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The Honourable Jackie Jacobson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 5, 2015****Members Present**

Hon. Tom Beaulieu, Ms. Bisaro, Mr. Blake, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Dolynny, Mrs. Groenewegen, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. Menicoche, Hon. Michael Miltenberger, Mr. Moses, Mr. Nadli, Hon. David Ramsay, Mr. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackie Jacobson): Good afternoon, colleagues. Before we begin today, I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil in the Great Hall.

The vigil remembers and honours Canadian soldiers who have fallen in Afghanistan and acknowledges the bravery, dedication, valour and professionalism of all members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have served in Afghanistan and supported the mission.

I encourage the public and all Members of this House to take the time to visit the vigil and recognize the courage and sacrifice of those who have served and continue to serve our country.

Orders of the day. Item 2, budget address. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

Budget Address**Introduction**

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to present the last budget of the 17th Legislative Assembly, I would first like to thank the Members of this Assembly, who, through various standing committees, have worked with the Cabinet towards achieving the priorities of this Assembly within the limits of our fiscal framework. It is a credit to our system of consensus government, as the many successes and accomplishments of the 17th Legislative Assembly and the numerous challenges met and often tough choices made are because we worked together. This budget looks to conclude the work of the 17th Assembly and prepare for the fiscal transition to the 18th Assembly.

Our accomplishments are built on three basic principles:

- We will protect programs and services while managing expenditures growth;
- We will maintain a stable tax environment to support the economy; and

- We will achieve this while remaining committed to the Fiscal Responsibility Policy to manage our debt.

Taking Stock

Guided by these principles, we have achieved some game changing goals during the past 1,197 days. Only 310 days ago we rolled up 5,000 kilometres of red tape when we gained responsibility for the management of our lands, waters and non-renewable resources on April 1st of last year. The smooth transition was a testament to the dedication of our entire public service, from the people who worked directly to make the assumption of the new responsibilities seamless to the employees who carried on the regular business of government while the focus and resources were elsewhere. Resource management decisions are now made faster while using the same stringent requirements and processes as before. We are finally receiving a share of the resource revenues generated in our territory. As an Assembly, we have chosen, after sharing with Aboriginal governments, to save 25 percent of the net revenues we receive from our resource revenues in the Heritage Fund to ensure future Northwest Territories residents share in the benefits of the resources we are using now.

We have protected programs and services. Over the life of the 17th Assembly we will have increased social envelope spending by \$112 million. To date in this Assembly, we have added \$69 million in new initiatives plus almost \$54 million in multi-year one-time funding to offset a portion of the NWT Power Corporation's electricity rate increase, which helped moderate the transition to higher rates. In 2015-16 the government proposes to add \$24.2 million to continue support of the priorities of the Legislative Assembly.

We have not raised taxes, except through indexing to inflation.

We have taken measured risk to make strategic capital investments to grow the economy. This includes the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link, which will provide opportunities for business, more efficient and effective delivery of government programs, and is expected to pay for itself with the anticipated growth of the Inuvik Satellite Station Facility.

During the life of this Assembly, including the 2015-16 capital budget approved last November, we will have delivered, started working on, or committed to \$1.5 billion in capital projects. This includes major projects like the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway and the Stanton Hospital renovation. These infrastructure investments are significant commitments that will benefit our residents for generations.

We have accomplished this while remaining committed to our Fiscal Responsibility Policy. In keeping with the policy's guidelines, we will have generated operating surpluses in every year of our mandate to pay for at least half of our infrastructure and to service debt. Through careful management of expenditures, we were able to keep our commitment to invest an additional \$100 million in capital in the last two years of this Assembly.

While we have borrowed to make capital investments, our debt servicing payments are 1 percent of total annual revenues, well below the Fiscal Responsibility Policy's maximum debt servicing payment guideline of 5 percent of total revenues, and the third lowest in the country.

Economic Outlook

These accomplishments are set against a backdrop of a different reality. We are expecting the economy to have grown 5.2 percent in 2014 and to grow 3.7 percent this year. The growth in 2014 reflects increased diamond production, pre-construction work on the Gahcho Kue Mine and the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway construction. The economic growth should continue this year with the increased investment resulting from the start of construction of the Gahcho Kue Diamond Mine.

These economic growth estimates cloak the decrease in resident employment, the declining population, the dramatically slowing oil and gas exploration, the business closures in some of our communities and the fact that our economy is only four-fifths of what it was in 2007. Our economic growth is concentrated in the diamond industries while the rest of the economy is not really growing at all.

Over the medium term there are encouraging signs that our two largest diamond mines will extend their mine lives. These potential extensions are not overly long-term and we need to be cautious. Forecasts are just forecasts until they become reality. The scope and timing of new resource projects is uncertain and already identified potential new mines, including the Gahcho Kue Mine, are smaller than the existing mines that will mature soon under the current mine plans.

We have been through the resource boom and bust many times and we are fortunate that we have the diamond mines to support our economy as they have. Nevertheless, we should not count on being

lucky again. Our economic future depends on us being able to make investments to grow and diversify the economy and achieve the objectives set in our economic strategies. We are measuring the success of our efforts by setting an aspirational target to increase the Northwest Territories' population by 2,000 people over the next four years. We are measuring success by boots on the ground because other economic indicators are misleading in a small resource-based economy with a large fly in and out workforce.

While all options are on the table to reach our 2,000 target, we are focussed on strategies to help private business retain and recruit as well as do the same for the GNWT workforce. These strategies look at the quality of life offered by the Northwest Territories. We have some of the highest incomes in Canada, our taxes are competitive and the lifestyle is second to none, so we are focusing on reducing the cost of living through investments to reduce energy and transportation costs and increase our stock of affordable housing.

Fiscal Situation

We expect to end 2014-15 with a \$109 million surplus despite facing both expenditure and revenue shocks. The most severe fire season in the Northwest Territories' history has cost \$55 million, or 3 percent of this year's budget. Record 64-year low water levels at the Snare Hydro system required the government to intervene with a \$20 million contribution to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to ensure higher electricity costs of 13 percent are not passed on to residents and businesses. On the revenue side, resource revenues are expected to be \$41 million lower and corporate income tax \$24 million lower than the 2014-15 budget estimates. This perfect storm of shocks has dropped our capacity to borrow and is projected to reduce the \$100 million cushion of unencumbered room under the federally imposed \$800 million borrowing limit to \$70 million by the end of this fiscal year.

Based on the economic outlook and the population growth forecasts, we are projecting revenues to remain almost flat over the medium term while expenditure pressures continue to grow. Without continued careful expenditure management, we will have a fiscal problem. If we want a vibrant economy, we need to make the infrastructure and other investments that will create the environment for our economic potential to be realized. We do not have the revenue growth necessary to make all these investments possible and we are constrained by the \$800 million borrowing limit to borrow to make strategic investments. We can make some investments but it will mean others will not be able to be made, and if we can't find enough savings through efficiency gains then other expenditure management actions will be necessary.

Even a higher limit on our authority to borrow will not mean we can relax on expenditure management. Our borrowing is made up of \$407 million in long-term and public agency debt and \$272 million in short-term debt. Much of our public agency debt, such as the \$184 million in Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation debt, is self-financing through ratepayers. Our short-term debt is created when we borrow for other infrastructure investments and cash shortfalls for programs and services. We use operating surpluses to pay for this debt. Addressing our growing infrastructure deficit and making investments to grow the economy will make large operating surpluses an ongoing requirement.

Consequently, for this budget we asked departments to find savings from within to limit forced growth and reduce the operating base. Our new initiatives, which are mainly completions of actions already started, would not be possible without this restraint.

Budget Highlights

The 2015-16 budget estimates that total revenues will be \$1.83 billion in 2015-16, a 0.6 percent drop from the revised 2014-15 revenue estimate. Through careful expenditure management by departments, we have held the growth in operating expenditures to 2.1 percent in 2015-16 to produce a budget of \$1.68 billion. The projected \$147 million operating surplus will increase our borrowing capacity to \$86 million by the end of 2015-16.

Revenues

This budget introduces no new taxes. We are holding to the principle of maintaining a stable and competitive tax regime. We need tax revenues to make investments for the well-being of residents and to grow the economy. At the same time, we want to be careful to not increase the cost of living, already one of the highest in the country, on Northwest Territories residents and business.

Expenditures

The budgeted 2015-16 operating expenditures are only \$34.6 million higher than the 2014-15 budget. Departments held the line on expenditures by keeping forced growth and other adjustments to \$46 million. This natural increase in spending was partially offset by reductions of \$23.1 million for programs that have ended and \$12.6 million in reductions to department budgets.

Without the concentrated effort by departments to find savings or to re-profile funding from within their existing budgets, it would not have been possible to present the \$24.2 million in new initiatives in this budget to continue the work to advance the priorities of this Assembly over the past four years.

Investing in People

We will be spending over \$930 million on social programs in 2015-16 as investments in the Northwest Territories residents to encourage healthy lifestyles free from poverty. Almost 72 percent of the increase in our operating budget will go towards our social programs, including an additional \$1.75 million for the food allocation in the Income Assistance program, allowing our most vulnerable Northerners to better feed their families.

To date, in this Assembly we have added over \$14.4 million in new initiatives to improve the well-being of Northwest Territories residents, ranging from actions under the Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Early Childhood Development Action Plan to prevention programs.

In this budget we are investing another \$4.9 million in new or re-profiled initiatives that will support Northwest Territories residents in reaching their full potential.

This budget proposes to add \$440,000 to promote integrated approaches to case management for high needs clients being served by multiple departments and agencies. Most of the funding is directed to improving wellness through pilot projects in Yellowknife and Inuvik that will integrate the services provided by various departments and non-government agencies to people with a variety of needs. The team will work directly with clients to help manage their cases so that multi-agency services are integrated into a single team for each individual. This pilot project will provide better service to individuals and will provide information on what approaches will work to ensure the culture shift necessary to break down the barriers and silos that exist across departments and between the GNWT and other agencies providing services. The final product of this pilot project will be the knowledge to make recommendations on how to support integrated case management as a permanent system-wide approach for the delivery of services to clients in a variety of areas, including mental health and wellness.

