to reduce poverty in the territory and to improve the health and well-being of Yukoners.

### 2.1.1 Core Housing Need

Statistics Canada measures core housing need periodically using data from the Census of Canada, the Canadian Income Survey, and the Canadian Housing Survey. Core housing need is an indicator calculated in two stages.

The first stage identifies whether a household lives in a dwelling considered unsuitable (i.e. not enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the residents based on National Occupancy Standards), inadequate (i.e. in need of major repairs) or unaffordable (i.e. shelter costs equal more than 30% of total before-tax household income).

The second stage establishes whether the household has affordable access to suitable and adequate alternative housing by comparing the household's total income to an income threshold based on local housing costs. Only those households that cannot afford alternative housing would be considered in core housing need. For example, a household that spends more than 30% of before-tax income on housing may not be in core housing need if their income is sufficient to afford the rent of a typical unit in the local housing market.<sup>11</sup> This situation typically applies to homeowners who spend more than 30% of before-tax income on housing-related costs who have an income that is sufficient to afford to rent a comparable unit in the local housing market for less than 30% of their before-tax income.

According to the 2021 Census, 9.9% of Yukoners lived in core housing need, a decrease from 12.1% in 2016 and 14.4% in 2018. The decrease in the proportion of people living in unaffordable housing can be attributed to: temporary COVID-19 government supports and benefits; the introduction of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit, and increased construction of multi-unit dwellings, which are typically more affordable than single-detached homes. \*

At the same time, the share of the population residing in housing that was inadequate or unsuitable increased during this period. It is likely that the prevalence of core housing need will have increased in 2022 following the elimination of COVID-19 income supports and benefits given the increase in the proportion of Yukoners living in inadequate or unsuitable housing.

Yukoners most likely to live in core housing need include:

- Lone-parent households: 25%
- Renters: 19.8%
- Indigenous Peoples: 18%
- People age 65 and up: 13.2%<sup>12</sup>

\* Multi-dwelling units include semi-detached homes, row homes, condos, and apartments.

### 2.12 Homelessness in Whitehorse

Homeless is increasing in the Yukon. In April 2021, the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board and the Safe at Home Society, with financial support through Canada’s Homelessness Strategy, conducted a third Point-in-Time count in January 2023 to enumerate the population of people experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse at that time. 151 people were identified without a fixed address and experiencing homelessness or considered at risk of experiencing homelessness. Of those:

- 67% were between the ages of 24 and 55
- 26% were aged 56 and older
- 7% were between the ages of 16 and 24
- 85% identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit)
- 19% reported having attended an Indian Residential School
- 54% identified as male
- 10% identified as LGBTQ2IA+ <sup>13</sup>

In March 2022, Whitehorse established a quality By-Name List. This is a single, shared list of all the people experiencing homelessness in the community. The goal of the By-Name List is to find the best match possible based on each person’s needs and available housing units. It is also a tool for understanding how many people are experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse in real-time and what the needs are for housing and health and social services. The number of people on the By-Name List experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse has increased to 234, up from 194 in May 2022.

### 2.13 The Rental Market

Extremely low vacancy rates and high costs continue to predominate the private rental housing market in communities across the Yukon. The Yukon Rent Survey released by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics showed that the vacancy rate for all of Yukon was 1.6% as of April 2022. There were no available rental units reported for Haines Junction while there were only two and four units available in Watson Lake and Dawson City respectively. Figure 1 below presents the vacancy rate by unit size and community as reported in the Yukon Rent Survey for the period ending April 2022.

Figure 1: Vacancy rates for the period ending April 2022, by unit size and community

	Yukon	Whitehorse	Dawson	Watson Lake	Haines Junction
<b>All</b>	1.6%	1.4%	5.6%	2.9%	0.0%
bachelor	1.1%	0.6%	14.3%	0.0%	...
1 bedroom	1.9%	1.4%	6.5%	7.7%	0.0%
2 bedrooms	1.8%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3-4 bedrooms	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
5+ bedrooms	0.0%	0.0%	...	...	0.0%

As vacancy rates continue to decrease, the median cost of rental housing across the territory increased by more than 22% between April 2019 and April 2022. Figure 2 below presents the median rental housing costs by unit size and community as reported in the Yukon Rent Survey for the period ending April 2022.

Figure 2: Median rental housing costs for the period ending April 2022, by unit size community

	Yukon	Whitehorse	Dawson	Watson Lake	Haines Junction
<b>All</b>	\$1,300	\$1,300	\$1,250	\$950	\$1,190
bachelor	\$1,000	\$1,035	\$1,000	x	...
1 bedroom	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,200	\$880	x
2 bedrooms	\$1,400	\$1,409	\$1,450	\$884	\$1,000
3-4 bedrooms	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$2,175	\$1,100	\$1,200
5+ bedrooms	\$3,000	\$3,200	...	...	x

## 2.14 Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit

The Government of Canada and the Yukon Government introduced the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit in December 2020, a direct to household benefit program which helps to subsidize rental market housing for low- and modest-income Yukoners. Under the program, eligible Yukoners can receive a monthly payment up to \$800 depending on household size and family size.<sup>14</sup> Figure 3 below provides an overview of the basic details of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit.

Figure 3: Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit Program Overview

Eligible Unit Size	Maximum Monthly Benefit	Maximum Annual Household Income Amount	
bachelor	\$200	\$51,480	<i>Note: The claw back rate for the program has not been disclosed publicly.</i>
1 bedroom	\$200	\$59,320	
2 bedrooms	\$400	\$68,720	
3 bedrooms	\$600	\$85,840	
4 bedrooms	\$600	\$87,040	
5 bedrooms	\$800	\$103,070	

The Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit is funded by an investment of \$18.2 million between 2020/21 and 2027/28 (\$9.1 million each from both the federal and territorial government). The program helped to partially offset the cost of rental housing for eligible low- and modest-income Yukoners. However, the amount of money allocated by the federal and territorial governments did not meet the enormous demand for financial assistance in response to increasing shelter costs. As such, the Yukon Housing Corporation reports that there is a wait list for this benefit. Timely access to much needed income supports is essential to ensuring that low- and modest-income Yukoners can maintain secure housing. Further, enhanced income supports, particularly for people who receive income assistance and are at greatest risk of experiencing homelessness, are needed to reduce poverty and to help address the housing crisis.

