



FOR RELEASE
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Amendments to Pioneer Utility Grant Act accepted

WHITEHORSE—The Yukon legislative assembly unanimously agreed to modernize the *Pioneer Utility Grant Act*.

Designed to assist seniors with their home heating costs, the Pioneer Utility Grant is a subsidy program for Yukoners 65 and older who rent or own their own home.

"We met with a number seniors groups and representatives who had voiced support for the suggested changes," Minister of Health and Social Services Doug Graham said. "I am pleased we are moving forward with these amendments which will help our seniors, particularly those living outside of Whitehorse where utility costs tend to be higher."

Amendments that will modernize the act include:

- moving the initial application date from October 1 to July 1;
- increasing the grant amount for rural residents;
- updating the eligibility requirements, such as a one-year minimum residency in Yukon;
- specifying grant application basics, such as net income; and
- expanding regulation-making powers to support implementation of the act.

Changes will be in effect for the July 2015 intake.

All applicants must now be 65 to be considered eligible for the grant and have lived in Yukon a minimum of 12 months before applying.

Proof of residency and annual income are now submitted when applying for the grant. Amounts subsidized will reduce as net incomes approach approximately \$165,000 for couples and approximately \$114,000 for individuals. An income-testing model will be introduced to the subsidy program within the next year.

These modernizations of the *Pioneer Utility Grant Act* will ensure flexibility and sustainability of the program so that the needs of Yukon seniors are met.

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