Helping people gain permanent employment is an objective that supports wellness in individuals as well as reduces income assistance costs. By re-profiling funds from its Income Assistance program, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment will be able to direct \$646,000 for a new initiative to establish five employment service officers in each region of the Northwest Territories to help employable income assistance clients to gain permanent employment or enter into training. These employment service officers will work one on one with specific income assistance clients, who typically have a wide range of needs and barriers to employment readiness and also work with employers throughout their region.

Our Early Development Instrument data suggests that a third of all Northwest Territories children are behind in their development by the time they reach five years of age, and in the smaller communities as many as 60 percent of five-year-olds are not at the level they should be. Many strategies and frameworks work in partnership to address the underlying issues that are holding our children back from reaching their true potential, and through the Early Childhood Development Action Plan this budget includes \$1.12 million in direct action to improve childhood outcomes. This funding will increase wages and training of early childhood staff in some communities. It will also support new regional approaches to early intervention for children in families at risk, improving our ability to provide children and their families with the special supports they need to reduce long-term social, emotional and educational problems.

This budget includes \$1.1 million to support the Wellness Court Program. The Wellness Court is an alternative to conventional court that focuses on addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour. The funds will be used to hire staff for the Wellness Court Program, including case managers and a psychologist, and to create an evaluation framework. We fully expect that over time this specialized court will result in a reduction in offending and will lead to other positive outcomes for clients and their families. In time, the outcomes from this program and specialized court will spill over into savings for the government and decreased demands upon the justice and correctional systems.

Supports for our seniors will have a positive effect on keeping whole families in the territory and is an important part of our population growth strategy. Over the long term we will have to find additional ways to help seniors stay in their own homes and their communities as long as possible. In the short term, however, our priority is to ensure adequate staffing in our existing long-term care facilities and we have added \$618,000 to the 2015-16 budget to provide more hours of direct patient care in Yellowknife's Aven Manor, Fort Simpson's Elders Care Home and Fort Smith's Northern Lights Special Care Home.

In addition to these new initiatives, we are proposing to transfer \$1.6 million from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to add 75 new housing spaces for income support recipients in Inuvik, Hay River and Yellowknife, which will improve the housing support provided to these residents.

Investing in the Economy

We have worked hard to be able to fund strategic investments in infrastructure that will create the environment for economic growth and diversification. We have taken measured risks and

are prepared to take more if we can invest in a fiscally sustainable manner.

Investments to grow the economy are more than investments in strategic infrastructure. Budget 2015-16 continues actions to build a diversified economy that will provide all communities and regions with opportunities for resident employment and business success with \$5.2 million in new initiatives. These actions complement the \$11.9 million in new initiatives spent in previous 17th Assembly budgets to strengthen regional economies and implement actions identified in the Mineral Development Strategy and the Economic Opportunities Strategy.

In total, the budget provides \$2.5 million for initiatives to support the Economic Opportunities Strategy, including more funding for the Agriculture Strategy, the Film Industry Pilot Project, regional economic plans, tourism promotion and training, a business internship, and \$1.5 million in support for the commercial fishing industry.

Over \$1.7 million in new funds are proposed for the Mineral Development Strategy, including \$300,000 for the Geoscience Field Assistant Training Program and a geoscience career liaison coordinator and over \$1.4 million to hire a geophysicist, a surficial geologist and a northern mining business development officer and provide support for incentive programs for exploration, scientific resource deficits and coordination between industrial market segments.

The 2015-16 budget proposes to make an initial contribution of \$1 million to help fund the 2018 Arctic Winter Games. We expect that a community or group of communities outside of Yellowknife will be chosen late this fiscal year to host the 2018 Games. This is a multi-year commitment to provide the host organization with funds to establish an office, hire staff and raise additional resources to conduct the Games and, if necessary, bring existing facilities to the standard expected by the Arctic Winter Games International Committee. Hosting the Games provides community and economic development and lasting sport and health benefits.

Devolution Implementation

We spent \$59 million in last year's budget to assume the responsibilities and duties under the Devolution Agreement for the management of our lands, waters and non-renewable resources. We set aside almost \$10 million of the \$67.2 million transfer into the base of our Territorial Formula Financing Grant in 2014-15 to fund necessary activities that were not anticipated in the initial implementation process. The 2015-16 budget adds \$3 million to complete the devolution implementation, including \$1.2 million associated with the impact on final devolution implementation actions on regular department budgets.

Within the Department of Lands, funding in the amount of \$151,000 has been allocated for the next three years for a resource management specialist to coordinate the GNWT input into the federal amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the federal regulatory improvement initiative and to help ensure the GNWT Surface Rights Board is established and operational by April 1, 2016. Although the act remains federal jurisdiction, the new regulations that are being contemplated under the act will be largely administered by the GNWT through its new delegated authorities. The new regulations represent important additions to the suite of authorities found under the act. The coordinated approach will bring forward the policy thinking from a number of departments to maximize the GNWT's influence in shaping the evolving regulatory regime and minimize its potential exposure to unanticipated administrative costs in new regulations.

An additional \$415,000 is budgeted for new lands and resource specialists and a legal advisor to ensure that we have a coherent and well-planned policy base for building relationships with the new boards and for the necessary coordination of GNWT decision-making with Canada for environmental assessment, inspection and enforcement of existing operations. As well, to continue the work of the office of the oil and gas regulator, we are including \$220,000 to fund a resource management position.

This budget provides \$1 million to establish a new liabilities and financial assurances division to manage and coordinate financial assurances for resource development projects across several departments by ensuring that companies meet their obligations for environmental liabilities. The legislative framework makes project proponents responsible for the remediation of their project or to respond to an environmental event. However, if the proponent does not respond, the GNWT protects itself and its taxpayers from the potential liability by demanding financial securities from the proponent. The new division will improve on the system inherited from the federal government by developing and managing environmental liabilities and financial assurances in collaboration and coordination with GNWT regulatory and central departments. This approach will ensure protection of the environment through whole project assessment of liabilities and financial assurances and provide necessary policy advice. This will ensure that the GNWT identifies the appropriate level of security for a project and will protect the GNWT from the significant financial liabilities that can arise from the failure of a proponent to address an environmental event or its closure and reclamation obligations.

Supporting the Environment

Information management is a key component in the development of sustainable economic and environmental management frameworks. Post devolution, it has become apparent that there are critical gaps in the Northwest Territories environmental and landscape baseline data, and therefore funding is required to increase the knowledge in this important area. This budget proposes investing \$694,000 to establish the Western Arctic Centre for Geomatics in Inuvik. This investment will provide resources for three positions that will provide geomatics services such as remote sensing and research support to the GNWT and other Northwest Territories stakeholders.

Following devolution the GNWT took over the full operation of the Taiga Environmental Laboratory, which provides analytical water sampling to the private sector and other government departments. This budget includes a \$577,000 increase in the facility's operating budget for costs to assume total control of the operations in the laboratory. These costs are expected to be partially offset by the revenues that will be received from the laboratory's operations.

Assuming responsibility for the Northwest Territories lands and waters on April 1st has transformed the GNWT from a co-lead with the federal government to the leader on the Northwest Territories Water Stewardship Strategy. The biggest risk to implementing our Water Stewardship Strategy is the potential effects on transboundary waters from actions of our upstream neighbours. This budget includes one-time funding of \$1.6 million to conclude protective transboundary water agreements with upstream jurisdictions. Commitments flowing from these agreements will be addressed in subsequent budgets.

Investing in Energy and Lowering the Cost of Living

The GNWT has a long-term commitment to reducing energy costs and our reliance on non-renewable energy sources. We have demonstrated this commitment with \$12.3 million in new initiatives in the last three budgets. The \$4 million in new initiatives in this budget will bring the total new actions taken in this Assembly in continuing energy initiatives to lower the cost of living and reduce Northwest Territories greenhouse gas emissions to \$16.3 million.

We are proposing an additional \$1.4 million in this budget to continue our energy conservation efforts. The \$400,000 in additional funding proposed to keep Arctic Energy Alliance regional energy advisors will bring the total funding for this initiative to \$1.13 million per year. As well, the \$1.4 million includes \$400,000 to convert streetlights in NTPC thermal communities to more efficient LED streetlights, \$300,000 to fund the hot water heater

replacement program, which is designed to replace domestic electric hot water heaters with more efficient oil- or propane-fired heaters in non-hydro communities, \$200,000 for the Commercial Energy Efficiency Program and \$100,000 for the Energy Efficiency Incentive Program that helps address upfront cost barriers that consumers face in becoming more energy efficient.

We are continuing our efforts to explore alternative energy sources with \$2.6 million for ongoing and new initiatives. The budget includes \$100,000 in additional funds to support the Alternative Energy Technologies Program, which provides up to one-half of the project cost for biomass and other alternative energy projects. We also propose providing the NWT Housing Corporation with \$700,000 to install solar panels on 30 public housing units in six communities to supply energy for the mechanical and electrical systems. We want to make further use of the sun's energy by proposing \$500,000 to integrate solar panels with the new diesel plant in Colville Lake and \$125,000 to support solar energy smart grid technology in communities. We are also looking to take advantage of world-class winds near Storm Hills by proposing \$175,000 to test the feasibility of large-scale wind-generated power in that location and \$50,000 for the NWT Wind Monitoring Program administered by Aurora Research Institute. We propose to continue to promote community biomass energy projects and evaluation of biomass projects with \$450,000 in additional funding. Finally, we propose \$325,000 to complete liquefied natural gas feasibility studies in Yellowknife and in one of three candidate communities: Fort Liard, Fort MacPherson and Tuktoyaktuk.

We know that to meaningfully reduce the cost of living and to enable the Northwest Territories economy to grow and develop, we need to make significant investments in energy infrastructure, specifically our generation capacity in Yellowknife and in the thermal communities. This fact was confirmed by the recent Energy Charrette held in Yellowknife. Pending the successful conclusion of our borrowing limit discussions with the federal government, the GNWT is prepared to make those investments. These investments are critical economic infrastructure that will lower the cost of living, use environmentally friendly alternative energy sources, minimize our reliance on the use of diesel and help create the conditions for economic growth.

Following discussions with the Standing Committee of Priorities and Planning, we are proposing to bring all of the GNWT's energy functions into the Department of Public Works and Services to better support the long-term sustainability of our energy policies, program development and delivery. This department has a proven track record for getting results in energy planning and conservation and is

already providing a leading role in the adoption of renewable energy technologies and developing and promoting good building practices for the northern environment. This action will result in a consolidated core of energy project management expertise and will provide a clear focus and accountability in energy project and program spending.

