

**For release
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First MRI north of 60 now open at Whitehorse General Hospital

Whitehorse – The first magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) program in Canada’s North has opened at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH) thanks to the joint efforts of the Yukon government, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the community.

Premier Darrell Pasloski was joined today by Health and Social Services Minister Doug Graham, Yukon Hospital Corporation Chair Craig Tuton and Yukon Hospital Foundation (YHF) Chair Curtis Shaw to cut the ceremonial ribbon on the new building, which is home to the territory’s state-of-the-art MRI scanner.

“We are incredibly proud to add MRI to our first-class diagnostic services as it can be used to evaluate with precision a wide range of conditions,” says Tuton. “With the new facility, Yukoners have a comfortable environment in which to receive the very best care, closer to home. This means improved and timelier access to an important test, which will result less travel and quicker diagnosis – an overall more positive patient experience.”

Tuton also notes the new facility is open ahead of schedule with the first patient exams scheduled for next week. The new MRI program is initially expected to conduct about 1,800 patient exams each year and is now accepting physician referrals for scans, which are then reviewed for safety and appropriateness.

“We have long recognized the importance of collaboration with health care providers to provide appropriate, affordable and seamless care and services to Yukoners. Working together with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Hospital Foundation on the MRI project is a perfect example of how cooperation can work to benefit all,” says Pasloski. “Our government is proud to have invested in this enhancement to health care in Yukon and I’d like to thank all those who helped ensure this facility was delivered to Yukoners ahead of schedule.”

The Minister of Health and Social Services echoed the Premier’s comments. “We know the stress and strain that people experience when facing medical interventions, particularly when far from home and family. Having an MRI in the territory will reduce that stress and improve services available to Yukoners,” says Graham.

YHF spearheaded a successful campaign that raised \$2 million for the purchase of the MRI scanner. The Yukon government matched this \$2 million in funds and then contributed an additional \$2.8 million to build the facility.

“I think Yukoners got behind this effort because we all know of someone who has had to travel out of territory for care and be away from family during a significant test or treatment,” says Shaw. “We cannot thank the community enough for its generosity in making this new MRI program a reality and ensuring quality health care is available right here at home.”

The new MRI scanner was supplied by Siemens Healthcare Canada Ltd., which secured a third-party contractor West Med to build the new facility with support from many Yukon specialized trades and local services. The new MRI facility will be open to the public this Friday, January 16 from 2-4 p.m. giving Yukoners an opportunity to meet our team and see the facility first-hand.

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Contact:

James Low
Communications, Yukon Hospitals
(867) 393-8698
james.low@wgh.yk.ca

Elaine Schiman
Cabinet Communications
(867) 633-7961
elaine.schiman@gov.yk.ca

Pat Living
Communications, Health and Social Services
(867) 667-3673
patricia.living@gov.yk.ca

**Backgrounder:
MRI Program at Whitehorse General Hospital**

- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is an advanced test that uses a magnet and pulses of radio waves to make images of organs and structures inside the body. The technique is widely used in hospitals for medical diagnosis, staging of disease and for follow-up.
- MRI is requested by a physician – and is a different and complementary exam to other imaging tests. Its use depends on what your medical provider needs to know. There are many specific reasons to use an MRI such as neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and oncological investigations, but the test may also be done to provide additional information about an issue seen in a CT scan, x-ray or ultrasound.
- All patients must be screened before they can receive an MRI to see if a scan is appropriate and safe. For example, a patient may not be able to receive a scan due to an existing health condition. What's more, an MRI may not be required when another imaging method is more appropriate.
- The Yukon MRI program is located in a new facility at Whitehorse General Hospital (WGH) and will initially conduct about 1,800 patient exams each year. WGH will not provide some very specialized, higher risk procedures such as those with neo-natal patients who require sedation or interventional MRI exams. This means about 5-10% of individuals who require MRI may still have to travel outside of Yukon for a scan.
- The MRI program will serve Yukoners until we determine our own need within the territory before accepting patients from other jurisdictions. Wait times will depend on the demand for the MRI service, however, the program has adopted four priority levels to ensure urgent, semi-urgent, non-urgent and follow-up scans are provided within an established timeframe.
- WGH also offers a range of medical imaging services, including radiography, fluoroscopy, ultrasound, computed tomography (CT) and mammography.
- The new MRI program will meet a significant need as the Yukon government provides medical travel assistance and covered costs for about 600 out-of-territory MRI scans a year.
- The Yukon Hospital Foundation was instrumental in leading a three-year campaign (completed a year ahead of schedule) that successfully raised \$2 million to buy the MRI scanner through the generous financial support from our communities and donors. YHF continues to raise funds to support Yukon hospitals in addressing priorities and meeting essential equipment needs that enhance our ability to provide safe and excellent care.