

# Yukon Legislative Assembly

## Fact Sheet No.6 How A Bill Becomes Law

### Laws, Bills, Acts and Statutes

A bill is a proposed law. If a bill is passed by the Legislative Assembly and receives Assent from the Commissioner it becomes part of the law of Yukon. Once a bill becomes a law it is also called an Act or Statute. Before a bill becomes law it must pass through five stages: Introduction and First Reading, Second Reading, Committee, Third Reading and Assent.

### Introduction and First Reading

This takes place during the Daily Routine when the Speaker calls for 'Introduction of Bills.' All other stages of a bill take place during Orders of the Day. A member who has a bill that he or she wishes to place before the Assembly will rise during Introduction of Bills and say, "I move that Bill Number \_\_, entitled (name of the bill) be now introduced and read a first time." There is no debate on the bill at this point. This is just a member's way of getting the bill on the Assembly's Order Paper (agenda). Bills can be voted on at First Reading, but this does not happen often.

### Second Reading

The purpose of second reading is to debate the bill in principle. Once a bill is on the Order Paper the government does not have to give notice to bring it forward for debate. Private members have to give one day's notice. When the bill is called for debate the member sponsoring the bill will rise and say, "I move that Bill Number \_\_, entitled (name of the bill) be now read a second time."

At that point the member who introduced the bill (the sponsor) can speak about it for an unlimited amount of time. When the sponsor is done speaking about the bill another member (almost always from the other side of the Assembly) will also have unlimited time to speak about the bill. All other members will have 20 minutes to debate the bill if they wish to. Once all members who wish to speak to the bill have spoken the sponsor has 20 minutes to speak again and close debate.<sup>1</sup>

Once debate is closed the Speaker will ask members if they are 'prepared for the question' (ready to vote). If members indicate that they are prepared for the question the Speaker will ask if they agree with the motion for second reading. By listening to the voice vote the Speaker will determine if the 'yeas' or 'nays' are in the majority and whether the bill has passed second reading or not. If two members rise in their places and call for a 'division' the Speaker will ring the bells to let members inside the Assembly and outside know that a formal vote will be conducted. Once the bells have stopped ringing the Speaker will ask the Clerk to call out the name of each member, and each member will rise in their turn and say if they agree or disagree with the motion

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<sup>1</sup> This time limit is raised to 40 minutes for Second Reading of a main appropriation act.

for second reading. Once all members present have been given the chance to vote the Clerk will announce the results and the Speaker will declare whether the motion for second reading has carried or not.

### **Committee stage**

Standing Order 57(4) says, “Unless otherwise ordered by the Assembly, when a Government Bill or a Private Member’s Bill is read the second time, it stands ordered for consideration by Committee of the Whole.” It is during this stage that a bill is examined clause by clause. In addition, a budget bill is examined department by department. Though amendments (changes) can be proposed at this stage they must be consistent with the principle of the bill because the principle of the bill was approved at second reading. There is no limit to how long the committee stage can last.

### **Third Reading**

The third reading stage allows the Assembly to consider the bill in its final form, subject to whatever amendments took place during the committee stage. The bill’s sponsor begins third reading by rising and saying, “I move that Bill Number \_\_, entitled (name of the bill) be now read a third time and do pass.” Members then have the chance to debate and vote on the bill in the same way as at second reading. Bills will often pass third reading without any debate if there were no amendments at the committee stage.

If the Assembly believes a bill requires amendment after it is passes through the committee stage, it may ‘recommit’ the bill to Committee of the Whole. This can happen when the bill is called for third reading, or during third reading. This rarely happens in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

### **Assent**

If a bill receives third reading and passes it is presented to the Commissioner for Assent. The Assent ceremony usually takes place in the Assembly chamber and typically happens at the end of the Spring or Fall Sitting when all the bills that have passed third reading are presented to the Commissioner at once.

The Assent ceremony begins when the Commissioner enters the Chamber and takes the Speaker’s chair. The Speaker, standing to the Commissioner’s right, will ask for Assent to the bills that have passed the Assembly. The Clerk of the Assembly will then read out the names of the bills. The Commissioner will then “assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.” Those bills are now laws.

Most laws come into effect as soon as they receive Assent. However sometimes a bill will specify that the whole bill, or parts of it, will come into force on a future specified date, a retroactive specified date or a future, unspecified date of proclamation by the Commissioner in Executive Council (the cabinet).

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