Investing to Improve Program and Service Delivery

The 17th Legislative Assembly is committed to improving program and service delivery for our residents and businesses. Including the \$5.6 million in new or enhanced actions proposed in this budget, a total of \$19.6 million will have been directed to improving program efficiency and effectiveness during the life of this Assembly.

Included in these initiatives is almost \$2.5 million to enhance the delivery of French language services and communications to residents of the Northwest Territories.

Last year's budget provided funding to allow health authorities to use information systems expertise at the Technology Service Centre. This budget provides \$1.5 million in additional funding to upgrade regional health authorities' computer systems so that they can be integrated into a territory-wide Health and Social Services Information Systems Service Centre. Bringing all authorities into one common platform will support the continued rollout of e-health programs such as the territorial Electronic Medical Records, which will improve patient outcomes and enhance the quality of care.

This budget includes the transfer of \$2.3 million in traditional economy programs from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The transferred programs include the Community Harvester Assistance Program, local wildlife committees, WSCC coverage for Resource Harvesters, Hunters and Trappers Disaster Compensation Program, Take a Kid Trapping/Harvesting Program and the Western Harvester Assistance Program. The two departments will cooperate to deliver the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources being responsible for the Fur Marketing Service Revolving Fund program and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment being responsible for national and international marketing and promotion. This realignment of responsibilities will ensure a coordinated approach to our programs to support traditional harvesting activities and products.

The government continues with its commitment to decentralize positions to the regions where possible. We are solidly into phase three of our decentralization implementation. After 15 positions

are decentralized in 2015-16, and including the seven positions approved for decentralization in 2016-17, we will have decentralized 150 positions to communities during this Assembly. We are working hard to make decentralization possible from within our existing operations as demonstrated by the Department of the Executive re-profiling resources in headquarters to establish two new service officers in Trout Lake and Wekweeti. However, not all decentralization efforts can be funded internally and this budget provides an additional \$813,000 in 2015-16 for further decentralization actions including costs associated with moving the territorial parks office from Yellowknife to Hay River.

We continue to work to remove the barriers to successful completion of our decentralization strategy. Through the NWT Housing Corporation's Market Housing and Housing for Staff programs, we are working with stakeholders to increase market rental housing in the smaller communities. We are using our recruitment initiatives to help address the high public service vacancy rates outside of Yellowknife by linking Northerners with regional vacancies and providing on-the-job training programs, and where we can't develop Northerners to certain jobs in the short term, we will recruit from outside the Northwest Territories using various recruitment tools and initiatives. Now that the dust has settled from the organization changes as result of devolution, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is currently undertaking an exercise to determine what activities are the most appropriate to decentralize and looks forward to discussing its conclusions with standing committees in the near future.

Looking Ahead

Mr. Speaker, we are forecasting total revenue growth to be basically flat for the next five years. By 2019-20 revenues are forecast to be only 0.4 percent higher than in 2015-16. Over the same period, expenditures are forecast to grow 8.4 percent, or about 2.1 percent a year, under assumptions of strict expenditure management and the return to a \$75 million capital budget.

Clearly, this is not sustainable. The revenue and operating expenditure projections mean that operating surpluses will be substantially reduced by 2019-20 under current assumptions. Smaller operating surpluses drop us deeper into a trap of short-term borrowing for cash to cover operating expenditures and leave little to no resources available for infrastructure investments and debt servicing payments. Even by constraining the capital budget to \$75 million annually, or about 4 percent of total revenues, total debt at the end of 2019-20 is projected to be \$759 million, only \$40 million below the current borrowing limit of \$800 million.

Actions on the revenue side are limited over the short term. Next year over \$1.2 billion of our \$1.8 billion forecast for total revenues comes from a single federal transfer, the Territorial Formula Financing Grant, which is projected to increase an average of 0.3 percent annually over the next five years. Our lack of population growth and the reduction in the forecasts for provincial government spending are compounding the drag on growth in the Formula Financing Grant and are beyond our control. Our \$425 million in own-source revenues are forecast to grow an average of 3.5 percent annually over the next five years, but when we factor in the slow growth in territorial formula financing, the growth in our total revenue forecast becomes flat. While increasing our own source of revenues is an option, we will need to carefully consider the balance between the amount of additional revenues that can be raised on our small tax base and the effect this would have on the Northwest Territories economy.

Fiscal sustainability means that the growth in the total operating and maintenance budget, including compensation and benefits paid to employees, must not exceed our revenue growth. Fiscal prudence means we need to keep a cushion of at least \$100 million in borrowing room. Taken together, this means other expenditure management actions, including reductions, need to be considered.

A higher borrowing limit will not solve this problem. Even the ability to borrow more without compromising our commitment to the Fiscal Responsibility Policy will require careful management of expenditures. What we borrow we must repay. This is why the provisions in the proposed Financial Administration Act that will ensure that the Legislative Assembly will have the ability to review, debate and vote on all short- and long-term borrowing annually through a borrowing plan tabled with the main estimates will be so important.

We are approaching the edge of a cliff and our challenge is to ensure that we do not go over. We should not be operating this close to the edge. Going forward, our main priority will be to continue to maintain fiscal sustainability while protecting our programs and services, making investments in critical economic infrastructure to grow the economy and investing in capital to reduce our \$3.8 billion infrastructure deficit. There will be difficult choices to make.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I shall conclude with the blunt message that we have been spending everything that we receive. This can work when revenues are growing, but with a forecast of flat revenue growth over the medium term we need to make sure our expenditures grow in line with our revenues.

However, as I was reminded by participants during last fall's budget dialogues, we have been here before. We have learned from past mistakes and together we can work to ensure fiscal sustainability to our budget. In the days leading up to the next Assembly, we must start considering the difficult decisions so that we are not passing our problems to future generations.

We will meet this challenge and turn it into opportunities. By working together to ensure that the actions we take will give us the best value for the dollars we are spending, we will still be able to seize opportunities to invest in actions to grow our economy, increase our population, increase our tax base, lower the cost of living and continue to protect the environment. Our Aa1 credit rating and key indicators reflect that we are collectively continuing to manage our way through these often trying times.

All Members of this Assembly should be proud of the work we have done toward achieving our vision of strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories. We will not shrink from the challenge of making the difficult choices to ensure that the GNWT remains on a fiscally sustainable path, able to implement our vision for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Colleagues, before we continue, I'd like to welcome the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, George Tuccaro, who is in the House today with us. Welcome. Also, I'd like to welcome a former Commissioner, Speaker, Minister, Member, Sergeant-at-Arms and a man of all seasons, Mr. Anthony J. Whitford. It's always good to have you in the House, Tony.

Colleagues, now we'll take a 30-minute recess for a reception in respect of the Afghanistan Memorial Vigil in the Great Hall. We will be holding the reception outside the public gallery in committee room A, and I invite everybody in the public gallery to join us for the reception.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. Item 3, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier, Mr. McLeod.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 132-17(5):
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the Honourable Glen Abernethy will be absent from the House today due to illness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Item 4, Members' statements. The honourable Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
FORT SIMPSON HEALTH CENTRE
REPLACEMENT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that the planning study for replacement of the Fort Simpson Health Centre is underway. This is a facility that needs to be replaced due to age and maintenance costs. A new building will improve the quality of health care service delivery in Fort Simpson and the five outlying communities which depend on this as a regional centre.

As we continue to improve and expand our health care services, we need quality medical workspace and offices. This session we are debating the operations and maintenance budget of the GNWT. While this project I'm speaking about is a capital project, the efficiencies of a new building will always bring operations and maintenance costs down.

It was our own engineers who did a study and recommended the replacement of the facility due to its age and increasing maintenance costs. The Minister of Health and Social Services should be aware of the importance of the health centre replacement to deliver improved services and better equipment to the residents of Fort Simpson and region.

As you are aware, this project is on the red flag list in the capital plan, meaning that upon the completion of the planning study we will consider it seriously during the capital planning process for 2015-16, which begins after this summer session and into the summer months.

The capital needs for health facilities in the communities are just as important in the regions and communities as the need to renovate the Stanton Territorial Hospital. It's also important for me to ensure that we begin the process of including a replacement health centre for Fort Simpson into the 2015-16 capital plans.

Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister of Public Works and Services about the current stage of the planning study at the appropriate time. Mahsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. The honourable Member for Tu Nedhe, Mr. Nadli.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION
IN FORT PROVIDENCE

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across our small communities, our language use is declining at

a scary pace. That means language revitalization is a tricky business. That means the government is aware that the consequences of inaction will be dire or even irreversible.

The government recently transferred the bulk of this responsibility to Aboriginal governments. The rationale behind the decisions is that Aboriginal governments are the experts on their own languages. For my part, I am pleased to see Aboriginal governments being entrusted with the task.

When the Dehcho First Nations met to discuss how to implement the region's five-year Aboriginal language plan and manage their responsibilities, leaders were optimistic about the possibilities. It doesn't surprise me. Language revitalization in my region has a dynamic and long-standing history. The focus is on Dene Zhatie, also known as South Slavey. The dedicated curriculum can be really applied to daily life.

In the community of Fort Providence, Ms. Lois Philipp is the star player in the language revitalization drama. As a young girl, Ms. Philipp attended Deh Gah School, and for more than a decade she's been a school principal. Back in 2013 she received Outstanding Principal Award from a national education advocacy group. Ms. Philipp is known for combining education, culture and community. For many years the Deh Gah School in Fort Providence has hosted emerging programs for school aged students. It's an experiential-based learning opportunity that allows students to acquire their language and reconnection with family members.

More recently, through a partnership with the University of Victoria, a university-level program is also running out of the school. Students from across the region attend classes for two weeks and then participate in practicums and field placements.

Taking control of language revitalization is an exciting opportunity for leaders in my region, but it's a huge challenge because funding is so limited.

At the appropriate time I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONTRIBUTIONS OF NORTHERN POWER SUPPLY ENTITIES

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House the issues of the cost of living and the cost of power were raised. Twenty-five years ago I was honoured to be appointed to the first board of directors of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. With the repatriation of what was a federal Crown corporation, the

Northern Canada Power Commission, to its rightful place in the northern territories, one of the first orders of business was selecting a community for the headquarters office. Pine Point was closing down and the economic fallout from that for Hay River was going to be immense. After a concentrated lobbying effort, Hay River was selected. I could have not been more pleased to be a part of those initial days of setup in the North.

