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SURVEY RESULTS WILL HELP GOVERNMENT PREVENT YOUTH SMOKING

WHITEHORSE – Health and Social Services Minister Peter Jenkins says that results of the Yukon Youth Smoking Survey will help the Yukon government combat youth smoking.

“As part of our commitment to healthy communities, the Yukon government wants to see as many as possible of our young people smoke-free,” Jenkins said.

Released today, results from the survey show that although Yukon youth are still smoking more than their provincial counterparts, the majority of Yukoners in Grades 5 – 12 do not smoke. In fact, only seven per cent of Yukon students are current smokers.

“I find it immensely gratifying to find that most Yukon youth do not smoke and that in fact, 61 per cent have never smoked at all – not even a few puffs of a cigarette,” Jenkins said. “At the same time 18 per cent of Grade 11 and 12 students do smoke and we have to put more effort into preventing kids at a younger age from becoming smokers in the higher grades.”

The minister said that by surveying youth about smoking, it is possible to form a clearer picture of when they first experiment with smoking, the factors that may contribute to their decision to start, and the factors that may maintain smoking. The survey data shows that Grades 8 – 10 are really critical.

“This big picture can be used to take action to discourage youth from taking up smoking and assist those who smoke to become smoke-free. For example, if we know the age when youth are tempted to try their first cigarette, then we know when to start our prevention programs. Knowing the attitudes and beliefs of youth who decide to smoke can help us develop prevention materials and programs which speak to youth’s understanding and concerns, and support a decision to remain or become smoke-free,” Jenkins said.

The Yukon Youth Smoking Survey was conducted by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, and funded by Health Canada. Yukon was not included in either the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey or the National Youth Smoking Survey.

In total, 161 classrooms were surveyed, including youth in every Yukon community. Seventy-seven per cent of Yukon students participated in the survey. The report looked at factors that distinguish youth who smoke from youth who don’t and what contributes to the decision to smoke or not to smoke.

Online copies of the Yukon Youth Smoking Survey will be available at www.hss.gov.yk.ca after Friday.

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