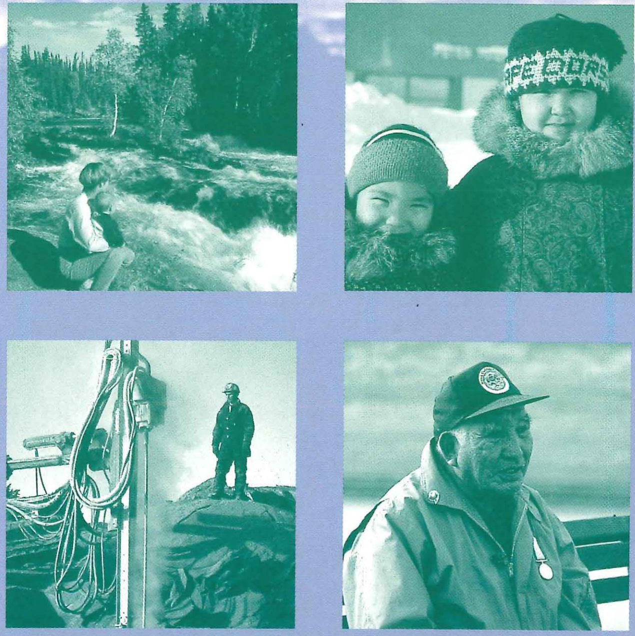
Public Accounts

Northwest Territories • 2002-2003

Section IV Government Indicators



Northwest Territories

SECTION IV

FINANCIAL INDICATORS

(Unaudited)

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INTRODUCTION

The Public Accounts of a government report on the fiscal year's revenues and expenses and how they relate to the overall surplus or deficit position of the Government. It is important to note that the financial condition of a government is often quite different from the financial condition of the economy.

A research study conducted by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants states:

The financial health of a government is it's financial health as measured by sustainability, vulnerability and flexibility, looked at in the context of the overall economic and financial environment. These terms are defined as follows:

- *Sustainability: the degree to which a government can maintain existing programs and meet existing creditor requirements without increasing the debt burden on the economy.*
- *Flexibility: the degree to which a government can increase its financial resources to respond to rising commitments, by either expanding its revenues, or increasing its debt burden.*
- *Vulnerability: the degree to which government becomes dependent on, and therefore vulnerable to, sources of funding outside its control or influence, both domestic and international.*

The information provided in the following pages is intended to assist readers of the Consolidated Public Accounts in their assessment of the Government's financial health. Information relating to assets or liabilities of the Government is specific to a point in time, whereas information relating to revenues and expenses encompasses the results of a fiscal year.

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT COMPARISONS

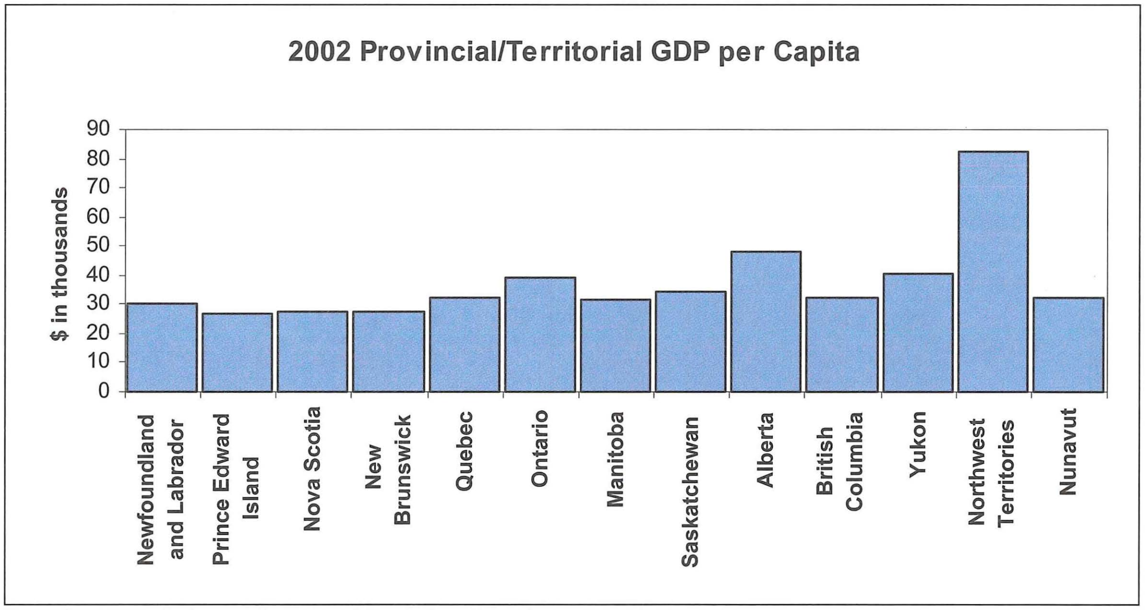
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the total unduplicated value of goods and services produced within the geographical boundaries of a country, province or territory, irrespective of whether the factors of production involved are resident or non-resident. GDP is typically measured in two ways: as total incomes earned in current production (income-based); and, as total final sales of current production (expenditure-based). Both methods yield the same estimate of GDP. Estimates of GDP are typically expressed at market prices, which includes the impact of taxes and subsidies in the estimate.