NTPC was a new asset of the GNWT. With the headquarters in Hay River came job opportunities, economic activity that went a long way toward offsetting the loss of Pine Point. Over the years NTPC has paid multi-million dollar dividends to their shareholder, the GNWT. That dividend was partially used to fund things like the Territorial Support Program. NTPC is a regulated for-profit Crown corporation. It has been served well by excellent management and leadership.

Unforeseen cost overruns on capital infrastructure upgrades on replacement volatility and fuel prices, these things all the while NTPC was investing in exploration of alternate energy sources and greener ways to generate power.

Northland Utilities is a private utility company that has operated in the Northwest Territories since 1951 with Hay River as their headquarters. After the decrease in hydro demand from the closure of Pine Point, that excess hydro from the Taltson was rerouted to Hay River and purchased from NTPC. NUL has also been an integral part of Hay River's economic base, contributing to employment and economic activity in its oversight and distribution of power in Hay River as well as the communities of Fort Providence, Kakisa, Trout Lake, Enterprise, Hay River Reserve, Dory Point and Wekweeti.

Ross Stanley, for example, by the way, the manager of NUL, as a point of interest, has worked for NUL in Hay River for over 40 years. Jim Thom in Fort Providence has worked for NUL for 25 years. NUL has millions of dollars in infrastructure on the ground in the NWT and is amongst the longest private sector companies in the North. NUL also boasts Aboriginal ownership and partnerships.

Fast forward to today. It is incumbent on us as elected leaders at all levels of government to ensure we do all we can to mitigate the high cost of living, including power, on behalf of our constituents. To that end, the Town of Hay River has undertaken an exercise to review the franchise agreement with Northland Utilities. Our government has hosted energy charrettes and much investment in exploring alternate energy prospects to address concerns within the broad mandate of cost of living.

I'd like to seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I appreciated the Premier and Minister Miltenberger's comments yesterday that the cost of power is a complex issue that our government is committed to taking a measured and thorough approach to examining if there are ways to reduce the cost of power to consumers in the North. There are many discussions, analysis and inquiries to be made to that end fully considering the full impact of any potential changes.

In the meantime, I want to come clean about my interest in this topic. Firstly, I am an MLA for Hay River, the headquarters of NUL, NTPC and the PUB. While these discussions are taking place at a municipal and territorial level, I want our comments and actions to instill confidence in the workplaces of these institutions. I also represent constituents, the private and business consumers of power to whom we owe direction and decisions with clear communications and due diligence that fully contemplate options and the effects of the actions and decisions we may make. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBRE OPTIC LINK

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month Members of the Legislative Assembly and some Members from Cabinet had the opportunity to travel up to Inuvik for a very historical event. That was the groundbreaking and the ribbon cutting of the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link.

Speaking about the community of Inuvik and the location that it's at, it's in an area where it's ideal for tracking the satellites that orbit the earth and collecting real-time data. These satellites monitor things like environmental monitoring, security, surveillance, resource development, as well as something that's been big and that's global warming issues and some of those projects.

The investment into the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link allows us to take that real-time data and ship it out to companies and countries that are investing in the satellite station facility in Inuvik.

I wanted to mention that in the budget address earlier it was great to see that this government is establishing a Western Arctic Centre for Geomatics in Inuvik. So, making sure that we do put the resources and the support in there now, so that when the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link is up and running, that we have people in place to do the work and working on that information.

However, aside from that office, I want to look at how we can utilize more of the Aurora College in Inuvik, the Aurora Research Institute in Inuvik and see where other investments are going. This fibre optic link is not only going to be good for Inuvik but

the whole territory. In an economy that we focus on where there's boom and bust, this Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link and the satellite station is going to create sustainable revenue for the North and for Inuvik and is also going to create jobs up and down the valley. It's going to help stabilize the economy not only for Inuvik but for the North. So when we talk about our fiscal situation we're in now, this investment that we have in the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link is one that's going to have a legacy for the North, for the people and the way we do business not only in Canada but around the world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolynny.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LEADERSHIP ON ENERGY SOLUTIONS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After spending a quarter-million dollars on two energy charrettes during the life of this Assembly, this government is poised in perfect position to say once again, with today's budget address, it has no idea what it's doing. But the old-age tactic of the three D's, that's delay, defer and defuse, the taxpayer is once again stranded on the roadside with no further resolve to our energy debacle.

Ironically, during our last session, every time an issue of energy, cost of living, or electricity generation hit the floor of this House, the Cabinet was quick on its feet to point out to the Messiah of the upcoming Energy Charrette as its public defender in action. So quick to point, but lacking in substance, everyone in this House fell for the trick.

Of course, who doesn't like a \$100,000 contact on the public books? I mean, it did create a couple of jobs for a couple of keynote speakers and some facilitators. This is always good, Mr. Speaker, but really what did this accomplish that wasn't already in archive?

When the public reads disclaimers in the most recent charrette's document conclusion, such as, "this is not considered to be a GNWT document," then I ask, what is it then? I think we all know what this document is; it's another GNWT Swiffer Duster picker-upper.

In the end, the public may never know the full impact of this latest energy charade, or I mean charrette, as a financial implication of our related investment proposals will come long after the next election banners come down.

It's really too bad this government will be judged only on its use of words and not its actions to mitigate our energy concerns. Let's hope the leadership of the 18th Assembly has more foresight. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REFLECTIONS ON BUDGET ADDRESS

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the budget is out and I look forward to discussing and debating it over the next five weeks. We as a government, as a Legislature, are stretching our resources further and further and I'm becoming increasingly concerned that we will overextend and end up in financial hot water.

In the fall we approved many millions of dollars for fire season costs and to avoid a low water rider on our power bills, some \$60 million in total. That was not money in the bank. Unfortunately, we don't have a savings account to draw on, a rainy day account that the Minister of Education talked about yesterday. No, we have to borrow to accommodate those two expenditures, and as we all know, borrowing costs money.

What are we doing in this 2015-16 budget to reduce or eliminate our need for short-term borrowing? The Minister of Finance yesterday stated that he expects flat revenue growth from now until fiscal year 2019-20, growth of less than half a percent I think he said.

I've said many times and I must say again, we need to find a way to increase our own-source revenues. There have been options proposed by Regular Members, but the government has so far studiously ignored any and all suggestions. We still do not have any new source of revenue to offset our operations and maintenance budget.

Speaking of revenues, it's been a year since the Finance Minister announced the government's population strategy, the goal to attract 2,000 people to the NWT in the next five years. It's now 2,000 in the next four years. We're one year into the strategy and I have yet to see a plan on paper, yet to see an explanation of how we will be enticing people to come and live in the NWT. I'm guessing we'll see a decline in our total population again this year when the Stats Bureau report comes out.

We've been operating under passive restraint, the latest buzz word from Finance, for several years now. Passive restraint has been the mechanism used to save money and try to live within our means. How well has that strategy worked? Not well. The budget for '15-16 has increased yet again over last year's budget, a situation we've seen every year since the start of this Assembly. Stronger action is required. Either cut programs and services or find another revenue source.

I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. BISARO: With the Finance Minister's statement that there will be no new taxes, we are not going to have a new revenue source in this next

budget year. Somehow we have to reduce our expenditures. As was noted by the Finance Minister both during the budget consultation held in Yellowknife last fall and in today's budget address, our current financial situation is not sustainable. The question is: What are we going to do to make it sustainable?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF CANCER

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today because I want to draw attention to yesterday, which was World Cancer Day. February 4th each year is World Cancer Day, and it's an important day that we all must acknowledge.

Yesterday might have been World Cancer Day, but the truth is, every day is cancer day for someone or someone's family. Just look around us. Even this Chamber has not gone untouched. We have people in this room and we even have people in our gallery who have overcome the struggle of cancer.

Cancer is not just an individual disease; it is certainly a family one. Whether we know them personally or we know them at a distance, cancer touches everyone. For those people and families who are lucky enough to get through remission, let us not forget that it becomes a lifetime struggle.

World Cancer Day should be, really, a call to arms for everyone. I would like to say a challenge of cancer in its own way, like Mount Everest of our time, a mountain that is there to be challenged but a mountain that is to be conquered.

If you look across the stats, age matters little, gender doesn't matter, background or even if you're rich or poor has really no effect. Cancer finds people everywhere. Cancer affects everyone equally. What changes is people's availability through prevention, detection and treatment. That's where some of the imbalances start to take hold. Early prevention goes a long way, detection is key and treatment is obviously the solution, but to put all those three components together, that will be the item of success we must all target.

Truly, cancer is a global problem, and one we must all fight for, fight with, and fight against. Yesterday we were privileged to hear some interesting stories of survivors. Charlie Furlong, Patrick Scott and Shiri MacPherson were on a video provided by the Department of Health and Social Services. I want to acknowledge all three of them, but in particular I want to emphasize both Charlie Furlong and Patrick Scott placed their success on the relationship their partners had with them. The reason I say that, and I want to underscore, is because cancer is not an individual disease, it's a family disease, it is a community disease.

In the Northwest Territories, 111 new cancer cases are diagnosed each year, and many of us think that it happens here more, but statistics prove that it's just as common here as elsewhere.

In closing, I want to say that the richness of life is really about family and health. I encourage each and every one of you to take that to heart and make sure when you know your body best, take care of yourself, not just for yourself but for your loved ones as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON BUDGET ADDRESS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a few comments about the budget. Obviously, there are many things in this budget. Some of the things that we are pleased with is obviously the moving of the territorial parks office to the Hay River area, the \$1.5 million in support of the commercial fishery, the housing programs in Hay River, and maybe even a million dollars for the Arctic Winter Games for Hay River or Inuvik. Obviously, we're happy with no new taxes. I think most people are pleased with that.

We are spending \$930 million in social programs, a large amount, but yet we still have a lot of people asking questions, people that want help with mental addictions, drug and alcohol addictions or mental health. Northern contractors are still complaining about northern content and northern supply. People are still concerned about northern manufacturing and the fact that we're not supporting some of our northern businesses.