**Recommendation 1:** Reassess eligibility requirements of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit to ensure more people can access the Benefit, including people receiving income assistance. *Responsibility: Government of Canada, Government of Yukon.*

## 2.15 Safe At Home Urgent Calls to Action

Anecdotal evidence emerged of an increase in evictions without cause following the introduction of the cap on residential rent increases in May 2021. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition launched a petition in November 2021 calling on the Government of Yukon to introduce a moratorium on evictions without cause as a way to protect long-term tenants.<sup>15</sup> In August 2022, Safe at Home issued the following ten urgent calls to action to immediately address the housing crisis and homelessness in Whitehorse:

1. Prohibit no-cause evictions under the Yukon's *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*.
2. Expand rent supplement programs to include individuals and families receiving income support and housing benefits.
3. Create a matching program for post-secondary students and seniors who have extra space in their homes.
4. Create more frequent reports from the Yukon Housing Corporation outlining data related to unit vacancies and inflows and outflows from Yukon Housing units.
5. Mandate the creation of a landlord registry to increase transparency across the rental market.
6. Regulate short-term and vacation rentals across the City of Whitehorse.
7. Increase transparency related to the housing shortages for out-of-territory employee recruitment strategies.
8. Increase the financial resources and supports that people need to deal with bed bug infestations.
9. Establish and resource a Yukon Tenant's Association.
10. Ban evictions related to arrears and eliminate debt-free entry requirements into housing for individuals on income support or a fixed income.<sup>16</sup>

The Yukon is currently one of only two jurisdictions in Canada that allows evictions without cause. In all other jurisdictions, landlords must provide a sufficient reason for evicting a tenant. The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA) includes a commitment to amend the *Landlord and Tenant Act* to prohibit evictions without cause.<sup>17</sup>

These actions represent immediate actions that can be taken to help address the housing crisis while recognizing that construction of new housing supply takes time.

**Recommendation 2:** Quickly implement the negotiated actions of the 2023 CASA including prohibiting evictions without cause and reviewing and amending the *Landlord and Tenant Act* to help address the housing crisis. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, Government of Canada*

**Recommendation 3:** Examine and implement Safe At Home's 10 Calls to Action in collaboration with Community partners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, City of Whitehorse, community partners, FN's governments*



## 2.2 The Challenge of Food Insecurity

According to Health Canada, food insecurity exists within a household when one or more members do not have access to the variety or quantity of food they need due to a lack of money.<sup>18</sup> The experience of food insecurity can range from concerns about running out of food before there is more money to buy more, to the inability to afford a balanced diet, to going hungry, missing meals, and in extreme cases, not eating for whole days because of a lack of food and money for food.

Food insecurity is a serious public health problem in Canada because individuals' health and well-being are closely associated to their household food security status. Among children, exposure to severe food insecurity has been linked to poorer health status and the subsequent development of a variety of chronic health conditions, including asthma and depression.<sup>19,20</sup> Adults in food-insecure households are much more likely than food-secure adults to report having been diagnosed with a wide variety of chronic diseases, including mood and anxiety disorders, arthritis, asthma, back problems, and diabetes.<sup>21</sup>

Statistics Canada measures food insecurity through the Household Food Security Survey Module of the Canada Community Health Survey. This consists of 18 questions asking the respondent whether they or other household members experienced the conditions described, which range in severity from experiences of anxiety that food will run out before household members have money to buy more, to modifying the amount of food consumed, to experiencing hunger, and in the extreme, going a whole day without eating. Based on the number of positive responses to the questions posed, households are classified as either food secure or marginally, moderately, or severely food insecure.

According to Statistics Canada, 15.3% of Yukoners reported in 2019 that they had experienced either severe (5%) or moderate (10.3%) food insecurity in the previous 12 months. Data regarding the prevalence of marginal food insecurity was not reported as this information was considered to be too unreliable to publish.

This is an increase from the 12.2% of Yukoners that reported in 2018 that they had experienced either severe or moderate food insecurity in the previous 12 months. An additional 4% reported they had experienced marginal food insecurity.

Given the lack of data regarding the overall prevalence of food insecurity in Yukon it is difficult to make direct comparisons to other Canadian jurisdictions. It is noteworthy however that in 2019 Yukon had the third highest rate of severe food insecurity in Canada behind Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. This was considerably higher than the national average of 3.2%.<sup>22</sup>

Available data shows that food insecurity is highly prevalent among people who receive social assistance. Nationally, 63% of households reliant on social assistance experienced food insecurity in 2021.<sup>23</sup> According to PROOF, a research institute out of the University of Toronto, the persistently high prevalence of household food insecurity demonstrates the need for more effective, evidence-based policy response to ensure that people have sufficient incomes to meet their basic needs.<sup>24</sup>

Available evidence from Canada demonstrates that reforms to social assistance policy can reduce the prevalence of food insecurity. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the prevalence of food insecurity among households receiving social assistance decreased significantly following the introduction of policy reforms included in their poverty reduction strategy released in 2006. Key interventions contributing to the reduction of food insecurity among social assistance recipients included:

- Indexing income support rates to inflation
- Increasing earnings exemptions
- Increasing health benefits

- Increasing the low-income tax threshold
- Increasing access to social and affordable housing
- Increasing liquid asset limits as a prerequisite for social assistance eligibility <sup>25</sup>

In British Columbia, the rate of overall food insecurity, including both moderate and severe food insecurity, among people receiving social assistance decreased following a one-time increase in social assistance in 2006 even though overall food insecurity among the general population increased between 2005 and 2012. <sup>26</sup>