For the Northwest Territories (NWT), Statistics Canada estimates current dollar GDP at market prices at $3,412 million for 2002; this represents an increase of 6.3% over the 2001 estimate of $3,210 million. A final estimate of 2002 GDP for the NWT, along with the other provinces and territories, is scheduled for release in October 2003; preliminary estimates of 2003 GDP will be release in April 2004.

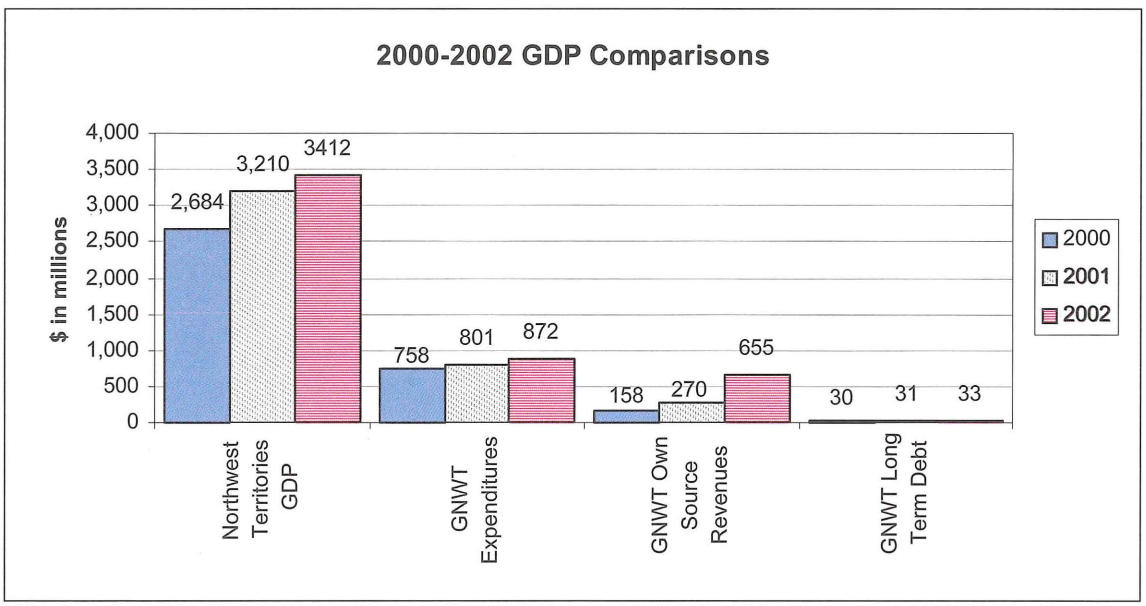
Gross Domestic Product at Market Prices, 2002 and 2001 (calendar year)
Canada, Provinces and Territories
Current Dollars ($millions)