We have some other positive things in the budget. Obviously, the \$20 million subsidy to power rates, our constituents wanted that, didn't want to pay more in power, but we need to find better ways to do that and I see other things, solar, wind, other investments. All of this positive stuff done with the government's budget, with forced growth, trying to hold forced growth, but the concerns are the spending.

In this Assembly we've seen a 16.7 percent increase in our budget. Not a bad number, 16.7, but when you look at it in the way of a number, \$236 million more than when we started this Assembly, that number has to be put under control. We have to figure out a way to do more with less. We have to control this spending. We can't let it get out of control. It's getting way too big, never mind the amount of debt that we are carrying and we're getting bigger and bigger. We need to control that more. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON BUDGET ADDRESS

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to make comments on the budget address. On page 11 of the budget, titled Looking Ahead, when we look at the first paragraph on page 11, it paints a bleak picture of what possibly could happen in the Northwest Territories. Our revenue growth is basically going to be flat to 2019-2020. This is what's coming up for the new Legislative Assembly next year.

Our revenue coming in will not increase very much, but our expenditures, as Mr. Bouchard talked about, are increasing. We want more. Communities are asking for more. Our needs are being challenged by the less revenue that we have coming in.

The way I look at it, something has got to give. We can't sustain this way of doing business and operating our territory. More and more is being asked of the Assembly, being asked of the MLAs. We're a territory. That's \$1.2 billion of the \$1.8 billion, as stated, comes from the federal government. Our dependency on the federal government is great and we're just raising \$425 million from our own-source revenues.

I'm glad that there are no new taxes coming in, but when you look at it, certainly as the Minister said, we are being pushed to the edge of a cliff, but who is pushing us? We don't want to operate on our toes going forward.

I think it's going to take a whole new mindset and attitude going forward on how do we maintain what we have now, sustain that and look at everything. Nothing is safe anymore in the operation of this territorial government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MACKENZIE DELTA HOUSING SHORTAGE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my statement is on the need for increasing housing units within my riding in the Mackenzie Delta, especially in Aklavik and Fort McPherson which have a waiting list of up to three years.

As I mentioned in our last session, this government has done a great job over the last number of years replacing units, although we now need to shift our attention to adding units that are needed in our small communities, as I mentioned.

Our goal is to increase the population in our territory by 2,000 people over the next few years, yet our smaller communities have a shortage of housing. Within our budget that was addressed today, it is nice to see \$1.6 million put into housing to increase 75 units, but that's for Inuvik, Hay River

and Yellowknife. What about the small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. Item 5, reports of standing and special committees. Item 6, returns to oral questions. Item 7, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Mrs. Groenewegen.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Jackie Milne in the visitors gallery today. She is the promoter and achiever of many things in all things agricultural. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce, to you and through you, someone who does attend a lot of our proceedings here from the riding of Range Lake, Mr. David Wasylciw.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also introduce constituent Jackie Milne, who also, as Jane indicated, is the face of agriculture in the South Slave and working on a lot of exciting projects down there. She's a go-getter. If we could divide her up into a few more and multiply Jackie in a couple of industries, that's for sure. She's a go-getter; she's enthusiastic.

I'd also like to recognize Tony Whitford, a good friend, as well as Darrell Beaulieu.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like my good colleagues here, I too wish to recognize one of our favourite territorial constituents, Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford, and he certainly was one of the people I was thinking about as those who have survived the day-to-day struggle with cancer.

As well, I'd like to acknowledge Darrell Beaulieu, the CEO of Denendeh Development Corp. As well, he is our BDIC chair and we could be talking about his resume here all day.

Sitting next to him is Margaret Gorman, who probably is the lady that makes it all happen and I'd like to thank her for attending, too, today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize Mr. Beaulieu and Ms. Gorman. I'd also like to recognize Tony Whitford and thank Tony for some of the advice that he's given me over the years.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. Mr. Ramsay.

HON. DAVID RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to take a second to recognize Mr. Darrell Beaulieu. Darrell is also the chair of our Business Development and Investment Corporation and I know Margaret Gorman is with him from DDC. Welcome.

It often doesn't get said, but I want to recognize Anthony W.J. "Tony" Whitford. He is my predecessor in the riding of Kam Lake, the last guy to serve as the MLA for Kam Lake. Welcome to the House.

As well, Jackie Milne. I know others have said she's a real champion of agriculture here in the Northwest Territories and I want to welcome her to the House, as well as David Wasylciw as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. Welcome everybody here in the gallery. Thank you for taking an interest in our proceedings here today.

Item 8, acknowledgements. Item 9, oral questions. The Member for Sahtu, Mr. Yakeleya.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 554-17(5): SUSTAINABILITY OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

MR. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask a question to the Minister of Finance. On page 11 of the budget address in the fourth paragraph the Minister talks about the fiscal sustainability, meaning that growth in the total operations and maintenance budget, including compensation and benefits paid to employees, must not exceed our revenue growth.

I want to ask the Minister if he could explain to the House what ideas or what things can be considered to not exceed the benefits and compensation to our employees due to the lack of our growth in revenue.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Yakeleya. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, one of the biggest single costs in the government is in fact what we pay for our staff of over 5,000 employees, so having affordable compensation packages are going to be critical on a go-forward basis. As well, we have to clearly collectively look at the vacancy rates and then, by extension, as we've talked about but very rarely, move in a comprehensive way. Look if we have to make choices as part of programs and services and what's critical and more of a priority to us, and if there needs to be some retrenching of our mandate, what would that be. Those are the areas that would be included. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance, given the situation in which we may be in on a go-forward basis, does that

mean everything is on the table with regards to the number of employees we have, compensation and benefits and programs and services that we're going to deliver and sustain in our communities and that it might mean that we're going to have to freeze or pause on our hiring with our employees in the Northwest Territories?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, if we're going to do this in an even-handed, comprehensive way, all things will be on the table. We need to look at all solutions and how creative we can be. Things that the Member has touched on would be some of those factors to be considered. We can leave no stone unturned as we look at fiscal sustainability and, at the same time, honouring our commitment to protect the programs and services.

We have to come to a hard decision about limits to growth, how big a civil service can we afford. Even though we've had restraint, every budget, including this one, has some positions in it. Every MLA, myself included, pushes hard to get government jobs in our communities and in our constituencies, which is all well and good through decentralization and those things. Every Member has asked, even though they know what our budget constraints are.

We need health centres, housing. You name the issue; we need those kinds of investments. So this is not a task for the faint of heart, but it is one that we'll have to apply ourselves to. Thank you.

MR. YAKELEYA: I think the Finance Minister has clearly laid it out on page 11 and he has had some discussions with us, and those are the choices that the Finance Minister has written about, the difficult choices that the Assembly will have to make.

I want to ask the Minister, given this reality, when will this exercise start to happen or we'll start to see some beginning of what we have to start making decisions about?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, this process is started. We've been using passive restraint and fiscal prudence discipline. We've been working on that. Things have changed in southern jurisdictions that have affected our formula, the original escalator in terms of the money they spend, and other things that are dragging down our formula overall. Our own-source revenues are growing at about 3.7 percent. They're projected to continue to grow. But when you look at some of the fiscal problems down south with the larger provinces, other provinces where they have severe challenges with their own budgets and debt and balancing their books as well as what the federal government is doing, it means we've been on this for a while.

So it starts now. I mentioned to the press this morning, we already have in Fort Smith the local housing folks on strike. We know we have collective agreements coming due, starting right away with

the Power Corporation, and very shortly after that as we move forward into the 18th Assembly just about all the collective agreements are going to come due. We're going to need to sit down and negotiate fair but affordable agreements that are going to reflect the need to keep our expenditures and our revenues in sync. We cannot have our expenditure growth exceed our revenue growth. That discussion is going to happen and that will lead to looking at how we manage the programs and services, things like vacancy rates, if we have to make choices, what are they? But there are very real things that are now underway and this budget, we've been setting the stage for that and this budget continues to lay out that plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Yakeleya.

MR. YAKELEYA: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is correct that we're going to have to make some real hard, cold fact decisions and some things that we know for sure that just need to stay in our communities or in our centres.

I want to ask the Minister, given that what he's portraying right now, is that something that we need to look at within our Crown corporations or agencies and say it makes sense? I know one of the issues right now, the Minister of Health is putting the health boards together to reduce the cost and make it more efficient.

Do we look at that type of avenue with, say, our energy sectors and our other areas that we know that makes a lot of sense for our small territory?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Everything that's funded by GNWT money, I believe, has to be considered. We talked about leaving no stone unturned. That doesn't matter if it's the Power Corp, the health boards, divisional boards, housing folks. It doesn't matter. We have to make sure that we manage all the money. This body votes on every penny that runs those 5,000 employees, all our boards, agencies and our own government departments, so we have to look at them all. As the Member asked, are all options on the table, and the answer is, once again, yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Member for Range Lake, Mr. Dolyunny.

QUESTION 555-17(5):
CENTRALIZATION OF
GNWT ENERGY FUNCTIONS

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we heard in today's budget address, energy is now the new activity in the Public Works and Services portfolio. This new role appears to contain, as we are told, the new fuel services division, formerly called the petroleum products division. It will now look after energy conservation. We've heard about efficiency programs, alternative energy solutions

and things about energy policy and planning. All these energy initiatives were previously fragmented throughout the GNWT, and because of these new found powers, my questions will be for the Minister of Public Works and Services.

I can understand the rationalization of trying to accumulate all the fragmentation of our energy programs, but to the question, if the Minister can answer here, what is the rationalization of putting energy now into Public Works and Services?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Dolynny. The Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June 2013, a recommendation came from the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning from the Regular Members. It recommended that Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources be created into a separate department. Cabinet looked at that in May of 2014 and looked at that recommendation and made the decision that we would consolidate one of those functions, well, two of them actually, the energy and the petroleum into Public Works, so that was the reason for us making that move over to creating that division under Public Works and Services.

MR. DOLYNNY: We'll probably dissect that question more as we get into the budget, but how does the Minister plan to coordinate with departments such as Industry, Tourism and Investment, Environment and Natural Resources and the NWT Power Corporation, especially on energy policy and all these initiatives?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Actually, we feel that with these three divisions consolidated under one area of Public Works, it would be easier to develop comprehensive energy policies and strategies. We find that we'll also be able to synchronize our planning for all of the energy functions. We also will be bringing people from ITI, three positions from ITI that were in energy policy and planning, along with the Northwest Territories Energy Corporation and positions that were there, along with one position from Environment and Natural Resources.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you to the Minister. As I said earlier, PWS oversees its new Fuel Services Program, previously known as the petroleum products division. This Fuel Services Program deals with NWT communities not accessible by the private sector.