According to PROOF, “given the extreme vulnerability to food insecurity for people who receive social assistance and the evidence that policy interventions can reduce their likelihood of experiencing food insecurity, provincial and territorial governments need to reform current programs to ensure that recipients can meet their basic needs, tracking food insecurity rates to assess the success of program changes.” <sup>27</sup>

The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Yukon Liberal Caucus and the Yukon New Democratic Party Caucus includes a commitment to increase social assistance rates by \$100 per month in advance of a comprehensive review of social assistance rates. <sup>28</sup>

**Recommendation 4:** Conduct a review of the *Social Assistance Act* to ensure that social assistance rates are set at a sufficient level so that recipients can meet their basic needs and to remove policy barriers that prevent recipients from accessing additional income supports intended for low- and modest-income Yukoners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

## 2.3 Living Wage Campaign

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition calculates the living wage for Whitehorse each year to maintain a current and accurate measurement of the cost of living in the community. Living wage calculations are an effective way to measure this in a way that directly integrates the role of public policy, including the provision of social services and the tax-and-transfer system. This calculation facilitates the identification and quantification of affordability challenges facing low- and modest-income households, as well as opportunities for policy changes to improve affordability and to reduce poverty. Calculating the living wage on an annual basis enables an assessment of the effect of policy changes on the ability of low- and modest-income families to meet their basic needs.

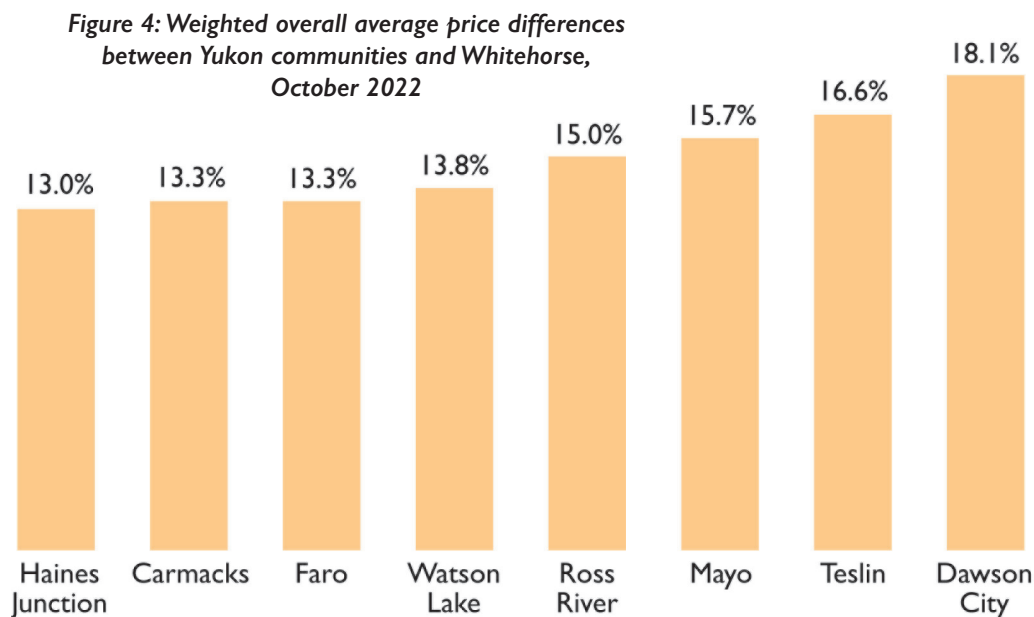
The Whitehorse living wage equaled \$18.28 per hour in 2022, a decrease of \$2.67 per hour from 2021. The decrease can largely be attributed to the significant reduction in child care expenses incurred by the reference family following the introduction of the Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Funding Program, which provides a subsidy of up to \$700 per month per child for licensed early learning and child care. The universal low-fee childcare program has substantially benefitted working families in Yukon who access this service.

The living wage is \$2.58 per hour more than the current minimum wage. As with previous years, housing affordability remains a significant concern for low- and modest-income households living in Whitehorse and is the single largest expense incurred by the reference family with food representing the second largest household expense.<sup>29</sup> The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition supports a comprehensive approach to eliminating the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage. This includes public

investments to help decrease the cost of housing, child care, and public transportation as well as policies to increase household incomes, including transfers to low- and modest-income Yukoners.

Available data such as the Food Cost Monitoring Study conducted by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in 2017 and the Community Spatial Index produced by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics suggest that the cost of most goods and services are higher in Yukon communities compared to Whitehorse. The Food Cost Monitoring Study found that the cost of a nutritious diet in every Yukon community was at least 10% higher than in Whitehorse.<sup>30</sup> For example, the average weekly cost of a basic, nutritious diet in Yukon communities (family of four) in 2017 ranged from \$274.78 in Whitehorse to \$500.24 in Old Crow.

The Community Spatial Index measures the relative cost of various goods in communities across the territory compared to Whitehorse. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics reported that the cost of goods and services were at least 13% higher in every community compared to Whitehorse in October 2022.<sup>31</sup> Figure 4 below presents the figures from the Community Spatial Index for October 2022.



The challenge of greater unaffordability in Yukon communities compared to Whitehorse is exacerbated by the fact that most government transfers to individuals, including all federal transfers, do not provide an enhanced benefit to individuals living in remote communities with higher costs. The Yukon Carbon Price Rebate and the Yukon Rent Supplement Enhancement are two examples of territorial transfers to individuals that provide a differentiated benefit to eligible recipients who live in Yukon communities other than Whitehorse. The higher cost of most goods and services and the relative lack of an equitable approach to income supports means that the living wage in other Yukon communities is likely to be substantially higher than it is in Whitehorse.

### 3.0 Report Card: How well were the 2020 Recommendations Implemented?

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This section provides an update on the implementation status of each recommendation listed in the previous Yukon Poverty Report Card and assigns a grade to each level of government responsible for implementation based on trends for relevant key indicators and an assessment of government action to date.

