



News Release

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Federal Announcement Launches Busy Time for New Board

The new Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) is preparing to launch a number of community-based activities in the wake of a recent federal announcement.

Last week, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Honourable Andy Scott, announced the names of the communities that will become the sites of Designated Offices for six assessment districts under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* (YESAA). A ministerial order named Dawson City, Haines Junction, Mayo, Teslin, Watson Lake and Whitehorse as Designated Office sites. The boundaries for the six assessment districts were also set out in the order.

“The Board is very pleased that the district boundaries and Designated Office locations have now been announced,” said YESAB Chair Dale Eftoda. “The announcement allows the Board to begin planning a number of key activities that need to take place in those six communities as part of our preparations for full implementation of the Act.”

These activities include the establishment of offices in the six communities and the hiring of staff.

“The Board is beginning the search for suitable office space in the five communities outside Whitehorse,” said Eftoda. “The Whitehorse Designated Office will share space with the main office of the Board, which has already been established.”

The Board will also be advertising for qualified assessment and support staff for each Designated Office.

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“After the Designated Office staff are in place, we expect they will be very busy preparing for full implementation of YESAA,” added Eftoda. “As well, they will assist the Board as we develop our rules, and help us obtain community input into our draft rules. One of the beneficial aspects of our legislation is that it provides for Designated Offices in the communities which will play a key role in the operations of the Board.”

According to the legislation, the Board was to begin conducting assessments on November 13, 2004. However, as announced in late September, regulations required under YESAA are still being finalized by the federal government, the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). Those regulations are now expected to be ready by next April. The Board has adjusted its schedule in order to be ready to conduct assessments as soon as the regulations are in place.

The federal government, in cooperation with CYFN and the Yukon government, is creating a set of regulations that will govern work done under YESAA. The legislation requires the Board to create a set of rules that will define its operations and procedures.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board was formed in June 2004. The Board was created under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, which establishes a process to assess impacts of projects and other activities in the Yukon or that might affect the Yukon. This is a requirement of Chapter 12 of the Umbrella Final Agreement and Yukon First Nations' Final Agreements. The Board is an independent advisory board which will administer an assessment process that will be carried out by six regional Designated Offices, the Executive Committee of the Board and Panels of the Board.

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