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Ribbon cut on new WGH emergency department, public open houses begin this week

Whitehorse - The countdown is on to next month's official opening of Whitehorse General Hospital's new emergency department and intensive care unit, as the ceremonial ribbon was cut today on the modern, two-storey hospital wing and public open houses are held later this week.

Yukon's Health & Social Services Minister, Pauline Frost, and Yukon Hospital Corporation's Board of Trustees Chair, Brian Gillen, were in attendance as hospital staff cut the ribbon on a facility designed to improve emergency care through enhanced patient safety, security and comfort as well as an overall modern work environment for hospital and medical staff. Ann Smith of Kwanlin Dün First Nation performed a traditional blessing.

The new emergency department will welcome its first patients on January 9, 2018. However, Yukoners will have an opportunity to see the new facility beforehand during two public open houses set for December 15 (1:30 - 3:30 p.m.) and December 16 (11 a.m. – 3 p.m.). Staff will be on-hand to show people around.

"The Government of Yukon is pleased to support this investment in advancing quality hospital services to benefit our residents across the territory," said Minister Frost. "Our hospitals and health facilities are among the best in the country. We would like to congratulate the hospital corporation's entire team, the builder, and all Yukon trades and businesses for helping to ensure this building supports our health and well-being for years to come."

YHC Chair, Brian Gillen, added that new facility is an incredible step forward in hospital care, giving Yukoners more direct access in emergencies and ensuring care is provided in modern treatment areas with advanced technologies and equipment. "Every part of this new emergency department was specially designed to increase the quality of care and patient comfort. We've also improved sightlines between patients and providers, ensured optimal infection control practices and enhanced privacy during treatment," he said. "Our team has been working hard over the last several months to get ready for opening day."

Yukoners coming to WGH's emergency department next month will notice a few changes in their experience.

"We want to ensure our patients and partners know how they will access emergency care, starting January 9," said Jason Bilsky, Yukon Hospitals' CEO. "You will arrive at the hospital and use the new emergency department's main door as it will become the hospital's new 24/7 entrance. First, you will speak with triage personnel who will ask you a few questions about your health for initial assessment. You will register by confirming your information, and then enter the treatment area based on priority and your specific needs. We will also be using a new electronic system to track your location and status in the emergency department."

The hospital's soon-to-be old main entrance will only be open during daytime hours (6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday), giving patients and visitors access for scheduled appointments and services such as diagnostic imaging services (X-ray, CT, MRI, ultrasound and mammography), lab tests, specialist clinic visits, First Nations Health Programs and cancer care treatments.

Bilsky noted the entire team is excited to show off the new facility. "I would like to thank everyone on our team and in the community for the skill and effort they have put into this new building – it is something that all Yukoners can be immensely proud of."

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For more information about the new emergency department, please visit yukonhospitals.ca/WGHExpansion