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GNWT Unveils Updated Licence Plates

YELLOWKNIFE (May 6, 2010): The Northwest Territories' iconic polar bear licence plate is receiving an upgrade. A new version of the polar bear plate – one with improved safety features and a more environmentally-friendly construction – will be rolled out to NWT residents beginning in July.

With the current licence plate design remaining unchanged for nearly 25 years, the plates have been updated to meet current North American standards for construction and visibility. While the old plates have been manufactured from steel, the new ones will be aluminum – making them lighter to ship, more environmentally-friendly to manufacture, and more easily recyclable. They will also be treated with a highly-reflective coating that improves the plates' night-time visibility, which will help to improve road safety across the Northwest Territories. The plates will retain the polar bear silhouette.

Minister of Transportation Michael McLeod says the conclusion of the GNWT's supplier contract in March provided a timely opportunity to introduce the improvements. "This was an easy change to make," he noted. "It modernizes our current licence plate and gives us something we can continue to be proud of. The new plates are safer, better for the environment, and will bring the NWT in line with the rest of the country."

As a broadly recognized symbol of the NWT, the newly designed plates will also include the recently-adopted NWT tourism slogan "Spectacular" and incorporate an added graphic element representing aurora borealis and the Northern landscape.

To accommodate the additional costs of production and administration of the new plate, there will be a \$10 one-time fee for licence holders when they are issued new plates. Individuals wishing to retain personalized plates, or their current numbered sequence, will incur an additional fee of \$25. A notice has been recently sent to all mailboxes in the NWT with information on this voluntary retention process.

For more information, contact:

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Backgrounder: New NWT Licence Plate FAQs

Why has the NWT decided to redesign the current NWT Licence Plate?

The plate currently does not meet national standards. A new design was required to meet national standards for physical size and increased visibility and safety, by adopting the latest reflective technology. The NWT is one of the only jurisdictions in North America that has not switched to new reflective licence plates.

Our current contract to manufacture plates expired in March 2010, and the manufacturer informed us they would cease producing licence plates. Since licence plate manufacturing equipment is proprietary to each manufacturer we simply couldn't move our production to another vendor, thus we embarked on a new design in order to meet national standards.

Why did the GNWT decide to create a new graphic design for the new licence plate?

The contract with our current licence plate manufacturer expired in March 2010. The tools & dies used to manufacture the current NWT licence plates are more than 25 years old, past their useful life, and no longer meet industry standards. By adopting a new manufacturing process, we were able to add new graphic designs to update the appeal and readability of the licence plate in support of on-road enforcement.

Why has the slogan been changed to “Spectacular”?

To incorporate the new NWT Tourism promotional slogan that is currently being used internationally to promote the NWT. The old slogan, “Explore Canada’s Arctic” was also a government tourism slogan that was introduced in 1986 and was used to promote the NWT. It is common in other jurisdictions to use tourism promotion slogans on licence plates, i.e. “Beautiful British Columbia”, “Ontario, Yours to Discover”, “Friendly Manitoba”.

How was the design of the new licence plate picked?

The Department has consulted with NWT Tourism Association, Traffic Enforcement Committee (RCMP, Municipal Enforcement, Road Licensing & Safety), the Royal Canadian Legion, Motorcycle/ATV dealers, design experts, manufacturers and other jurisdictions. Feedback received from these groups was incorporated into the final design. The shape has not changed.

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Why were there no consultations with the public on the new design?

Technical requirements for the new plate design precluded the ability to obtain meaningful input on a large scale from the general public. We believe the design that has been chosen will be pleasing to the public. We did consult with numerous interest groups including enforcement agencies, NWT Tourism, veterans, manufacturers, motorcycle/ATV dealer and other jurisdictions.

We are considering seeking public input on the new designs for the souvenir plates as there are no technical constraints, regarding visibility and safety as these will primarily be used for promotional purposes.

Why is there a \$10 fee increase in price for the new plate?

The new \$10 fee is required for cost-recovery. The cost to register a vehicle will not change. Other jurisdictions that charge a fee when a new plate is issued include: PEI \$5; Manitoba \$7; British Columbia \$18; Ontario \$20; New Brunswick \$25.

Why do individuals wishing to retain their existing plate number or slogan have to pay an additional \$25 fee.

This fee is strictly voluntary for those residents that wish to retain their current plate numbers or slogan. This is a one-time fee to recover the costs of doing a special production run for these personalized plates.

What are the environmental benefits to the new licence plate?

We have moved from steel plates to aluminum plates, which do not require the toxic paint dip that the steel plates do. Aluminum plates are lighter to ship, resistant to corrosion and are more easily recyclable.

What are the safety benefits of this new plate compared to the current plate?

The licence plates are treated with a reflective coating which improves night time visibility by approximately 700%, thus increasing visibility for enforcement and improving road safety. This is particularly important when vehicles are disabled without lights on the side of the road.

Why are the validation stickers changing?

The registration stickers are currently located on the bottom of the polar bear plate and denote month and year of expiry. In winter these stickers are easily covered with snow and make it difficult for enforcement to verify if a vehicle is properly registered. The new design has moved to a single registration sticker which is now located at the top of the plate. It will significantly

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improve visibility for law enforcement. This change was suggested by law enforcement to aid in traffic enforcement.

Can I place my old plate on the front of my vehicle as a novelty plate?

No. According to *The Motor Vehicle Act*, no person shall operate a motor vehicle with a licence plate representing the Northwest Territories, other than a licence plate of current issue, attached to the motor vehicle.

Where can I bring my old plate if I don't want to keep it?

You can return your old plate to your local issuing office for recycling.

What if I would like to get a new personalized licence plate?

The process for applying for a new personalized licence plate or veterans licence plate remains the same. Simply fill out the application form, and return it to your local issuing office.

If I purchase a new personalized plate do I need to place it on my vehicle?

All licence plates purchased must be registered to a vehicle and placed on that vehicle. You cannot purchase licence plates for decorative purposes.

If I decide not retain my personalized slogan or current numbered sequence, what happens to it after the 18-month implementation?

After the 18-month implementation period, any personalized slogans that were not retained will be made available to the public on a first come first serve basis, through the personalized plate program. All numerical sequences other than those retained will be retired.

When will the new plate be available?

The new plate will be launched on July 1st, 2010 and we expect all vehicles will transition to the new plate through the regular registration process over the next 18 months until December 31st 2011.

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Changes to the Northwest Territories Licence Plate

1. The current regular plate is 6 ¼" X 12 ¼", which is a non industry standard size. The new plate will meet industry standards and will be 6" X 12".
2. The motorcycle and ATV plates are currently 4 ½" X 7 ½", which is non industry standard size. The new plate will meet industry standards and will be 5" X 8".
3. The current licence plates are painted and have been replaced with a plate that is covered by a reflective sheeting cover.
4. The current design of the licence plate is blue and white the new plates have a graphic design.
5. The slogan has changed from "Explore Canada's Arctic" to "Spectacular", which is now digitally printed instead of embossed.
6. The Veteran Plate has changed to the slogan "Lest We Forget" and features a poppy.
7. Dealer plates are now distinguished by a black and white plate with no graphic designs.
8. Validation Stickers will now become one sticker which denotes both the month and year. It will be located to the top right of the licence plate.

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