**I:** Implement a freeze on residential rent increases for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and limit future increases based on the Consumer Price Index for Whitehorse. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Status Update:** In accordance with the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Yukon Liberal Caucus and the Yukon New Democratic Party Caucus, the Government of Yukon enacted the Regulation to Amend the Residential Tenancies Regulation under the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, which introduced a cap on residential rent increases effective May 15, 2021. Under the regulation, residential rental rates for long-term tenants cannot increase greater than the rate of inflation for the previous calendar year.<sup>32</sup> The maximum allowable residential rent increase equalled 1% for 2021 and 3.3% for 2022.<sup>33</sup>

The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement maintains the cap on residential rent increases until 2025 and ensures that residential rents for long-term tenants cannot increase greater than the rate of inflation for the previous calendar year up to a maximum of 5%. The revised policy also allows landlords to increase rents in future years by 2% if inflation happens to fall below 2% annually.<sup>34</sup>

**Indicator:** Maximum Allowable Residential Rent Increase

2021: 1%

2022: 3.3%

2023 and beyond: minimum of 2%, maximum of 5%

**Assessment:** The Government of Yukon did not adopt the recommendation to implement a freeze on residential rental rates for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic to help ensure renters, particularly those who may be at risk of homelessness, have access to secure and affordable housing. The introduction of a cap on residential rent increases through the Regulation to Amend the Residential Tenancies Regulation did support long-term tenants by providing greater certainty regarding housing costs for 2021 and 2022. However, a household renting a 3-4 bedroom unit at the median rental rate for Yukon when the regulation was introduced would have been subjected to possible increases totalling up to nearly \$75 per month by May 2022.

Many renters continue to experience significant affordability challenges due to the ongoing housing crisis and global inflationary pressures. The commitment to revise the cap on residential rent increases provides long-term tenants with some protection from inflationary pressures as landlords will not be able to increase rents by more than the rate of inflation for the previous calendar year up to a maximum of 5%. However, the maximum allowable increase of 5% still represents a significant burden for many long-term tenants. Further, increasing shelter costs are a primary driver of overall inflation and the 5% maximum increase is well above the Bank of Canada's inflation target of 2%.

Anecdotal evidence emerged of an increase in evictions without cause following the introduction of the cap on residential rent increases. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition launched a petition in November 2021 calling on the Government of Yukon to introduce a moratorium on evictions without cause as a way to protect long-term tenants.<sup>35</sup> In August 2022, Safe at Home issued ten urgent calls to action to address homelessness in Whitehorse including the introduction of a prohibition of no-cause evictions under Residential Landlord and Tenant Act.<sup>36</sup> The Yukon is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada that allows evictions without cause. In all other jurisdictions, landlords must provide a sufficient reason for evicting a tenant. The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement includes a commitment to amend the *Landlord and Tenant Act* to prohibit evictions without cause.<sup>37</sup>

**Grade:** C+

**Rationale:** The Government of Yukon introduced a cap on annual residential rent increases based on the rate of inflation in lieu of a freeze on rental rates for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic as recommended by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. The introduction of a cap on annual residential rental increases did help to protect many tenants from excessive price increases, but likely exacerbated the issue of evictions without cause. Significant action is required to protect long-term tenants from excessive residential rent increases in 2023 and beyond as well as from evictions without cause.

**2:** Substantially increase investments in social and affordable housing to eliminate wait lists for seniors and social housing and to ensure that no Yukoner experiences homelessness. *Responsibility: All levels of government.*

**Background:** The Auditor General of Canada released the findings of its audit on Yukon Housing and Health and Social Services in May 2022. The audit focused on whether the Yukon Housing Corporation provided Yukoners who have the greatest housing needs with adequate, affordable, and suitable housing. Specifically, the audit looked at how social housing units were allocated, whether they were suitable, and whether the units were being maintained adequately. The Auditor General of Canada also examined whether the Department of Health and Social Services supported vulnerable Yukoners who were experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness by facilitating access to housing to meet their needs. The Auditor General of Canada concluded that the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services did not provide Yukoners with the greatest housing needs, including people experiencing homelessness, with adequate and affordable housing.

The Auditor General of Canada recommended the following actions to better support Yukoners who have the most significant housing needs:

1. The Yukon Housing Corporation should conduct a review of rent assessment for those on social assistance, housing eligibility requirements, and its prioritization system to ensure that there is access for those in most need of housing and benefits.
2. The Yukon Housing Corporation should update its needs analysis across its housing portfolio to identify gaps compared to existing supply and funding levels and take specific actions. This should include realigning the housing stock to meet identified needs, calculating a five-year deficit for capital and maintenance, and aligning its capital asset and maintenance plans to address gaps and carry out these actions over a planned time frame.
3. The Yukon Housing Corporation should ensure that it has appropriate systems and practices in place to identify, document, and complete major and emergency repairs in a timely manner and increase accessibility and energy efficiency of their housing stock.
4. The Department of Health and Social Services should, in consultation with housing partners, undertake regular and comprehensive needs analysis, including a review of the use of hotels as temporary accommodation, and take appropriate action to meet client needs.
5. The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that agreements with third-party providers are comprehensive and are monitored for key deliverables.
6. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that there is governance and oversight in place by effectively working together and with other housing partners to demonstrate meaningful progress, resolve problems, and achieve results.
7. The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services should work together with housing partners to identify gaps and improve information systems to provide relevant, accurate, and timely information to support decision making and to report on the planning, delivery, and results related to housing in the Yukon.
8. The Yukon Housing Corporation should establish appropriate performance indicators—including short-term and long-term targets and outcome measures at the program level—as well as develop and implement a program evaluation framework to assess achievement of desired results.
9. The Department of Health and Social Services should establish appropriate performance indicators—including short-term and long-term targets and outcome measures at the funding agreement and program level—as well as conduct regular program and housing provider evaluations to assess and report on achievement of desired results.<sup>38</sup>

