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AMBULANCE SERVICES TO JOIN PROTECTIVE SERVICES BRANCH

WHITEHORSE – Premier Dennis Fentie, Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers and Community Services Minister Glenn Hart announced today that Emergency Medical Services (EMS), which provides ambulance services to Yukoners, will be transferred from the department of Health and Social Services to the Protective Services Branch of the department of Community Services. The transfer of staff will occur in December 2007 and is a key component of the modernization of Yukon’s overall emergency response structure.

“Bringing all Yukon’s emergency response agencies together under one roof will contribute positively towards further improving Yukon’s emergency response capabilities,” Fentie said. “We are moving forward on our commitment to provide the best possible coordinated first response to emergencies throughout the territory.”

The new structure will enhance the development of harmonized services and build capacity within the organization, reduce the burden on volunteers and improve the overall emergency response capability.

Part of the modernization development will include recruiting for full-time primary care paramedics for Watson Lake, Dawson City, and other communities where necessary. These will be supported by community-based EMS volunteers.

Minister Cathers emphasized that the government will continue to enhance the professional EMS program within the new emergency response structure, and maintain the EMS relationship as an integral part of the continuum of health care services in Yukon.

“The department of Health and Social Services will complete the discussions currently underway with EMS volunteers regarding remuneration,” Cathers said. “We will work to conclude an agreement that recognizes the valuable contribution that our volunteers make in providing ambulance services to Yukoners, before the transfer takes effect.”

“We will be addressing all of our emergency response facilities, equipment, maintenance and training needs,” Hart said. “Bringing EMS into Protective Services Branch will provide new opportunities to take a ‘big-picture’ approach to our operations, including the administration and coordination of support to ensure the continued protection, safety and well-being of Yukoners in each and every community.”

Community Services will meet with key stakeholders, including staff and volunteers in the communities, to obtain their advice, ideas and views on how to best manage the specific needs of each Yukon community under the newly combined emergency response structure.

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