

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE 31ST LEGISLATURE

The 24-day Second Session of the 31st Legislature concluded on December 16, 2003. Your Members of the Legislative Assembly continued their work toward rebuilding the Yukon's private sector economy.

Recent accomplishments have included:

- **Passing the largest Supplementary Budget in Yukon history (\$95,505,000)**
 - Nearly \$45,000,000 of this was federal government funding for programs transferred due to devolution
 - An additional federal transfer of \$23,000,000 came as a result of a significant Yukon population undercount
 - This determination freed up another \$15,000,000 set aside by the previous government as a precaution against a population overcount

- **Jobs and Income have increased for Yukoners**
 - Through increases of \$800,000 for Firesmart and over \$3 million for Community Development Fund in the Supplementary Budget
 - **These increases bring the total for Firesmart to \$1.85 million and more than \$4 million for CDF**

- **The construction of facilities for the 2007 Canada Winter Games and the Whitehorse Waterfront will be great for the Yukon and the economy**
 - Supplementary Budget included \$8 million instalment for the 2007 Canada Winter Games
 - Yukon Government has agreed to pay the Business Incentive Policy (BIP) costs (\$700,000 estimated) for the multiplex
 - Supplementary Budget contained \$3,600,000 for the 2007 Host Society; raising this commitment to \$4 million
 - Waterfront development is anticipated to cost \$15.5 million with a completion date in 2007. Yukon Government contributions to this include:
 - \$1,235,000 waterfront land purchase
 - \$ 462,000 contribution to Kwanlin Dun First Nation Cultural Centre
 - \$ 250,000 for Roundhouse move and rehabilitation
 - Total of \$290,000 committed to 2004 Whitehorse Seniors' Games
 - \$320,000 budgeted for Decade of Sport and Culture Initiative

Health Care and Childcare:

- Approximately \$6,700,000 (\$20 million over three years) was included in the health care budget due to increased federal funding negotiated by the three territorial premiers
- \$4.5 million for three-year Primary Health Care Transition Fund
- The budget for Whitehorse General Hospital has been increased by more than \$1.8 million
- FASD Action Plan
 - \$210,000 over three years to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon (FASSY)
 - \$132,000 for Diagnostic Team Coordinator to the Child Development Centre

- A \$ 200,000 increase in the advertising, recruitment and relocation budget has resulted in attracting several new doctors and healthcare professionals to the Yukon
- Child Care Direct Operating Grants were increased by \$ 675,000
- **Yukon Government officials were successful in achieving a commitment of \$18.7 million for the continuation of the Shakwak Project in 2004**
- Increased auxiliary/casual employment is expected from \$ 750,000 budgeted for secondary road maintenance
- \$ 500,000 is budgeted for both Robert Campbell Highway engineering and other highways planning
- \$ 825,000 of Film Incentive Program funding transferred from Tourism to Economic Development
- An Agricultural Policy Framework was signed with the federal government on July 16, 2003

Forestry has also seen support from the Yukon Government:

- Agreement on 128,000 m³ of timber ensures long-term access and encourages forestry investment
- \$300,000 for Kaska Forest Resources Stewardship Council
- \$250,000 budgeted for forest renewal (directed toward the spruce beetle kill)
- \$500,000 budgeted for forest engineering (directed toward SE Yukon forestry)
- Ongoing negotiations with Kaska on forestry agreement

Evidence of an economic turn-around is seen in:

- Building permits have increased by \$18 million over the same time last year – **an 85% increase**
- Retail trade for September 2003 was \$34,716,000 an increase of \$1,945,000 (**5.9%**) over September 2002
- The economic bilateral agreement with the Kaska has had its first success with the agreement between Teck-Cominco and the Ross River Dena. This agreement will see hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on their R-15 claim block.
- Yukon mineral exploration increased to at least \$13 million in 2003; doubling the \$6.9 million spent in 2002. **This value is expected to double again in 2004.**
- At the end of December 2003, 500 additional people were employed over August 2003 and the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 9.7%. **This is a drop of 0.7% over December 2002.**
- During just the last three months of 2003, the Yukon population increased by 168 people.