**Status Update:** In response to the Auditor General of Canada report on Yukon Housing Corporation, the Government of Yukon released a work plan in December 2022 addressing each of the recommendations in the report. The work plan outlines 36 response actions and timelines for implementation. Priority policy areas identified are:

- Amending the prioritization system and eligibility requirements in the Community Housing Operational Policies
- Conducting an in-depth analysis of eligibility and subsequent waitlist to better understand demand for the Yukon Housing Corporation's rent-gear-to income program
- Identify key indicators and complete an evaluation for the Community Housing Framework that takes into account data derived from housing partners from across the housing continuum.<sup>39</sup>

**Indicator 1: Seniors and Social Housing Wait List:**

October 2020: 316  
July 2021: 365  
April 2022: 493  
January 2023: 276\*

**Indicator 2: Number of people on the By-Name List experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse**

May 2022: 194  
August 2022: 206  
January 2023: 234

Post pandemic, the Yukon Housing Corporation has reinstated the requirement that applicants for seniors and social housing submit a notice of assessment annually from the Canada Revenue Agency to secure a place on the wait list. As a result, the Yukon Housing Corporation removed 208 households from the waiting list, of which only 2 have since submitted a notice assessment as of February 1, 2023.<sup>40</sup>

The Yukon Housing Corporation's Tenant Allocation Policy aims to allocate 20% of community housing units in Whitehorse to people from the By-Name List and experiencing homelessness. The policy requires that community housing applicants from the By-Name List submit a support plan as part of their application. Applicants from the By-Name List who are experiencing homelessness and do not submit a support plan are not considered under a priority stream for community housing.<sup>41</sup>

**Assessment:** The continued growth of the seniors and social housing wait list as well as the increase in the number of people on the By-Name List are both indicative of a growing and deepening housing crisis. The Auditor General of Canada noted that the waiting list for eligible social housing applicants grew significantly and much more rapidly than the population did between 2015 and 2021 while the average time that an applicant spent on the waiting list climbed from 1.1 years in 2014 to 1.4 years as of October 2021.<sup>42</sup>

\* The reduction in the wait list for seniors and social housing (see above) was largely driven by the Yukon Housing Corporation reinstating the requirement that applicants submit a notice of assessment annually to secure a place on the wait list. As such, the reduction in the wait list is more indicative of an unmet need for assistance with tax filling rather than a reduced need for seniors and social housing.

The requirement under the Tenant Allocation Policy that community housing applicants from the By-Name List submit a support plan as part of their application creates a significant barrier for people experiencing homelessness to secure community housing and does not align with the principles of housing first. A housing first approach recognizes the stabilizing effect of securing access to stable housing for people experiencing homelessness that supports people to access health and social services for treatment of any concurrent issues. An equitable approach to tenant allocation would recognize the adverse health and wellness outcomes associated with homelessness and prioritize available units to those on the By-Name List who are most in need without preconditions.

In addition to the systems improvements recommended by the Auditor General of Canada and the response actions initiated by the Government of Yukon under its work plan, there remains a substantial need for greater investments in social and affordable housing to ensure that all Yukoners can access adequate, affordable, and suitable housing.

**Grade: F**

**Rationale:** The housing crisis in the Yukon continues to worsen as exemplified by the sustained increase in the seniors and social housing wait list and the number of people on the By-Name List experiencing homelessness. Substantial investments in social and affordable housing are required to address the housing crisis.

**3:** Implement recommendations from the *Putting People First* report including those intended to close the gaps for lower-income Yukoners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Background:** In November 2018, the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services appointed an independent committee tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of health and social programs and services in the Yukon. As part of the review, the Committee engaged with Yukoners to better understand the challenges that people face when interacting with various health and social services and the gaps that exist across the continuum of services. In its report, *Putting People First: The final report on the comprehensive review of the Yukon's health and social programs and services*, the Committee stated that:

“While we found that some parts of the system are working well in Yukon, other parts are not. More importantly, there is a lack of coordination across the system. This makes it hard to deliver services in a person-centered, holistic, preventative, safe and respectful way. To fix this, we believe that major, system-level changes need to be made.”

The Committee produced a series of 76 recommendations with the intent to foster a health and social service system that is person-centered, holistic, focused on prevention, relationship-based, safe and respectful. Recommendations intended to close the gaps for lower-income Yukoners included:

- Bring together all social assistance delivery agents to create a common vision for social assistance, leading to the design and delivery of more equitable, effective, easy-to-navigate and person-centered income support programming.
- Develop a referral policy and procedure to employment and training services for all individuals on social assistance to determine work readiness and/or vocational planning. Ensure the current employment and training services are meeting the needs of clients. Retooling these services should also lead to improved outcomes in social assistance duration, workforce attachment, and reducing the overall impacts of poverty.
- Develop a referral policy and procedure for community health services for individuals with medical barriers to work if they are not currently receiving medical treatment.
- Create a framework and provide support for data management and analysis for social supports programs. This work should be completed with associated timelines attached to ensure relevant data is reviewed and reported upon regularly.
- Conduct a program evaluation of social supports to determine if current practices and policies are achieving program objectives and are cost-effective, and what are the most influential factors in entering, staying on, and leaving social assistance in the Yukon.
- Provide funding to NGOs to formally implement free tax clinics for low-income Yukoners to maximize benefits tied to income tax filing. There should also be a coordinated effort to: recruit and train volunteers; offer this service physically and/or virtually in all communities; and advertise these clinics widely so social workers and other health care workers can make referrals.
- Design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot, in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and potential funding partners such as the federal government, health and social research programs and others.



