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2005 YUKON ADDICTIONS SURVEY SHOWS CHANGES IN CONSUMPTION

WHITEHORSE – The *2005 Yukon Addictions Survey*, released today at the Yukon Summit on Substance Abuse, shows some significant improvements in the 15 years since the *1990 Yukon Addictions Survey*.

“I think that many people will be surprised by the survey results,” Health and Social Services Minister Peter Jenkins said. “But when you put the Yukon results in the context of the national survey, we are not that different and the problems we are facing here in the North are really no different than the problems faced in the South.”

According to the recent survey, Yukon residents consume similar amounts of alcohol and drugs as other Canadians, with a few exceptions.

While 79 per cent of Yukoners reported using alcohol in the past 12 months, the same rate as Canada, the majority of those reported light alcohol use. The number of light drinkers has increased since 1990. Heavy frequent alcohol use is also down since 1990, to 10 per cent from 14 per cent.

The report also shows that 21 per cent of Yukon residents over the age of 15 years reported using cannabis in the past 12 months, compared to 14 per cent of Canadians. Otherwise for the most part the report shows usage differences between Yukon and the rest of Canada “are minor”.

The minister said that while he recognizes Yukon does have some serious issues with the abuse of alcohol and drugs, he is buoyed by the reductions in the number of heavy drinkers and the statistics that show Yukoners are not using heavy drugs in the quantities that some people believe.

“Again, we are not that different from other Canadian jurisdictions. Cocaine use is at three per cent; hallucinogenic drugs and ecstasy are at one per cent. I think most Yukoners would have put that number much higher, given the attention drug use receives in the city.”

Jenkins did point out that these numbers reflected the general population responses. Unlike the Canadian Addictions Survey, the Yukon Bureau of Statistics specifically sought out and surveyed individuals in the high-risk population.

“We know that we have a real problem in a certain segment of our population but we wanted to know how big a problem that was. A unique part of the Yukon survey was that the Stats Bureau actively sought out those considered to be part of the at-risk population. No other jurisdiction took the time to do this,” Jenkins said.

He also said that the perception of drug use in the Yukon may be a result of proximity to the problem.

“Unlike people in large southern centres, we can’t avoid seeing evidence of alcohol and drug problems as we go about our daily lives. On any given day, walking to the grocery store, the video store or just out along the trails, we come face to face with the facts and faces of alcohol and drug abuse within our community. We can’t hide from it,” he said.

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