



July 4, 2024

Heather P. Jones

Chief Coroner for the Yukon Territory

PO Box 2703 (J-10A)

Whitehorse, YT

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Dear Chief Coroner Jones,

I thank you for your May 24, 2024, correspondence that shared the Inquest Report into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Vanessa Hager and Darla Skookum, and highlighted the Jury Recommendations that are directed to Connective. I appreciate this opportunity to outline how we are addressing the issues raised in the Report and Recommendations.

Connective's goal is to always meet the needs of the communities that we serve. The Coroner's Inquest into these four tragic deaths at 405 Alexander (the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter) has shone a light on significant issues and our hearts ache for the families, friends and communities of the deceased. We are committed to preventing similar deaths in the future and we have already begun implementing change.

Connective is able to move forward on some of the recommendations on its own. For example, our policy review is in progress. We have completed an internal review and have engaged a consultant to help ensure that we get this right. Recommendations regarding internal communications and communication with guests at the shelter are also being implemented, including hosting monthly talking circles with Council of Yukon First Nations and service users. The same is true for recommendations addressing training and staffing, recruiting locally with an emphasis on hiring First Nations team members has always been a priority and we are developing strategies to accelerate our efforts. We have taken the first steps in revising job postings to

reflect this commitment and developing ongoing monitoring of the recruitment process with our partners. The first phase of our work on these recommendations is underway, and we are making plans to consult, collect information, and seek external support to enable us to go even further.

Other recommendations, such as those calling for consultation with interested Yukon First Nations will take time. We are engaged with the Yukon Government, who have taken the lead on connecting with the First Nations seeking guidance on what form of engagement and timing is most appropriate. Where requested we have met with Yukon First Nations administrative leadership as a starting point. The process to engage with community groups and individuals is underway. These activities will take time and we are approaching them as ongoing practice to be continued beyond the response to the recommendations. We know that trust must be earned and cannot be rushed, and we also know that many of the underlying issues and challenges that bring people to 405 Alexander are systemic and deeply complex.

Grief and loss can be experienced by communities and individuals and must be met with compassion and support. This is true for family, friends and the communities of the deceased as well as those who worked to help improve the circumstances of those lives now lost. Connective has approved an in-person counselling support initiative to launch later this Summer for its employees and will work alongside the Yukon Government and other interested parties to be a source of support and compassion for community members.

It is important that Connective take responsibility to help move forward on all the recommendations. We will cooperate fully with the recommendations directed to the Yukon government. It is also important to recognize that Connective is not and cannot be alone in this work. The problems are too serious to believe that one organization acting on its own can achieve the transformative change required to address the compounding challenges related to alcohol use, the opioid crisis, the chronic shortage of housing, mental health, and the stigma and systemic racism that combine into a dangerous and toxic environment for vulnerable people in the community.

We also recognize that our service users are supported by many organizations and the Yukon Government. This challenge requires us to take a collective approach within each of our organizations to continue to increase access to services that reduce pressures on programs and support stronger health outcomes of vulnerable Yukoners. These are often the people who have come to rely on short-term solutions (such as shelter accommodation) and require more support to address the causal, underlying reasons for their distress.

The Inquest has fostered many important conversations. Yukoners rightly hope and expect that meaningful and sustained change will be the legacy of the women whose deaths we mourn. We must not waste this moment when so many are watching, listening and hoping. We want to be successful in our efforts and we believe our success can contribute to a healthy, thriving and resilient Yukon.

I want to make our commitment to Yukon clear. We are here for the long haul, and we will work every day to build trust, deepen our relationships, and demonstrate our values of inclusivity, accountability, and collaboration.

Sincerely,



Chris Kinch
VP Service Delivery – Northern BC & Yukon
Connective