- Create an income-tested, payer-of-last-resort public plan for extended benefits.
- Work with First Nations governments and the Government of Canada to determine how to coordinate the delivery of non-insured health benefits to all Yukoners and ensure consistency in benefits and efficient delivery.
- Create a separate, stand-alone disability benefit for those with permanent disabilities. Leave the Yukon Social Assistance top-up in place for individuals with short-term disabilities, who generally have higher expenses than the average social assistance recipient.
- Increase the disability top-up amount to \$325, to reflect inflation since 2005, and index disability income to inflation going forward.
- Combine Adult Disability Services and Child Disability Services into one needs-based program and develop a new eligibility and assessment framework for services based on the needs of adults and children with disabilities.
- Expand the mandate of adult programming to cover a broader range of disabilities and create new services, as appropriate, to meet the needs of this expanded adult service population.
- Provide self- or family-managed care funding to enable adult Yukoners with disabilities to live at home for longer.
- Align Government of Yukon housing initiatives under one provider, including management of non-governmental organization services for Yukoners requiring housing supports.<sup>43</sup>
- Implement a By-Name List to improve coordination among service providers and reduce homelessness in the territory.
- Work with partners to increase investment in infrastructure and programming for community food hubs in all Yukon communities.

**Status Update:** The Government of Yukon released a progress report in November 2022 that provided an update on the implementation status of each of the 76 recommendations listed in the *Putting People First* report. Recommendations implemented as of that date include:

- Implementing a universal low-fee early childcare program.
- Supporting community partners in the establishment of a By-Name List of people experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse to improve access to housing coordination.
- Doubling the medical travel benefit for Yukoners as part of enhancements to the medical travel program.
- Reducing pharmacy markups and fees to a level close to the national average.

However, despite these achievements, no action has been taken to date to begin implementation of 23 recommendations including:

- Create a framework and provide support for data management and analysis for social supports programs.
- Conduct a program evaluation of social supports, to determine if current practices and policies are achieving program objectives and are cost-effective, and what the most influential factors in entering, staying on, and leaving social assistance are in the Yukon.
- Design and implement a guaranteed annual income pilot, in collaboration with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and potential funding partners such as the federal government, health and social research programs, and others.

- Create a separate, stand-alone disability benefit for those with permanent disabilities. Leave the Yukon Social Assistance top-up in place for individuals with short-term disabilities, who generally have higher expenses than the average social assistance recipient.
- Increase the disability top-up amount to \$325, to reflect inflation since 2005, and index disability income to inflation going forward.
- Align Government of Yukon housing initiatives under one provider, including management of non-governmental organization services for Yukoners requiring housing supports.

**Indicators:** There were 76 recommendations in the *Putting People First* report.

Number of recommendations implemented as of November 2022: 14

Number of recommendations not yet started as of November 2022: 23

**Assessment:** The Government of Yukon has made progress on many of the recommendations provided in the *Putting People First* report including implementing a universal low-fee early child care program that has helped support the health and wellness of many Yukoners. Given the transformative nature and the necessary involvement of different partners from a range of sectors, fully implementing all the recommendations will take considerable time to achieve.

Despite significant efforts to achieve progress on many of the recommendations, no action has been taken to initiate implementation of 23 of the recommendations. The lack of action to support low-income Yukoners living with disabilities is especially concerning. In particular, implementation of the recommendation to increase the disability top-up amount can be achieved quickly with limited administrative burden.

**Grade:** Incomplete

**Rationale:** The Government of Yukon has demonstrated a commitment to implementing many of the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report. However, there has been a considerable lack of action on the recommendations intended to close the gaps for lower-income Yukoners. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition would like to see the Government of Yukon take immediate action to implement these recommendations, particularly those intended to support people living with disabilities.

**4:** Build upon work completed by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to develop a made-in-Yukon basic income program. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, Government of Canada.*

**Status Update:** Following the release of the *Putting People First* report, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition developed a detailed values statement and policy brief to help support preliminary efforts to create a basic income program that meets the needs of Yukoners. The Government of Yukon has not taken any action to date to build upon this work.<sup>44</sup> The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition has offered their support to the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada to ensure community discussions and knowledge are undertaken leading to the creation of a robust basic income program.

**Indicator:** There is no basic income program in Yukon.

**Assessment:** The lack of action from the Government of Yukon in response to this recommendation is concerning given the potential impact of implementing a basic income program to help facilitate the elimination of poverty in the territory. At minimum, the Government of Yukon should adopt a motion in the Legislative Assembly calling on the Government of Canada to support the creation of a basic income program in Yukon.

**Grade:** F

**Rationale:** The Government of Yukon has not taken any action to initiate implementation of this recommendation.

**5:** Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15.12 per hour with future annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index for Whitehorse in accordance with the schedule proposed by the Yukon Employment Standards Board. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Background:** The Government of Yukon tasked the Yukon Employment Standards Board with conducting a review of Yukon’s minimum wage in February 2018. After reviewing the evidence and engaging with local stakeholders, including the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Employment Standards Board recommended a phased approach to increasing the minimum wage over three years that would have resulted in an increase to approximately \$13.80 per hour on April 1, 2020 and to \$15.12 per hour on April 1, 2021 depending on inflation. The Yukon Employment Standards Board concluded that the proposed increases “will benefit the Yukon by reducing the inequality gap as recognized by the living wage, improving the local economy by increasing consumer spending power, and allowing employers to attract and retain employees more easily.”<sup>45</sup> The Government of Yukon rejected the proposed schedule and opted to limit the increase to \$13.71 per hour for 2020 and \$13.85 per hour for 2021.

**Status Update:** In accordance with the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Yukon Liberal Caucus and the Yukon New Democratic Party Caucus, the Government of Yukon increased the minimum wage to \$15.20 per hour effective August 1, 2021 with annual increases indexed to the rate of inflation.<sup>46</sup>

**Indicator: Minimum Wage Rate**

April 1, 2020: \$13.71  
April 1, 2021: \$13.85  
August 1, 2021: \$15.20  
April 1, 2022: \$15.70

**Assessment:** The minimum wage increase implemented on August 1, 2021 aligned the minimum wage with the schedule recommended by the Yukon Employment Standards Board. Minimum wage earners benefitted substantially from this action. Despite the increase, a sizable gap between the minimum wage and the living wage still persists. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition supports a comprehensive approach to eliminating the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage. This includes public investments to help decrease the cost of housing, child care, and public transportation as well as policies to increase household incomes including transfers to low- and modest-income Yukoners.

