



Office of the Premier
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

October 16, 2023

Heather P. Jones
Chief Coroner for the Yukon Territory
PO Box 2703 (J-10A)
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Dear Heather P. Jones,

Re: Kaiya Sandra Faith Stone-Kirk

Thank you for your letter of August 17, 2023, outlining the recommendations given by the Jury on improving the safety of infants and children in the Yukon. I appreciate your consideration of opportunities to enhance the systems, policies and processes in the Government of Yukon and specifically in the Department of Health and Social Services' Family and Children's Services Branch.

In response to the five recommendations highlighted in your letter, I assure you that our government is committed to working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to fully review the recommendations the Jury provided. Working together with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations and other stakeholders to review these recommendations is consistent with the collaborative approach we used to amend the *Child and Family Services Act* in 2022.

I understand that the Director of Family and Children's Services will be providing you with an update on work being undertaken within the program in response to these important topics, and I am pleased to also share an update on that work here.

On April 4, 2022, Family and Children's Services implemented a policy that provides guidance on safe sleeping spaces. The policy includes information from the Public Health Agency of Canada on safe sleep strategies and their rationales. It requires all Family and Children's Services' workers to review these strategies with parents, extended family caregivers and community caregivers who provide care for a child two years of age or younger. Family and Children's Services' workers are also required to support the set-up and conduct visual inspections and document sleeping surfaces during visits to homes where there is a child who is two years of age or younger. Caregivers providing care to a child two years of age or younger are also required to provide safe sleep surfaces and safe sleeping education to anyone who supervises the child for a short period of time, such as a respite caregiver or babysitter.

The Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations are in the process of developing a caregiver strategy that will be tailored to fit the needs of each community. This strategy aims to provide more culturally appropriate out-of-home placements for children in their own communities, and focus on caregiver recruitment, retention, training and support initiatives. We will consider initiatives that align with the Jury's recommendations.

Additionally, the *Child and Family Services Act Policy Manual* details the roles and responsibilities of parents, extended family caregivers and Family and Children Services' social workers under the Extended Family Care Agreements. It states that caregivers are required to understand their obligations to meet the child's day-to-day needs and to undergo a Child and Family Safety Review which focuses on the safety, protection and immediate health, educational, developmental and emotional needs of the child and willingness and ability of the extended family to meet those needs. The Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations are currently reviewing the Policy Manual and will consider the Jury's recommendations.

Thank you again for your thoughtful and comprehensive recommendations to help keep the Yukon's children safe, protected and cared for. We are committed to working alongside Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations to make the changes needed to improve the safety of infants and children in the Yukon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ranj Pillai', written in a cursive style.

Ranj Pillai
Premier

cc. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services