Can the Minister indicate how he intends to track the cost of fuel in these communities?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The petroleum products division will become the fuel services division, so all of the functions at this point where we're buying fuel from the rack and then delivering and then having distribution at the community level, those costs and then the functions and the positions that are directly associated with those functions of delivering fuel to

the communities will be the cost of fuel, and that's how we will continue to determine the cost of fuel in these communities that we provide fuel services to.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Dolynny.

MR. DOLYNNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister indicate if he intends to make the cost of fuel in communities more easily accessible, more transparent to the public to view?

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Yes. We try to, within the rules and the regulations that govern the revolving fund, we have some flexibility, so as now, when the opportunity comes where we anticipate the fuel costs continuing to go down for a little bit more, we're lowering the cost of fuel for all of the communities where we provide a service, and the cost is going to be lowered from anywhere from seven cents to nine cents a litre at this time and anticipating some more costs of fuel being lowered when the delivery actually occurs.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre, Mr. Hawkins.

QUESTION 556-17(5):
IMPACT OF LOW WATER LEVELS
ON POWER COSTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask some questions to the Minister of the NWT Power Corporation. Oddly enough, it's not actually on rates, so those concerned can feel comfortable it's not about that or, yeah, those who can feel a little at ease.

Late last year we were given the terribly shocking news that the government may have to look at bailing out the potential rate rider that would have carried about \$20 million on the Power Corporation, and that would have been about \$10 million each year. Since that time of the experience that led us to the particular problem, oil prices have significantly dropped.

My question for the Power Corporation Minister is: It was banked on that it was approximately \$10 million each year to cover the shortfall through the generation of power, so I'd like to know what type of analysis is being done, because I guess we gave approval for \$20 million, \$10 million each year, to be spent to make up that shortfall in power. I guess we don't need all that particular money, so what type of watch is happening, how much money are we actually saving from that initial \$10 million each year that we gave them to spend? Because if you're not spending it, I'd like to know what's happening to it.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will spend what is needed, so the volume will depend on the temperature. For example, when I came in here Tuesday from Fort Smith, it was about 40 below, and when I came over the hill every smokestack at Jackfish was going flat out with a great big plume of smoke, so it depends on the consumption.

There have been some projected savings with the cost of diesel. Diesel hasn't come down as much as the price of oil. We're tracking that. We'll account for every penny and litre that we use and burn on an as required basis.

Ten million dollars has not gone into the NTPC coffers. It will only be done based on actuals and invoices, so it will all be accounted for, and we're paying very close attention to that projected savings.

Once again, depending on the cold and what's happening with fuel prices, it could be in the neighbourhood of \$900,000 or maybe \$1 million, but again it depends on a number of factors that we don't control. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Any savings is certainly good. Usually when Members approve a supplementary appropriation, we usually say goodbye to the money because we never see it again. The issue really is about accounting, and I'm glad to hear it's going to be drawn down by bills and actuals.

When can the territorial residents and, more particular, when can the Members see the accounting of at least this first year? It's difficult to predict next year, but when can we see the accounting and results of that particular money, because we want to make sure this money is being spent on what it's intended for. Who knows where it goes once we give approval to it and that's really the issue.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I would just like to clarify for the record for my young colleague for Yellowknife Centre, that a point of fact is when supplementary appropriations are voted on, we do see them, we see them visible all around us. They help us provide services to adults down south for health. They help fund projects. They help move money forward in the budget, so we can do the Tuk-Inuvik highway. Every cent that we put into supplementary appropriations and approve in this House is visible and brings added value to the Northwest Territories.

With regard to the Members, if there's a wish, we can pull together an accounting today, if you'd like, but we'd be more than happy to meet with committee. I understand there's a meeting coming up with the Power Corporation with the committees. We can have them make sure that they have that information at hand for committee members. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Knowing the rules of the House as I do, I can't speak to a specific example made in committee once, but the deputy minister said if they have money left over for a particular initiative, they just keep it. So that's the point of this exercise and why I'm asking about this particular money, to make sure it's accounted for properly. If all the money isn't required – we went on good faith to support it – we'd like to see what isn't used and returned to the good balances of the people of the Northwest Territories.

As far as reporting it, I'd be personally satisfied if you could report it when it's completed in the cycle of the season. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Once again to my young friend from Yellowknife Centre, my political life exceeds his by a couple of months and I can say to him with some certainty, plus some time in government, the rule that I've seen is the Legislature has been very careful all along that they always coffer the money. One of the conditions in the FMB that comes to the House is the money is spent on what it is voted for and if you don't use it, it goes back. If you want to change the use, then you have to ask. So I will make sure that the staff of NTPC are ready to address the issues when they meet with committee. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Hay River North, Mr. Bouchard.

QUESTION 557-17(5):

ISSUES ARISING FROM BUDGET ADDRESS

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be for the Minister of Finance on a few things that were in the budget. The first thing I have is about the moving of the territorial parks positions to Hay River.

Can he indicate to me how many positions that includes?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard. The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's still in planning, but it will be at least two positions.

MR. BOUCHARD: I would just like to get clarification on the scheduling of when this would happen and when we would get a report on how that transition will happen.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Work is being done in terms of the planning and potential notification, pending the passage of the budget and April 1st kicking in. If there are people that have to be moved or housed or relocated, those kinds of things, it could take as long as 18 months or two years to make the final move. Political commitment has been made. If the positions are vacant, things

may move faster. The Minister of ITI would be well able to speak to that issue when his budget comes before the House. Thank you.

MR. BOUCHARD: I look forward to those questions in the House. The Minister stated in his budget address, the 2,000 people plan.

Can he give us a bit of an update on where that plan is? Ms. Bisaro discussed this as well. Where are we at? We are one year in. Have we made any successes in getting 2,000 more people to live in the Northwest Territories?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The first year has been a planning year and we've been working with industry and we are looking at changes to the procedures. For example, in Human Resources, where we want to be able to go south to job fairs or recruiting, that we're going to empower the folks that go down there to look at the resumes and do interviews. If the people meet the criteria, then a conditional job offer can be made pending the checking of references. That's as opposed to the current process where we have to come back and months go by and people wander away. That's one thing.

We are expecting and the Minister of ECE will be standing up in the House here in the very near future about good news issues where it pertains to the Nominee Program, the expedited process, the number of spaces we are going to have as a government, the ability to really ramp up our efforts in that area that will see a significant influx to the Northwest Territories. We are working with ITI on the work that they do, as well, with Make Your Mark and the other programs they have.

As a government we've made a decision that when we go south, now that we've sorted out education access to the names of the students in the various communities, want to start budgeting in our travel time to sit down with students in the communities we go to, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, you name it, to take them out and meet with them and do the recruiting that we talk about to ensure we don't get superseded or bypassed by industry or other recruiters because we don't make that effort. In fact, when we were down in Ottawa just recently, I and Minister Lafferty and Mr. Beaulieu were at breakfast with about eight or 10 of the students from Ottawa. We talked with them and the good news was that every one of the folks that came to breakfast indicated that they are definitely coming back to the North, but they really appreciated that effort, and that effort will pay dividends.

So, those that scoff or those that say you've had a year, you should have 500 people here already, sometimes ready, fire, aim is not the process to take. We want to get our aim clear first, before we pull the trigger, and that's what we've done in this first year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Bouchard.

MR. BOUCHARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a great Minister's statement. The Minister didn't talk about the mine workers who fly in/fly out.

How are we working on them to make sure they come back and work in the Northwest Territories and quit flying over our heads? How do we get them to stay in the Northwest Territories?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: That is an issue that bedevils every jurisdiction that has a lot of resource development, like Alberta. Probably many of us have been on planes, I know I have, when there's a shift change coming out of Fort McMurray. So it is a challenge. What is happening with Dominion Diamonds, for example, they've taken that issue head on and they are doing away with their incentives and paying of travel back and forth to force the issue. It's that kind of courageous corporate action that we're hoping will bear fruit and add to our 2,000 in five year success. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, Mr. Moses.

QUESTION 558-17(5):
POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE
MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBRE OPTIC LINK
AND SATELLITE FACILITY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to follow up on my Member's statement earlier on the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link as well as the Inuvik Satellite Facility. I have questions for the Minister of Finance.

It's been in the newspaper and on NWT Days we had a delegation going over to China and Japan. We had a delegation go to Sweden as well as Germany, I think last year.

I just want to know what kind of talks and, I guess, commitments are we getting from other countries to look at putting up antennas or satellites at the Inuvik Satellite Facility. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This whole initiative has been one of acceleration that the federal government and other countries were very interested when we started talking about this project in the last government and they were giving us a lot of verbal support. As we move forward through the last government, late in the last government, but this government where we worked with the Assembly and we ramped up our interest and we've moved this project from the political debate to the approval of the money and project design to, as the Member said, the actual start-up of the installation and the fibre optic line,

there's been an increasing amount of business. Literally, countries are beating a path to the door of Inuvik because they know that we are committed. The money has been voted, the project is being built, it's being built by a high quality firm with Ledcor and NorthwesTel and it's going to give the very benefits the Member is talking about.