**Grade: A**

**Rationale:** Despite initially rejecting the schedule to increase the minimum wage recommended by the Yukon Employment Standards Board, the Government of Yukon eventually increased the minimum wage on August 1, 2021 to align with the recommendation.

**6:** Create and implement a new Yukon Poverty Reduction Strategy and include legislated targets and timelines for poverty reduction. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Background:** The Yukon Government released a Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2012 to help guide social policy development and ensure that policies, programs, and services reflect social inclusion and poverty reduction goals. The strategy consisted of three primary goals: 1) improving access to services; 2) reducing inequities; 3) strengthening community vitality.<sup>47</sup> Although the strategy included a series of social inclusion indicators (e.g., distribution of income, high school completion, labour force participation, and access to affordable housing and health services), it did not include a formal definition of poverty or any measurable targets.

**Status Update:** The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy has not been implemented. The Government of Yukon has not committed to a formal definition of poverty or established targets for poverty reduction. *Putting People First* identifies and addresses some solutions, but does not include targets, timelines nor is it comprehensive in relation to poverty reduction.

**Indicator:** The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy has not been implemented.

**Assessment:** A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that includes a formal definition of poverty, an official performance measure or indicator, and legislated targets for poverty reduction is needed to guide efforts by the Government of Yukon to effectively reduce the depth and breadth of poverty experienced by Yukoners. A comprehensive strategy should prioritize actions that improve access to quality health and social supports and services, increases household incomes, and improves affordability by reducing the cost of basic needs such as housing.

**Grade:** F

**Rationale:** A new and comprehensive strategy is needed to guide efforts to reduce poverty in the territory. The new strategy needs to include: legislated targets for poverty reduction; actions that improve access to quality health and social supports including those recommended in the *Putting People First* report; actions that increase household incomes such as increasing social assistance rates; enhancing income supports for people living with disabilities; implementing a guaranteed income program; and actions that reduce the cost of basic needs including housing.

**7:** Move forward with the creation of a territory-wide universal low-fee childcare program. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Status Update:** The Government of Yukon implemented a universal low-fee childcare program effective April 1, 2021. Under the program, the Government of Yukon provides licensed early learning and childcare operators who choose to opt in to the funding programs with \$700 for each child in full-time care to reduce monthly payments for parents. Parents of children in part-time programs receive a pro-rated reduction.<sup>48</sup> The introduction of this universal childcare program reduced the cost of child care services for families by roughly \$32 per day for each child receiving full-time care.

**Indicator:** The Yukon now has a universal low-fee childcare system.

**Assessment:** The Government of Yukon has successfully implemented a universal low-fee childcare system that dramatically reduced the cost of child care services for Yukon families. Additional efforts are required to bolster the capacity of the system to ensure that there are sufficient spaces to accommodate demand. Specifically, sustained efforts to train new and existing care providers as well as wage enhancements are required to ensure there are enough care providers in the territory.

**Grade: A+**

**Rationale:** The Government of Yukon quickly and successfully implemented a universal low-fee childcare system that has supported working families across the territory.

**8:** Build on the Whitehorse Transit Master Plan with investments to improve the quality and accessibility of affordable transportation options including walking, cycling, and public transit. *Responsibility: City of Whitehorse.*

**Status Update:** The City of Whitehorse released its Transit Master Plan in 2018 that outlines a long-term vision and strategy for transportation decision-making and investment over the next 20 years. The plan includes a series of recommendations intended to meet demand, maintain the strengths of the existing system, and rectify its shortfalls in operations and customer experience. The plan highlights the need for substantial investments to promote a multi-modal transportation system that provides users with convenient and low-cost alternatives to private vehicle ownership.<sup>49</sup>

In 2020, the City of Whitehorse began the process of updating its Transportation Master Plan, which will set the direction for the transportation system going forward. The City of Whitehorse released a report in October 2022 summarizing the findings from engagement sessions intended to solicit feedback about experiences and desires for the Whitehorse transportation network from relevant stakeholders, interested parties, and the community for the purposes of guiding the development of a revised Transportation Master Plan. Key priorities highlighted through engagement sessions include:

- Increasing transportation options for all ages, abilities, incomes, and seasons
- Improve traffic safety
- Focus on core transportation services
- Complete streets
- Climate action and sustainability<sup>50</sup>

The City of Whitehorse introduced public transit service on Sundays and statutory holidays effective March 13, 2022 as part of ongoing efforts to improve transit services throughout the community.<sup>51</sup> The City of Whitehorse also adopted the Modernized Transit Route Plan in December 2022 that aims to add two new bus routes and increase transit service hours by approximately 35% over the next three years.<sup>52</sup>

**Assessment:** Significant investments in infrastructure and service enhancements are required to develop a multi-modal transportation that provides residents with improved access to quality low-cost alternatives to private vehicle ownership. The key priorities highlighted in the Transit Master Plan and the feedback obtained through the Transportation Master Plan public engagement sessions provide a good foundation to build a multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of all Whitehorse residents.

Additional action is required to ensure that all Yukoners have equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable public transportation regardless of where they live. Yukoners living in rural communities typically commute long distances at significant expense to obtain goods and to access health and social services not available in their home community.

**Grade: B-**

**Rationale:** The City of Whitehorse continues to improve access to public transit services in the community but more work is needed.

**9:** Offer subsidized public transit passes to low- and modest-income households to help reduce their transportation costs and promote greater social inclusion. *Responsibility: City of Whitehorse.*

**Status Update:** The City of Whitehorse does not currently offer subsidized public transit passes to low- and modest-income households. The cost of a monthly transit pass for one adult has remained unchanged for over six years, however, at \$62 per month, this still represents a significant financial barrier for many low- and modest-income households.

