

North

Yukon MLAs pass territorial budget, shut down house until fall

'It is critical for certainty going forward, in what is currently an uncertain world'

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Yukon Premier Sandy Silver tabled his government's 2020-21 budget two weeks ago in the Legislature. The \$1.62 billion budget was passed on Thursday, bringing the spring sitting to an early close. (Claudiane Samson/CBC)

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The Yukon legislature passed the territorial budget on Thursday, curtailing the amount of time MLAs had to debate about it, and bringing an abrupt end to the spring sitting.

Budget deliberations typically take weeks, but the government wanted to wrap things up quickly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$1.62 billion budget was [tabled two weeks](#)

[ago](#); Thursday's vote came after just three days of debate in the house.

"It is critical for certainty going forward, in what is currently an uncertain world," said Tracy-Anne McPhee, the government's house leader, on passing the budget.

Opposition parties, who had [questioned the budget's urgency](#), went along in the end — but not without getting some concessions from the government.

The Yukon Party got more glucose monitoring for diabetics. The NDP got a ban on evicting people who can't make rent because of COVID-19.

Even so, the opposition was still not convinced of the need to rush things. Earlier this week, MLAs passed an [interim budget measure](#) to fund the government through May.

"I guess one of the things that still bugs me about this budget is the fact that the government has showed the urgency in getting it through, even though the COVID-19 virus is not mentioned in the budget, anywhere," said opposition leader Stacey Hassard of the Yukon Party.

- [Yukon declares public health emergency over COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Yukon to set up respiratory assessment centre for COVID-19 and flu](#)

NDP Leader Kate White echoed that.

"To be clear again, there is nothing, not a single line item in the 2020-2021 budget that mentions COVID," White said.

With the budget passed, the Legislative Assembly won't sit again until the fall. MLAs hope the worst of the COVID-19 crisis will have passed by then.

With files from Chris Windeyer