So we have the Swedes; we have the Germans; we have interest from the Norwegians; we're talking to the Japanese; we're looking and talking to the Italians; we're looking at going back this June to go do another quick tour to make sure that we can really market this now that we have a product that is going to be on the ground in the second part of 2016. Sweden Space Agency just came out, in fact, when we're heading to Ottawa, with a very positive press release saying they're doubling their investment in Inuvik because of the fact that they are now very satisfied that this project is going to happen and it's going to have enormous benefit to Inuvik, all the way down the valley, but Inuvik is the anchor tenant and it's going to change the face of Inuvik. For this \$80 million, we're going to be transforming the economy in Inuvik away from total reliance on resource development to this type of information technology that has an enormous long-term benefit and life. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. In the budget address the Minister announced the establishment of the Western Arctic Centre for Geomatics in Inuvik. Aside from that, I want to ask the Minister, has he been talking with the Aurora Research Institute or Aurora College in looking at developing some kind of training program so that as the Fibre Optic Link becomes in place whether or not that type of training is available for people in the Northwest Territories? This is a new, different type of industry and gives our residents a chance to become educated in something else. Has he been having those talks? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, there are discussions underway. The reason the Western Arctic Geomatics Centre is going to Inuvik is because of the fibre optic line and the work and opportunity that's going to be created by having them located there. The college has been in meetings, there's a working group forum. The Germans, among others, have offered up 20 percent of their volume for data processing in Inuvik. So, there are training opportunities, there's going to be other opportunities related to service development, value added secondary industry opportunities. When you look at what happened in Kiruna, Sweden, \$100 million to \$150 million and 400 jobs, approximately, added to the community over the years, an advanced physics university in Kiruna, and the college is ideally situated to take advantage of that and we are hard at work to make sure that we get all the training opportunities that we can. It's going to really give young folks some

opportunities in other areas where they can use other skills, their math, their sciences and all those other skills. We're going to work with the countries that are coming in, the college, the government to make sure that we are as ready as possible and there's an enormous future here. Thank you.

MR. MOSES: Thank you. There are a lot of benefits once this fibre optic link gets connected down the valley here.

I want to ask the Minister, talking with his Cabinet counterparts in terms of such benefits as telehealth, e-learning, has he been doing some type of inventory to make sure that we have those types of resources in the community so that we can increase the telehealth, the e-learning and with other departments as well? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The communities coming down the valley are all going to have a direct fibre link or a microwave link and just about every community that I can think of has the capacity to do telehealth and the schools are all hooked up. What they don't have is the bandwidth to be able to do it properly. So now we're going to marry up the fact that we have the infrastructure with the capacity to, in fact, allow them to use telehealth to its full capacity, that students can log on to their computers and do work and not wait half an hour to get on. What's going to be important in terms of opportunities for the communities coming down the valley is that final mile piece, the connection from the fibre link into the communities. It's going to be an opportunity for businesses or communities, community development corporations to look at wiring their community to put the businesses all on the link to allow them to benefit, as well as the phones, cable, all that kind of thing.

Even Tuk, once the road is built we're going to go back up and we're going to put that fibre link into Tuk and it's going to have all the same connectivity that Inuvik does, or Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Moses.

MR. MOSES: Maybe some short responses.

---Laughter

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a delegation that's travelled around the world looking at investments. Would the Minister be looking at possibly creating or hosting some type of conference in Inuvik so we could get a delegation from all over the world and it would boost the economy in the North and boost the economy in the Beaufort-Delta to see the potential of the Fibre Optic Link and potential of the satellite facility? Would the Minister look at hosting a conference of some type? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you. The role of a Minister is very difficult, that fine line between fulsome responses and being accused of not answering the question, so we try to err on the side of answering the question so that we can remove that complaint.

In regard to the Member's specific question, the community of Inuvik has indicated to us in writing that they would like to see a very major gathering of this type that the Member talks about in Inuvik. Instead of the oil and gas show, they would like to convert it, not this coming year but next year, into a gathering that's going to bring together all the folks.

About a year or so ago we invited all the university presidents, for example, up to Yellowknife to have a discussion about the possibilities of how we do business with our research agenda, traditional knowledge, the remote sensing that's going to happen. Now that we'll have the satellite station up and running, it enables a whole different kind of conversation and we're going to be working with the Town of Inuvik to have that very meeting. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The Member for Nahendeh, Mr. Menicoche.

QUESTION 559-17(5):
FORT SIMPSON HEALTH CENTRE
REPLACEMENT

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in the day I spoke about the planning study for the replacement of the Fort Simpson Health Centre. I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works and Services what is the current stage of the planning study. I am aware that they've done an initial visit to Fort Simpson I think at the end of November. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Menicoche. Minister of Public Works, Mr. Beaulieu.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RFP for a planning study for the Fort Simpson Health Centre will be released this month. Thank you.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. I guess I was mistaken, because there was an initial visit to Fort Simpson by Public Works and Services staff. So maybe the Minister can indicate exactly what that initial visit was about. Thank you.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: Thank you. More of the consultation portion of the work that Public Works is doing is determining what type of items would be associated with planning studies. We've looked at the needs assessment, operational plan, functional program and feasibility analysis for the specific health centre. So that was what the initial meeting with Public Works was about and then from there the decision was made to release the RFP to complete the planning study.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: The community is certainly interested in exactly what type of building is being planned. I think there were several types. I think there is a B/C that is currently being built in the community of Fort Providence. I'd just like to try and get a handle from the Minister what guidelines or parameters or design plans does he have from the Minister of Health and Social Services to develop the replacement health centre for Fort Simpson.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: The departments of Public Works and Health and Social Services are at the stage when they are determining what design for the type of community. It's almost like a little bit of a regional centre. In Fort Simpson that health centre can provide some services to the small communities in the immediate area, so the design will be a little more complex than just a community health centre, which is something that is being built in Fort Providence and Fort Resolution next year. I don't know the letter associated with this particular design, but it would be a design that is something that fits the community and it would be an increased service from what is available now.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Menicoche.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I was just trying to get around if there is a standard design plan that would offer Fort Simpson, like, I think there was a standard design for Fort Providence, and I think in, oh, I forget. I think it was Lutselk'e. I don't know if there's another specific design that's being offered there, or is it all the same design? What I'm getting at is that many years ago I went to Alaska and I saw their Aboriginal-built hospital. It was very welcoming. It had lots of Aboriginal culture attached to it visually as you go through.

I would just like to know what is the department's view of designing a new replacement health centre to take into account the cultural needs of over 60 percent of the Aboriginal population that are in and around Fort Simpson.

HON. TOM BEAULIEU: As the Member is aware, back in 2011-12 we put a bit of a delay on the planning study so that we could complete the planning study for Norman Wells as Norman Wells also provides to sort of a regional health centre. Some of the designs that we get from our consultation in Norman Wells will be incorporated into Fort Simpson. We would also be specific to what the community wants in Fort Simpson, as well, so there is certainly room for consultation from the community.

In Hay River, when we built the health centre, there was opportunity for community input, so this will be the same thing. Fort Simpson will certainly have input in how the health centre is designed and built in Fort Simpson.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Member for Hay River South, Mrs. Groenewegen.

QUESTION 560-17(5):
POPULATION GROWTH STRATEGY

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on some of the questions today around the population growth strategy, the questions that were already asked earlier. I have never seen the population growth strategy. Since there doesn't seem to be one in writing, I'd like to suggest some subtitles: Get People, Keep People, Make People, Extend People.

Now, I seriously have some suggestions under each one of these.

Get People: When it comes to getting people, does anybody actually keep an eye on labour markets? Like, we talked about the commercial fishery closing in Alberta. There is a group in a specialized industry. We've got two million pounds of fish, a sustainable harvest floating around in Great Slave Lake every year which never seems to get brought in. I mean, are there any people in any department? Like, where are the people that are working on the growth strategy, population growth strategy? I mean, are there people who are working on specific initiatives such as looking at labour markets in other jurisdictions? The oil patch, they're laying off tens of thousands of people. We need people up here in different disciplines. Is anybody actually working on getting people? What are you doing?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a committee of Cabinet that includes ECE, it includes ITI, Finance, Environment and Natural Resources, just about every department is represented around the table. We're working on those types of things, the labour market information. We're tracking the work on the Nominee Program being shepherded and looked at by a Minister. Minister Lafferty will be making an announcement in the House. The commercial fisher piece, we've got the money in the budget. The question of are we doing stuff, yes, we've also set up a committee that involves all the key industry players, members of the chamber to look at ways that we can collectively pool our efforts and combine our efforts to hit that target of 2,000 in five years.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I'm sensing that some people on this side of House would like to help you out with that, and if they could see something in writing, perhaps we could make some valuable contributions to that initiative, to that strategy.

Now, on to the topic of keeping people. Seven hundred people left the Northwest Territories last

year, but because of a high birthrate, that was offset to a larger extent.

Is there any way of tracking why people are leaving the Northwest Territories? I don't know. I know you can't do exit interviews, but is it possible there's any way to find out why people are leaving? I mean, we can guess. The cost of living, we can guess. But do we have any way of collecting that data?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Yes, we do track that, and we have some ideas and we get some feedback. A lot of it is the issue of family; some of it is the cost of living; some of it is retirement.

In regard to the Member's earlier comment of an interest of committee, we'd be happy to get all and any suggestions that committee members have in terms of their suggestions, and if there are other suggestions in terms of involvement in the work we're doing, we'd be happy to look at what they would propose as well.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Under the topic of making people, we have some young families in the South Slave that are having, like, four and five children, and I have a guess that there would be more people having larger families if we had something comparable to the child tax credit, but something made in the North.

Has the Cabinet ever contemplated a way of supporting young families who want to have larger families in helping them in some way financially through something similar to what the federal government does with the child tax credit, something made in the North?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: That issue of some type of enhanced encouragement to address the issue the Member has referred to, increasing our population through birthrate, we've had some initial looks at it. We haven't reached any definitive decisions yet of how we would do that in a way that would really promote that and it would actually show value. We know that in Quebec, I think they offered \$3,000 per child. It's something that's on our to-do list. We've been focusing on some of the more immediate things, but it's something that has been brought forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Final, short supplementary, Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the topic of extending people, we all know about the demographic bubble of the baby boomers and the people are aging, and we just heard a statistic this week that if people actually make it to pensionable age, the now anticipated age of people who are on a pension is like 89 for men and 91 for women. Anyway, we have got to address that demographic, that growing demographic of seniors who would stay in the Northwest Territories if there was a wider variety of options for them in terms of

accommodation. Not just public housing but accommodation with caregivers that people could actually, who could afford to, contribute financially to.

Where are we at in working to try and find ways to accommodate older people to keep them here longer so they don't have to go south to those types of accommodations that they would like?

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: That issue was flagged in the budget address as well. We do a significant number of things already. We are putting some money in this budget to try to extend the staffing complements in Yellowknife, Simpson and, I believe, Fort Smith for starters. But we want to and we already do a number of things for seniors.

I appreciate the Member's concern and we are intending on looking at those longer term changes, as well, that we need to deal with as this bubble moves through their lifecycle.