The City of Whitehorse suspended public transit fares between May 18 and June 30, 2022 following the closure of Robert Service Way due to a landslide. The aim of suspending public transit fares was to support ridership and to reduce traffic.<sup>53</sup> The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Yukon Liberal Caucus and the Yukon New Democratic Party Caucus includes a commitment to provide funding to the City of Whitehorse to replace fare generated revenue and make public transit free in Whitehorse.<sup>54</sup>

**Indicators:** There are no subsidized public transit passes available to low- and modest-income households. The cost of a monthly transit pass for one adult was \$62 in December 2016 and that is what it cost in January 2023.

**Assessment:** The City of Whitehorse does not currently offer subsidized public transit passes to low- and modest-income households. Eliminating public transit fares will improve affordability for people who use public transit while promoting greater social inclusion for low- and modest-income households. Although the price of a monthly transit pass has not increased in over six years, the current cost does represent a significant expense for low- and modest-income households in Whitehorse while serving as a barrier to social inclusion.

**Grade: Incomplete**

**Rationale:** No action has been taken to date to reduce the cost of public transit for low- and modest-income households in Whitehorse. Future implementation of the commitment made in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement to eliminate transit fares would result in the Government of Yukon and the City of Whitehorse being awarded an “A” for this recommendation.



**10:** Implement the recommendations from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate's 2020 annual report. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon.*

**Background:** Established in 2010, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office (YCAO) advocates for children's voices to be heard, loudly and intentionally, throughout the Yukon. The YCAO helps children and youth effectively access government services and have their views heard and rights considered in the decision-making of government service providers. The YCAO also identifies systematic or policy related-issues, and provides public information about the role of the Advocate and children's rights. In their 2020 Annual Report, the Child and Youth Advocate flagged the growing number of individual advocacy issues and the disproportionate impact on Indigenous children and youth.

The report contained three main recommendations:

- Update the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* to include a mandate to review critical incidents and deaths of children
- Apply a child rights impact assessment as part of the development and design of all relevant programs and policies
- Build meaningful partnerships with Yukon First Nations that support cultural connections, strengthening relationships, and building resiliency for children and youth <sup>55</sup>

**Status Update:** *The Child and Youth Advocate Act* is now seven years overdue for a review. <sup>56</sup>

Because it has now been three years since the YCAO made its recommendations<sup>57</sup>, issues and areas of concern have shifted. The YCAO has now created a youth working group to produce a youth-friendly version of the existing legislation, plan community stakeholder engagement, and provide input into legislative amendments. An updated proposal will be submitted in the fall of 2023.

**Indicator:** One of the main priorities of the proposal was to have investigative powers included in the Act to review critical incidents and death of children. Because the Act has not been reviewed, this has not been done.

In addition, there have been significant delays in YG's commitment to having a Child Rights Impact Assessment applied to relevant programs and policies. For example, none of the assessment recommendations made by the YCAO's office were accepted when the bill to update the Child and Family Services Act was passed in March 2022.

**Assessment:** Given that the *Child and Youth Advocacy Act* has still not been reviewed, and no Child Rights Impact Assessments have been put in place by YG, there is strong indication these are not areas of priority for the territorial government.

**Grade:** C-

**Rationale:** Governments are obligated to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Article 3: Right to adherence to the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children). The Yukon Government has yet to show a commitment to prioritize this in their policies.<sup>58</sup>

## 4.0 Moving forward: 2023 Yukon Poverty Reduction Recommendations

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Progress since the last Poverty Report was released in March 2021 has been mixed. Some recommendations have been followed, others are works in progress and some have not been remotely attempted. The following 17 recommendations reflect areas of priority moving forward that will meaningfully address the reduction of poverty in the Yukon. (*The four new recommendations mentioned in the front half of this report are included in this list.*)

1. Limit future annual residential rental increases for 2023 and beyond to the lower amount of the rate of inflation for the previous year or 2%. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
2. Quickly implement the negotiated actions of the 2023 CASA including prohibiting evictions without cause, and reviewing/amending the *Landlord and Tenant Act* to help address the housing crisis. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, Government of Canada*
3. Substantially increase investments in social and affordable housing to eliminate wait lists for seniors and social housing and to ensure that no Yukoner experiences homelessness. *Responsibility: All levels of government*
4. Amend the Tenant Allocation Policy to ensure that community housing units are allocated equitably by increasing the percentage of units designated for people experiencing homelessness and by removing the requirement that those on the By-Name List submit a support plan as part of their application for community housing. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
5. Reassess eligibility requirements of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit to ensure more people can access the Benefit, including people receiving income assistance. *Responsibility: Government of Canada, Government of Yukon*
6. Examine and implement Safe At Home's 10 Calls to Action in collaboration with community partners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, City of Whitehorse, community partners, FN's governments*
7. Expedite implementation of the Housing Work Plan based on the nine recommendations made by the Auditor General of Canada in their report on housing in the Yukon. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon in partnership with Yukon First Nations, non-governmental organizations, and other housing partners*
8. Implement the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, including those intended to close the gaps for lower-income Yukoners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
9. Build upon work completed by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to develop a made-in-Yukon basic income program. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon, Government of Canada*
10. Amend the *Employment Standards Act* to authorize the Yukon Employment Standards Board to conduct a review of the Yukon's minimum wage policy every three years to ensure that the minimum wage rate reflects the needs of Yukoners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
12. Create a new poverty reduction strategy for the Yukon that includes legislated targets for poverty reduction. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
13. Conduct a review of the Social Assistance Act to ensure that social assistance rates are set at a sufficient level so that recipients can meet their basic needs. Remove policy barriers that prevent recipients from accessing additional income supports intended for low- and modest-income Yukoners. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
14. Build on the Whitehorse Transit Master Plan with investments to improve the quality and accessibility of affordable transportation options. *Responsibility: City of Whitehorse*

15. Eliminate all fares on public transit in Whitehorse. *Responsibility: City of Whitehorse in partnership with the Government of Yukon*
16. Explore opportunities to increase access to public transportation in rural communities across the territory. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*
17. Implement the recommendations from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate's 2020 annual report. *Responsibility: Government of Yukon*

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