	2002	2001	Percent Change
Canada	1,142,123	1,092,246	4.6
Northwest Territories	3,412	3,210	6.3
Nunavut	935	901	3.8
Yukon	1,211	1,193	1.5
British Columbia	134,365	130,859	2.7
Alberta	150,469	151,319	-0.6
Saskatchewan	34,526	33,305	3.7
Manitoba	36,527	34,707	5.2
Ontario	470,567	443,852	6.0
Quebec	242,914	229,617	5.8
New Brunswick	20,888	20,507	1.9
Nova Scotia	26,193	25,203	3.9
Prince Edward Island	3,767	3,480	8.2
Newfoundland and Labrador	15,982	13,761	16.1

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT COMPARISONS (continued)

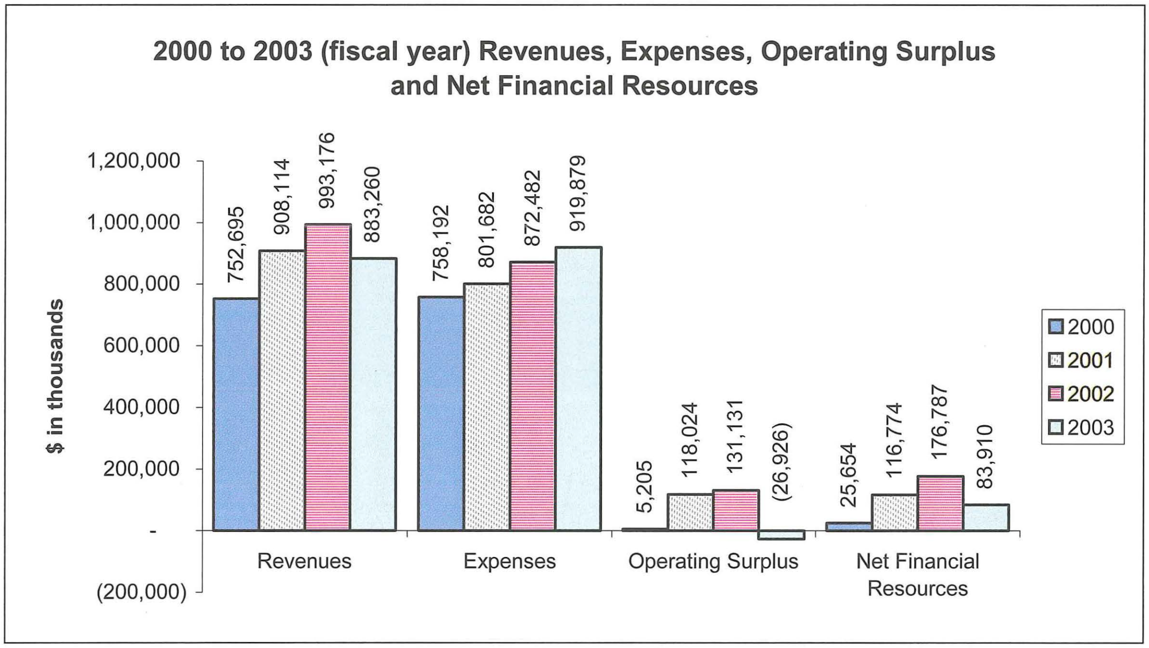


Based on population estimates of Statistics Canada as on July 1, 2002



*Northwest Territories GDP is based on a calendar year, while the balance of the information is based on amounts from March 31 fiscal year-ends.

REVENUE, EXPENSES, SURPLUS AND NET FINANCIAL RESOURCES



* Revenues depicted above exclude both recovery of prior years expenditures and revenue from the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

The Government currently has positive net financial resources (assets), which as depicted in the following pages, translates into having more financial resources (assets) than outstanding liabilities at the fiscal year end. While the Government's net financial resources have been drawn down by over 50% during the year, as discussed on page 6, some of the factors that contributed to this draw down are of a one-time nature. Net Financial Resources remains an important indicator showing the Government's financial position to be sustainable, at least in the short-term, and allowing the Government some flexibility in adapting to meet future needs.

