



Government of Yukon

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NEWS *release*

FOR RELEASE #10-141
July 30, 2010

Yukon adopts new birth certificate

WHITEHORSE – As of today, Yukon joins other Canadian jurisdictions in adopting a new, standardized, more secure and durable birth certificate.

The new certificate has a standardized design and security features that make it one of the most secure birth certificates in the world. It was designed by the Canadian Bank Note Company Ltd. working with the Canadian Vital Statistics Council and was approved by all Canadian jurisdictions. The new design has features to minimize identity theft, forgeries, and loss.

"A birth certificate is a primary identification document," Health and Social Services Glenn Hart said. "It is used to obtain everything from a social insurance number to a passport. It's important to protect it in every way we can."

The Vital Statistics Council for Canada has a mandate to develop, strengthen, and support the Canadian system of vital statistics. As one of the 13 provincial/territorial representatives on the council, the Government of Yukon worked with the council and identity experts to develop this highly secure birth certificate.

The Yukon government made one change to the standard certificate by ensuring that same sex parents could be reflected on the certificate.

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See backgrounder below.

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Backgrounder: Image and Q and A about the new birth certificate



QUESTION: What's new about this design?

ANSWER: The stock for the new document is high security polymer (plastic). The new certificate is 13 cm by 18 cm in size (5"x7"). It is designed to discourage people from carrying it in their wallet or purse. The certificate has:

- Two window features – one contains a colour shifting property (gold/purple); the other contains three "floating" maple leaves
- Two watermark/shadow features – maple leaves and Canada geese
- Thread containing the word "CANADA" repeated
- Tactile printing similar to that found on Canadian currency
- Colour shifting printing, "CANADA" in three waves below the clear window containing the maple leaves (purple/green)
- Contains the provincial/territorial coat of arms in colour with the jurisdiction's seal and a signature

The new design also contains certain forensic features that assist authorities in determining the validity of the document, as many certificates are reported lost or stolen every month.

QUESTION: Why are you changing the design now?

ANSWER: The current design used by most jurisdictions is more than 20 years old. With new developments in technology and emerging threats related to identity theft, tampering and counterfeiting, the Vital Statistics Council of Canada recognized the need to update the standard document design in an effort to ensure document integrity, reliability and public confidence.

QUESTION: Will the new birth certificate be the standard document for the next 20 years?

ANSWER: The Vital Statistics Council for Canada is committed to working with experts in document security to conduct periodic reviews of the birth certificate security features to ensure that they can withstand emerging security threats.

QUESTION: There are discussions on secure Yukon driver's licenses. We've got new passports and long lines at passport offices. Where does this fit in with this with this general upgrading of the documentation that is used?

ANSWER: The birth certificate is the foundation document that is used to obtain a passport, driver's license, social insurance card and First Nation identity documents and others. So it is important to have a secure foundation document.

QUESTION: What did this new certificate cost the Yukon government?

ANSWER: Because this project was done with a vendor who is our current printer in Canada, development costs are absorbed by them. The costs are then spread and amortized back to all the provinces and territories as we purchase certificates over the years to come.

QUESTION: So there will be more cost to the territory, but you're not passing it on to the consumer?

ANSWER: The production cost of the certificates is only a few cents over the cost of the old ones. The cost to clients will remain the same at \$10 per certificate.

QUESTION: You indicate that existing birth certificates will remain valid for the foreseeable future. Are there plans to make existing birth certificates invalid at some point?

ANSWER: At this point there are no plans to require people to replace their existing birth certificates. We have updated the format of birth certificates a number of times over the years, most recently in 1983, and we have never required people to replace their existing documents. The new birth certificate is one of a number of initiatives that Vital Statistics registries are undertaking to enhance birth certificate security. It is up to the agencies who accept these documents to determine what document is sufficient to meet their needs.

QUESTION: If I bring in my old certificate to Vital Statistics, can I get a new one free of charge?

ANSWER: Old certificates will not be replaced free of charge. Vital Statistics organizations will continue to charge the birth certificate fee for the new certificate. The fees are required to cover the costs for production and issuance of the new document.

QUESTION: Do we know how much identity theft there has been in Yukon related to the existing birth certificate?