Your legislature passed the following Bills:

- Bill #6 (Fourth Appropriation Act, 2002-2003) – Final Supplementary for last year
- Bill #7 (Second Appropriation Act, 2003-2004) – 2003-2004 supplementary budget
- Bill #35 (Act to Amend the Public Printing Act)
- Bill #36 (Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act)
- Bill #37 (Statistics Act)
- Bill #38 (Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act)
- Bill #39 (Decision Making, Support and Protection to Adults Act)
- Bill #40 (Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act)
- Bill #41 (Health Professions Act)
- Bill #42 (Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act, 2003)

Bills #39 and #41 are new pieces of legislation. Bill #39 permits others to protect, to support and to make decisions for adults who are, for various reasons, unable to protect, support or make decisions for themselves. Bill #41 is an omnibus act – it allows for the certification and registration of additional health professions by drafting and approving appropriate regulations rather than requiring the amendment of the legislation.

Bill #36 – Amendment of the Taxpayer Protection Act. Only Section 4 of this Act was removed. Originally, this section required the use of cash accounting (the booking of capital assets in the year they were acquired or constructed in reporting an accumulated surplus or deficit). This section also capped employee termination benefits at \$30 million, which understated the government's real liabilities and artificially inflated accumulated surplus. The Yukon Government is complying with the recommendation by the Auditor General of Canada and the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants public sector accounting guidelines. These guidelines recommend that the Yukon Government move to full accrual accounting (ie: amortizing capital assets over their useful life and booking actual employee termination benefit amounts). **Starting on April 1, 2004, full accrual accounting will be in use by the Yukon Government. Maintaining a "single set" of books will give Yukoners a clearer picture of the territory's finances.**

First Nations Relations:

- \$1.1 million over two years in budget for the Aboriginal Languages Services Agreement
- A commitment of \$200,000 toward a winter road to Old Crow and another \$500,000 for riverbank stabilization in Old Crow
- The Yukon Government's continued support for an Alaska Highway pipeline is shown by the commitment of \$250,000 for the Aboriginal Pipeline Group
- \$300,000 for a Tagish-Carcross First Nation cultural centre
- Kwanlin Dun initialled land claim and self-government agreements on September 24, 2003, ratification to be early in 2004
- Kluane First Nation ratified land claim on October 20, 2003
- Carcross-Tagish First Nation initialled land claim and self-government agreements on October 30, 2003, ratification to be early in 2004
- White River First Nation initialled land claim and self-government agreements on August 8, 2003, ratification to be early in 2004

Education and Social Issues:

- \$100,000 budgeted in Supplementary Budget for the Indexing of the Yukon Student Grant
- \$100,000 budgeted for Family Violence and Violence Against Women prevention initiatives
- \$338,000 for Rural Electrification and Telephone
- \$1 million budgeted for a territory-wide school needs assessment
- Additional \$456,000 budgeted for teachers and Educational Assistants due to increased enrolment
- \$47,000 budgeted for payment of increased and indexed Pioneer Utility Grants
- The new teachers' agreement required budgeting \$649,000 for increased wages and benefits
- \$400,000 for planning and design of a new Tantalus School (Carmacks)
- \$200,000 for expansion of shop/cafeteria in Porter Creek Secondary School

Good News for Christmas !!

On December 10, 2003, Vincent Ready, the arbitrator, gave his binding decision on the Yukon Government Employees' Contract. It includes:

- The Collective Agreement will have a four-year term from January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2006.
- Wages: Year 2003 = 2%
Year 2004 = 2.5%
Year 2005 = 2.5%
Year 2006 = 3%
- Effective April 1, 2005 the orthodontics lifetime maximum is increased to \$2500 and effective April 1, 2006 the same lifetime maximum will be increased to \$3000.
- The Employer will continue to pay one hundred percent (100%) of salary and benefits of the Union President and will invoice the Union quarterly for twenty-five percent (25%) of all costs of salary and benefits (which means gross salary plus all benefits).