REVENUE, EXPENSES, SURPLUS AND NET FINANCIAL RESOURCES (continued)

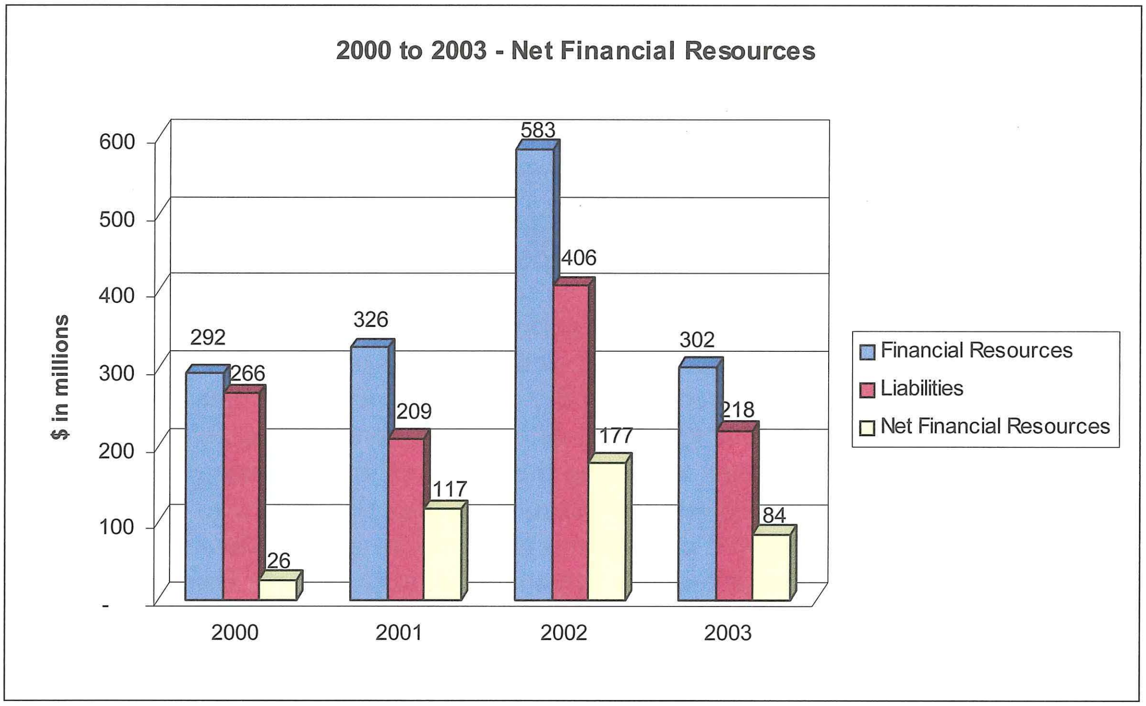
The table below illustrates, both as dollars and as a percentage, the increase in revenue and expenses for the last two fiscal years.

	2000 to 2001		2001 to 2002		2002 to 2003	
	$ Change (in thousands)	Percent Change	$ Change (in thousands)	Percent Change	$ Change (in thousands)	Percent Change
Revenues	155,419	20.6%	85,062	9.4%	(109,916)	(12.5%)
Expenses	43,490	5.7%	70,800	8.8%	47,397	5.4%

While an increase (or decrease) maybe be significant, it is important to relate that change to the rate of change in other components. Examples of things to watch are: (1) expenses increasing at a faster rate than revenues, (2) the drawing down of net financial resources to maintain or improve services or (3) a fluctuation related to a one time event or an event that may not re-occur in the future. Assessing the likelihood of any change in the level of revenues or expenses continuing into the future is an important factor to consider. This information can only be reviewed on a meaningful level when consideration is given to what is the driving factor; inflation, new initiatives or other factors. These changes are important when assessing the long-term sustainability of the present level of services.

