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IMPROVED DENTAL SERVICE FOR RURAL YUKONERS

WHITEHORSE – Beginning late this week, residents of rural Yukon communities will have better access to visiting dental services within their own communities, Health and Social Services Minister Peter Jenkins announced today.

“The Department of Health and Social Services has signed an agreement with the Hay River Dental Clinic to provide dental services in each community where regular dental services are not available,” Jenkins said. “This will help address concerns that have been expressed about the lack of dental services for adults in rural communities.”

Jenkins said the government will cover the costs of travel and accommodation for the visiting dentists and provide them with a dental office to work from. In most communities, this space will be in the local school or the health centre. The Yukon government does not cover the costs of dental work for adults.

Previously, the department made these funds available to Whitehorse-based dentists through a contract with the Yukon Dental Association. Both interest and ability to provide services has dwindled over the years and as a result there was no regular dental service in most communities.

“Since we were kids, we were told to have regular check-ups,” Jenkins said. “If you don’t have a dentist in your community and you don’t travel that much, you can’t get the treatment you need to maintain good dental hygiene. This should help alleviate some of those concerns.”

The community visits begin Sept. 17 in Haines Junction, followed by Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek, Teslin and Old Crow. The community schedule will be posted on the Health and Social Services website www.hss.gov.yk.ca and individuals wishing to book appointments in their communities are asked to call and leave a message at their community health centre.

Health and Social Services runs the Yukon Children’s Dental Program for all school-aged children from kindergarten to Grade 8 in communities with a resident dentist, and through to Grade 12 in communities without a dentist.

“We are fortunate the Hay River group was willing to step up to the plate to meet this need,” Jenkins added.

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