ANSWER: Investigations are confidential; we do not get any information. We know that the technology is out there today, sometimes in the wrong hands. The police have arrested people who have had significant numbers of documents, sometimes owned by hundreds of people at a time, in their possession. We know that there is a criminal element out there that very specifically is going after identification theft, from which they create different documents to use in the commission of fraud.

QUESTION: Where can we get statistics on this information?

ANSWER: Website www.phonebusters.com/english/statistics_E06.html

QUESTION: The current version of birth certificate has been around since 1983, why have you waited so long to introduce a more secure version?

ANSWER: It is since 9/11 that we have had a heightened awareness of the need for an elevation in our personal security. After September 2001, the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for Vital Statistics requested a security review of current birth certificate documents. Over the past two years, the Vital Statistics Council for Canada, in conjunction with the Canadian Bank Note Company Ltd. and in consultation with document security experts, worked on designing a new birth certificate with a focus on improving the security and durability. The prototype for this certificate was reviewed by the Document Integrity Technical Working Group, a team composed of forensic document experts from the RCMP, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the Canadian Passport Office and the Canada Border Services Agency. This process has taken time but it is the team's opinion that the new birth certificate is a very secure document with ample anti-counterfeiting/forgery security features.

QUESTION: This certificate has been designed to withstand the known security threats posed by modern technology. Are you saying that it is impossible to duplicate this certificate?

ANSWER: This certificate is truly one of the most secure documents in the world. We have also included a number of security features that will not be revealed to the general public. These additional features are third level forensic features that will assist authorities in confirming the validity of the document.

While the new design includes the most modern security features available, it would not be prudent to say any design is counterfeit-proof. We are satisfied with the level of security in this new design. Additionally, the certificate was purposely created in a size that discourages people from carrying it in their wallet or purse. This significantly reduces the opportunity for theft or loss.

The prototype for the certificate was reviewed by the Document Integrity Technical Working Group (for group details see the question above).

QUESTION: How many security features are there and can you provide us with a list?

ANSWER: This new birth certificate has a number of security features that will not be revealed to the general public. This measure provides an additional safeguard against identity theft and counterfeiting. These other features are enhanced features that will assist authorities in confirming the validity of the document.

QUESTION: So why did you go with this sort of unconventional size, and how will that change? If people won't be able to carry it in their wallets, how will it change things?

ANSWER: A lot of identity theft occurs when people lose their wallets with their birth certificates in them. Also, the certificates themselves get destroyed because they go through the wash or get wet one way or another.

QUESTION: Should people, with older birth certificates, be concerned about identity fraud or theft? Should people be encouraged to trade in that old one for a more secure birth certificate?

ANSWER: The old birth certificate has some security features. We discourage people from carrying their birth certificates on their person unless they are securing services or other forms of identification. There's no question that the new birth certificate will be a much more reliable and secure document than the old one. There is nothing mandatory, but a new birth certificate is a great way to enhance your personal security.

QUESTION: How long do existing birth certificates get to stay in play, or is there a suggestion that people that are already carrying the old birth certificate should be moving toward the more secure document?

ANSWER: Yes. While the old certificates will not be invalidated, in some instances, where identity security is of utmost importance, citizens may be asked to provide the new more secure document as proof of identity or citizenship. We will be educating our stakeholders about the security features and benefits of the new design.

QUESTION: I was born in another province. Can I get one of the new birth certificate?

ANSWER: You must apply for your birth certificate from your province or territory of birth. Eight Canadian provinces have adopted the new certificate: Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

QUESTION: If this is the new standard for Canadian birth certificates and all provinces and territories are concerned about security, why aren't all jurisdictions using the new design right away?

ANSWER: Security and integrity are values all member jurisdictions share. This new design requires changes in processes and equipment. Each jurisdiction will adopt the new design at the appropriate time.

QUESTION: What is the Vital Statistics Council of Canada?

ANSWER: The Vital Statistics Council of Canada is an association of vital statistics experts from across Canada with a mandate to develop, strengthen and support the Canadian system of vital statistics. Each Canadian province and territory is represented by a member of the Council as well as Statistics Canada.

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