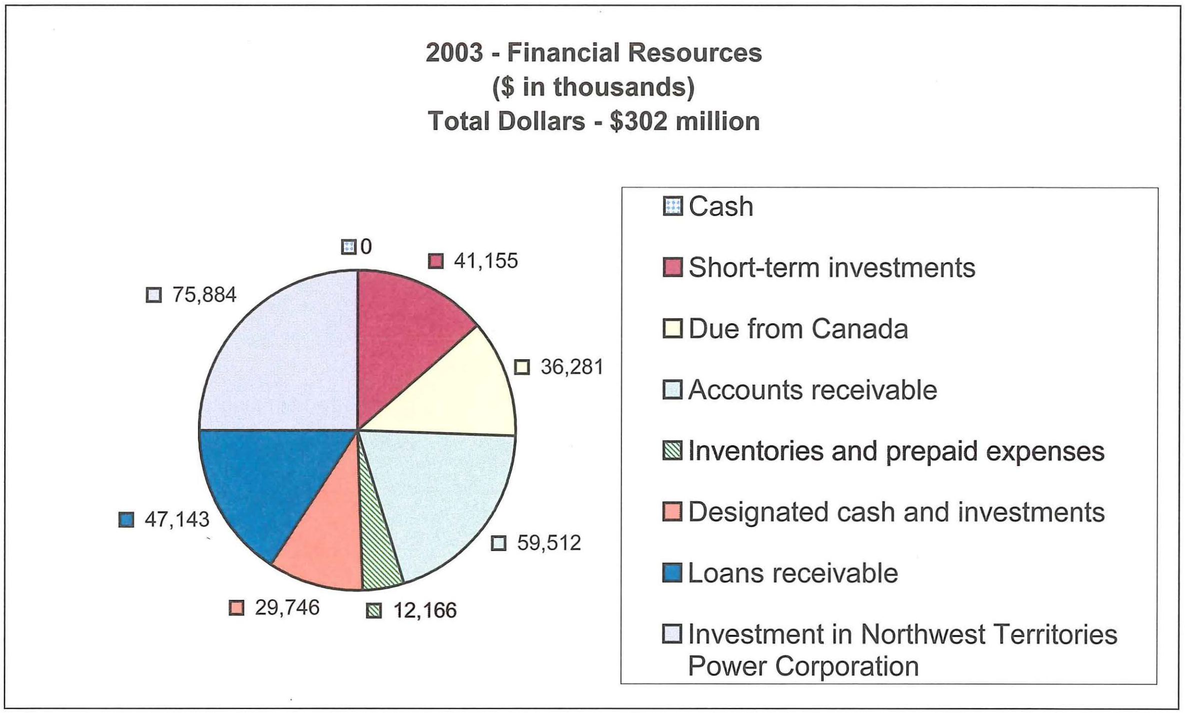
NET FINANCIAL RESOURCES

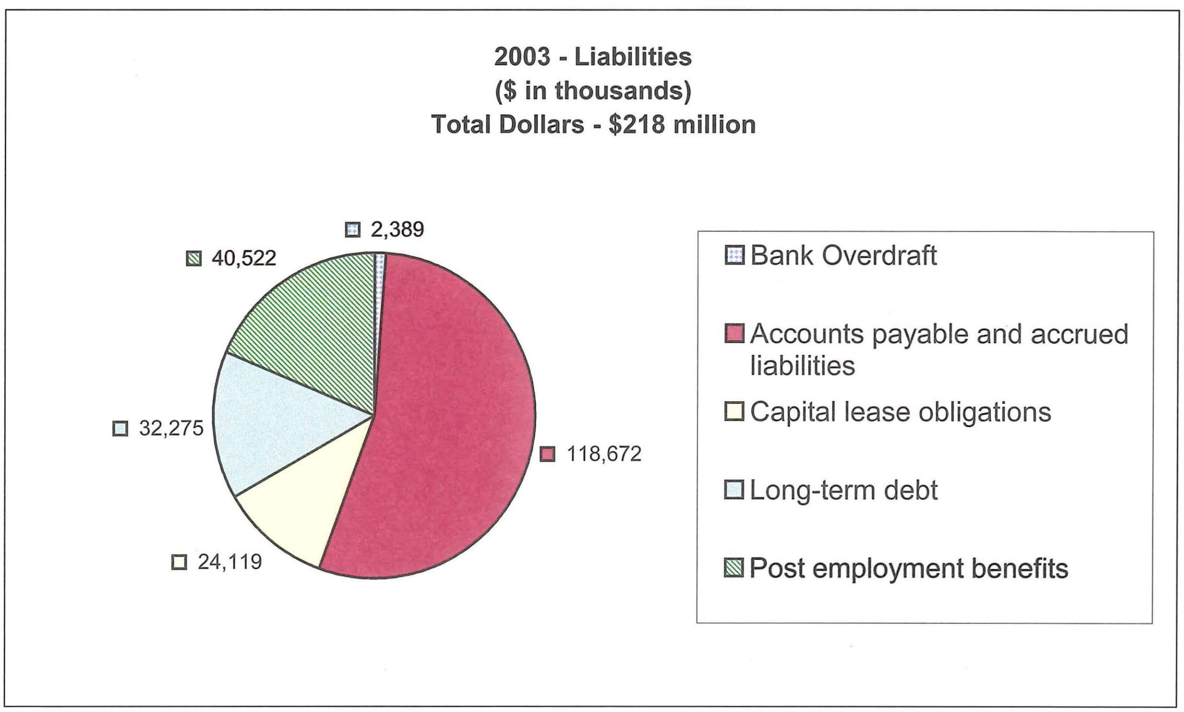
Net financial resources are the residual financial resources (as detailed on the next page) after being reduced by all financial liabilities of the government. The graph below depicts the Government's net financial resource position at the end of the fiscal year.