The actuarial tables may have the average person living to 89 for men, for example. The folks, if you do it based on occupation, it tends to be a lot shorter. Politicians, people in high-stress jobs, so if you make it to retirement, if you can grab a fraction of that 89, we'll be lucky, but knock on wood. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Member for Frame Lake, Ms. Bisaro.

QUESTION 561-17(5):
PROGRAM REVIEW OFFICE

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are addressed to the Minister of Finance and I'd like to put some questions to him on the Program Review Office.

We got notification this last week that the Program Review Office had established two standing offer agreements. They were for program monitoring and evaluation services and for program design. I look at the Finance website under the Program Review Office and it says, "The office was established to help advance the goal of effective and efficient government by conducting a systematic review of government programs and services." The other paragraph says, "The GNWT has established the Program Review Office as an internal resource to support the ongoing review and reporting of all government and activity."

I look at this notice of standing offer agreements, one for program monitoring and evaluation services and the other one for program design, and it makes me ask the question, what is the Program Review Office staff doing? Why do we need these two standing offer agreements? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Bisaro. Minister of Finance, Mr. Miltenberger.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Program Review Office I think has, if my memory serves me correctly, four people. We have 5,000 employees, about 11 or so departments, quite a number of significant sized other agencies, colleges, power corporations, Crown corporations and the sheer volume of things that need to get done require that we need to bring in, from time to time, outside resources because it's physically impossible for that small number of people to do all the work that's needed, the work that they're currently doing as well as try to address some of these bigger, broader issues. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: Thanks to the Minister and I guess I thought it was a rather larger little section than that, only four people. My recollection is that the budget was something like \$800,000, but I could stand to be corrected on that.

So, I guess I'd like to know from the Minister, then, in the area of program design, and I presume that goes to making things more efficient and presumably saving us money, which is what this office was intended to do, what role does the Program Review Office play in program design and increasing efficiency in program services? Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: When they are asked to be involved or they are involved, they work with the host department or agency and they look at being efficient, not necessarily to save money but to make sure that they are designed in such a way to put the money they do have to the best, most efficient and effective use, and that's one of the functions they provide. They provide a coordinating function; they provide a function where they can link in and get the people they may need to help work with the departments, to do the detailed planning in terms of the effectiveness of the design, the horizontal and vertical issues with reporting relationships, communications and those types of things. Thank you.

MS. BISARO: To the issue of the standing offer agreement for program design, it's to provide assistance with the design of new programs and re-design of current programs, so I'm still struggling to understand why this is not the job of the Program Review Office.

So, to the Minister, I'd like to know, in the same vein, what is the role of the Program Review Office in monitoring and evaluation of departments and/or their programs and services. I thought that's why we established the Program Review Office in the first place. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: The Program Review Office was initially designed to address a need for a large corporation, an almost \$2 billion corporation, to have some capacity for that internal overview program supervision in terms of design, implementation and audit-type function to work with

other parts of government to make sure that we do deal with the issues of efficiency, effectiveness and economy. That's what their role is intended to be and that's what it is and it's evolving as we look at it. It's a very small operation and they need to have these types of agreements or standing offers so they can bring in expertise. The four people are not necessarily experts in every area, but they are able to manage, coordinate and collaborate. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Short supplementary, Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can be short and I thank the Minister for his answer. I would like to know from the Minister if he can estimate for me and this House what he estimates the cost in the 2015-16 budget year of these two standing offer agreements. Thank you.

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: I'll get that detailed information for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. The honourable Member for Mackenzie Delta, Mr. Blake.

QUESTION 562-17(5):

MACKENZIE DELTA HOUSING SHORTAGE

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few questions for the Minister of Housing, leading from my Member's statement. As I mentioned, I have a shortage of housing units in my riding. In Aklavik and Fort McPherson, we have a waiting list of up to three years.

What is the plan to address the housing shortage in Aklavik, McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Blake. The honourable Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation, Mr. McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have 804 people on the waiting list in the Northwest Territories. In the Member's riding alone, I think there are about 39 on the waiting list. In many cases, people have to be on the waiting list to access some of the support programs. So they may be housed, but they have to be on the waiting list to access some of those programs. That's the reason some of the numbers are so high.

At far as the length of time, I'd have to find out about the length of time. We try to get as many people into units as quickly as possible.

As to what we're doing to address the issue, again, we're challenged with the declining CMHC funding. That's why we do a lot of replacement units. In the Member's riding alone, in 2014-15 I think we spent about \$12.5 million trying to address some of the housing concerns. Well done, Mr. Blake.

We'll continue to make our investments in the communities they are needed in. Thank you.

MR. BLAKE: I also mentioned that within our budget we have budgeted \$1.6 million for 75 units, which will be an agreement entered with lease agreements in Inuvik, Hay River and Yellowknife.

Will the Minister consider this as a possible solution in my riding as a short-term solution? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The \$1.6 million is money that we've received from ECE through their Income Support program. They supported many people in public housing or income support clients into housing units. We've taken over the administration of that program, so we're actually looking at 75 units possibly leasing and, in turn, give those units to former clients who were formerly on income support to try to transition back into public housing. So it's not the construction of 75 new units. I believe in many communities there are families supported through this particular program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BLAKE: I don't think the Minister really answered the question. Will he consider that as a solution? Yes or no.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I thought I did answer the question. Yes, we will look at it for every community.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. McLeod. The Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Nadli.

QUESTION 563-17(5):

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION
IN FORT PROVIDENCE

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government recently transferred responsibility for language revitalization to Aboriginal governments. The thinking is to put the job in the hands of the language experts at the local level, to involve elders and also the speakers.

When will the government be able to provide a detailed report on the progress and outcome of their efforts? This question is posed to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Nadli. The Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Part of the plan is in 2014-15 that the regional Aboriginal governments will be receiving a contribution from our department. There is an increase in contributions from \$1.5 million to \$3.48 million for them to hire their own coordinator and to look after the languages programming at the community level. The Member is quite correct; we need to focus on those Aboriginal groups who are the experts in the field and they can provide more feedback and more positive results. Those are just

some of the areas that we have explored and we have continued to provide those opportunities at the community level.

MR. NADLI: Experts tells us that the NWT is on the brink of losing some of our Aboriginal languages, and yet Aboriginal governments who are responsible for five-year language plans are receiving substantially less money than they asked for. I'm very worried that they don't have enough funding to truly succeed.

What is this Minister doing to reverse the tide of language erosion and ensure Aboriginal governments succeed in this area?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We are making drastic changes to our contributions even before big changes from previous years. Some of the areas that we've transferred on to Aboriginal governments... There are approximately seven different areas of initiatives that we've transferred, working very closely with the community governments, and that is languages program, regional and community-based Aboriginal literacy activities, there are Aboriginal language acquisition projects, \$93,000 of \$143,000 budgeted. There are teaching and learning centres that we have to deal with through education authorities. There's also Aboriginal language culture-based education that's also administered by education authorities. Aboriginal language terminology. Also, the last one is Aboriginal Languages Strategic Initiative of \$360,000. These are some of the initiatives that we felt should be at the community level, at the regional level, and we'll continue to push that forward with other initiatives within our department as part of empowerment on to the communities.

MR. NADLI: I'd like to know the role of the federal government in the Aboriginal language revitalization efforts. The Minister has indicated that funding for '15-16 would be increased from \$1.5 million to \$3.4 million. I want to understand whether the federal government is involved with that.

Is the Minister pushing for a stronger role for the federal government in the language revitalization efforts?

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: I'm glad the Member is asking that pointed question. It is one of the key topics that I shared with Minister Glover just last week while we were in Ottawa and stressed that the Aboriginal language programming has not increased over the last decade. Those are just some of the areas that we have been pushing since I came on board in 2007.

I am very optimistic that there will be a funding increase. We're working very closely with the federal government. In this particular area, \$1.5 million to \$3.4 million, that's our GNWT funding that has been dispersed into Aboriginal government. At the same time, we are again working very closely

with the federal government so they can be a true partner as we move forward with long-term plans.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. Final, short supplementary, Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas that the Minister has been clearly outlining is just looking at the local efforts in terms of trying to explore areas of how greater efforts could be made to try to preserve some of the languages that are on the decline. He's indicated some drastic changes that more likely will be contemplated.

What can this side of the House expect in terms of perhaps one significant focus that his department will undertake to ensure that the languages will not decline and, at the same time, greater efforts will be made to work with the community level? Mahsi.

HON. JACKSON LAFFERTY: We've been told over and over from Aboriginal governments, community governments and especially the elders that we must preserve our language and also our cultural way of life. Based on that, we have been working very closely with Aboriginal governments to provide them greater flexibility, accountability and also decision-making authorities to revitalize our language, strengthen our languages as well. Those are some of the key points my department will be working on with Aboriginal governments. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Lafferty. The time for oral question period has expired. Item 10, written questions. Item 11, returns to written questions. Item 12, replies to opening address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 15, tabling of documents. Mr. Miltenberger.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 188-17(5):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MAIN ESTIMATES
2015-2016

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document, entitled "Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2015-2016." Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr. Moses.

TABLED DOCUMENT 189-17(5):
PUBLIC INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE
MACKENZIE VALLEY FIBRE OPTIC LINK
AND THE INUVIK SATELLITE FACILITY

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the historic event that happened in Inuvik last month, I have a few various news articles as well as a news release from the Swedish Space Corporation pertaining to the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link

and Inuvik Satellite Station Facility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Moses. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Mr. Miltenberger.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 44:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE
HOSPITAL INSURANCE AND HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION ACT

HON. MICHAEL MILTENBERGER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, February 9, 2015, I will move that Bill 44, An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Miltenberger. Item 18, motions. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016, with Mrs. Groenewegen in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): Thank you. I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order. We have one tabled document before us. What is the wish of committee? Ms. Bisaro.

MS. BISARO: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we report progress.

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Groenewegen): I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Can I have the report of Committee of the Whole, Mrs. Groenewegen?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder to the motion? Mr. Miltenberger.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, February 6, 2015, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Opening Address
11. Replies to Budget Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. Motions
19. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 43, An Act to Amend the Borrowing Authorization Act
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 188-17(5), NWT Main Estimates 2015-2016
 - Bill 38, An Act to Amend the Jury Act
 - Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Partnership Act
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 6th, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:30 p.m.