

FOR RELEASE
June 12, 2006

#06-136

NEW COMMUNITY COURT TO EMPLOY AN INTEGRATED, PREVENTIVE APPROACH

WHITEHORSE– Justice Minister John Edzerza has announced an innovative, therapeutic approach to heal and prevent the addictions that lead to crime and recidivism.

The Community Court is a collaborative effort among the Departments of Justice and Health and Social Services, the RCMP, and non-government helping agencies. The court will create opportunities for offenders with addictions, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and mental health problems to receive the treatment they need.

“Those afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, addictions and mental illness are often vulnerable to victimization and, in turn, victimize others,” Justice Minister John Edzerza said. “In order to make any real progress toward prevention, we must address this relationship in a holistic way.”

Offenders who meet designated criteria and who plead guilty will be given the option of Community Court. They will be required to meet regularly with an addictions counsellor and attend regular “check-ins” during their court proceedings. Upon completion of this assessment process, a report that reflects the treatment needs of the offender will be prepared for sentencing. This sentence may entail court-ordered treatment or a period of closely monitored supervision in the community.

The Community Court will be a partnership of representatives from government, RCMP, the Crown and judiciary, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon (FASSY), the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools, Legal Aid, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

“We’re very pleased that there will be an opportunity for flexibility and modifications specific to each individual’s capabilities,” FASSY Executive Director Judy Pakozdy said.

“Community Court will call on the entire community to help these individuals,” Edzerza said. “No department or agency can tackle this complex problem alone.”

The Community Court was identified in the Substance Abuse Action Plan and is one of the recommendations made by the public during corrections consultations.

The Government of Yukon has allocated \$300,000 to start the program in the 2006-07 fiscal year.

-30-

Contact:

Peter Carr
Cabinet Communications Advisor
(867) 667-8688
peter.carr@gov.yk.ca

Dan Cable
Director of Policy and Communications
(867) 667-3508
Dan.Cable@gov.yk.ca