Net financial resources are a good indicator of a government's ability to meet its existing financial obligations. However a significant change in the level of net financial resources occurred in the current year reducing our net financial resources by over 50%. The main cause of this change is related to unusual events that occurred in 2002 increasing our net resources. An excess of cash on hand due to the prepayment of the Grant by Canada and higher corporate taxes increased our assets in 2002. While our 2002 liabilities were also increased by the requirement to repay funds advanced on the Grant, the net effect was to temporarily increase our net financial resources. In 2003 we saw the reverse effect, as these items did not reoccur. Net financial resources will always be affected by any dramatic changes in revenues or expenses, as can be noted by the change from 2000 to 2001. It is worth noting that the Government of the Northwest Territories is in a net financial resource position while most governments are in a net debt position.

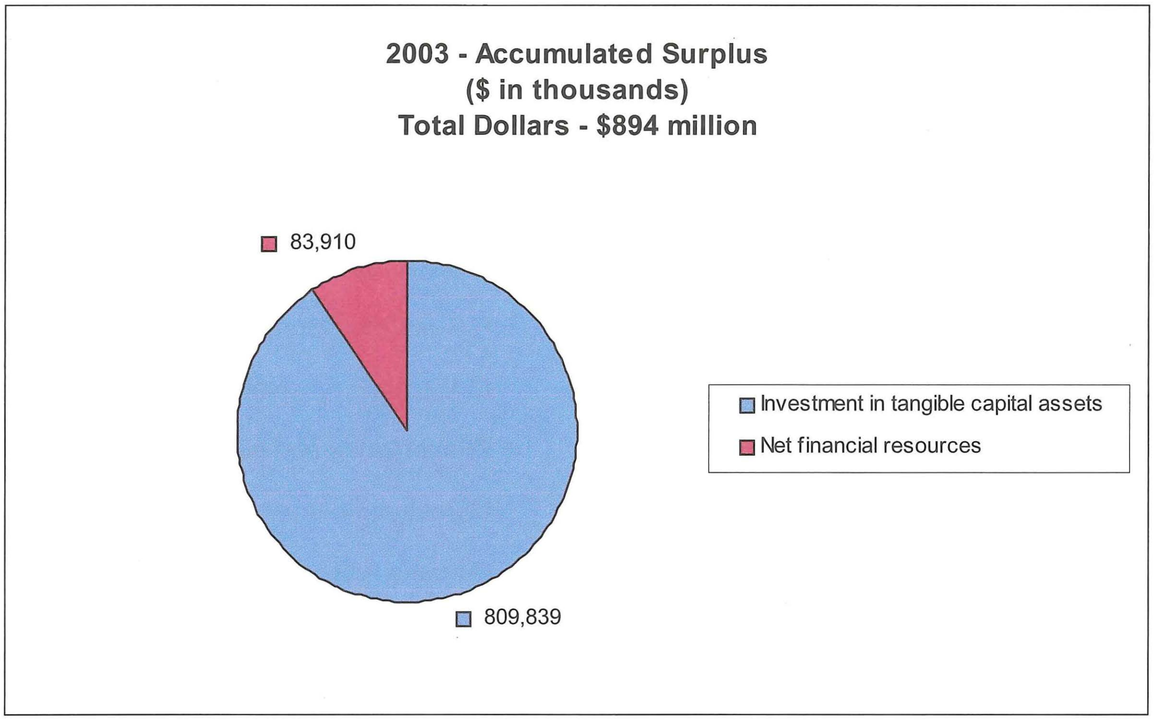
FINANCIAL POSITION





The above graphs illustrate the varied composition of the Government's financial resources and liabilities.

FINANCIAL POSITION (continued)

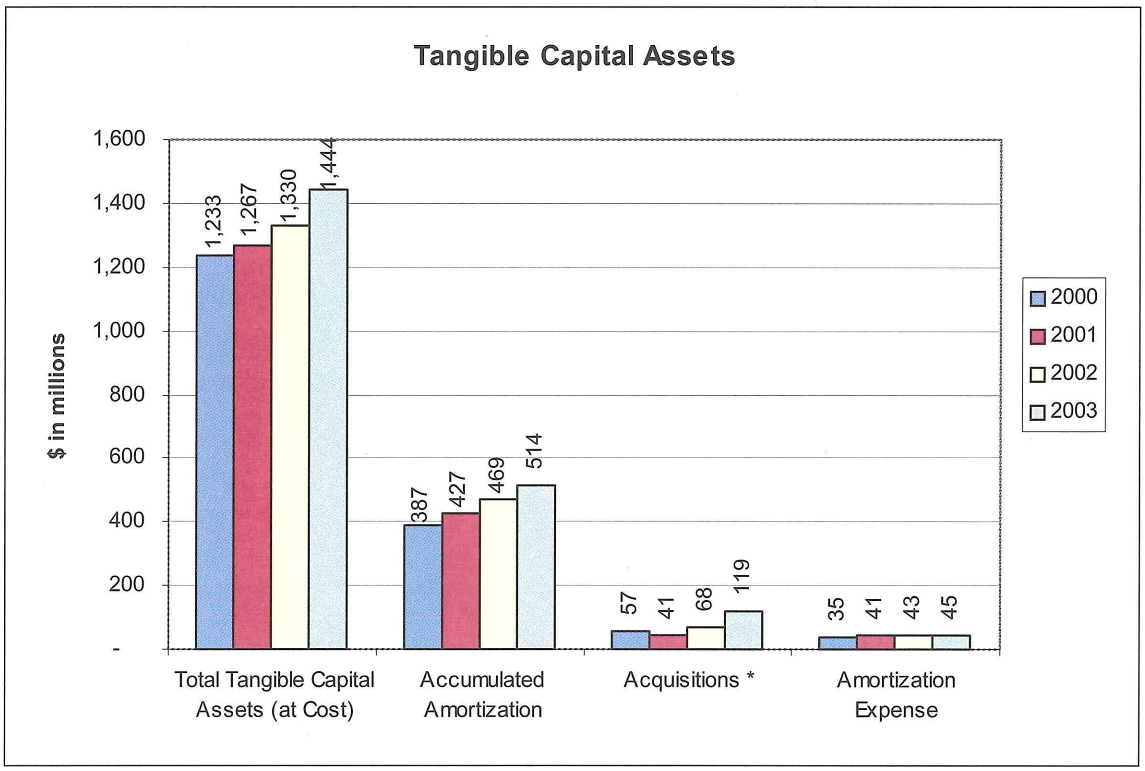


The surplus of the Government is comprised of its net financial resources and its investment in capital assets. When considering the flexibility of a Government to budget for a deficit that portion of the surplus which is associated with tangible capital assets must not be confused with financial assets that are available to meet current and future obligations. Nor should net financial resources be equated to available cash.

TANGIBLE CAPITAL ASSETS

Tangible capital assets include assets purchased directly by the Government and assets that were fully or partially contributed to the Government of the Northwest Territories by Canada or other parties.

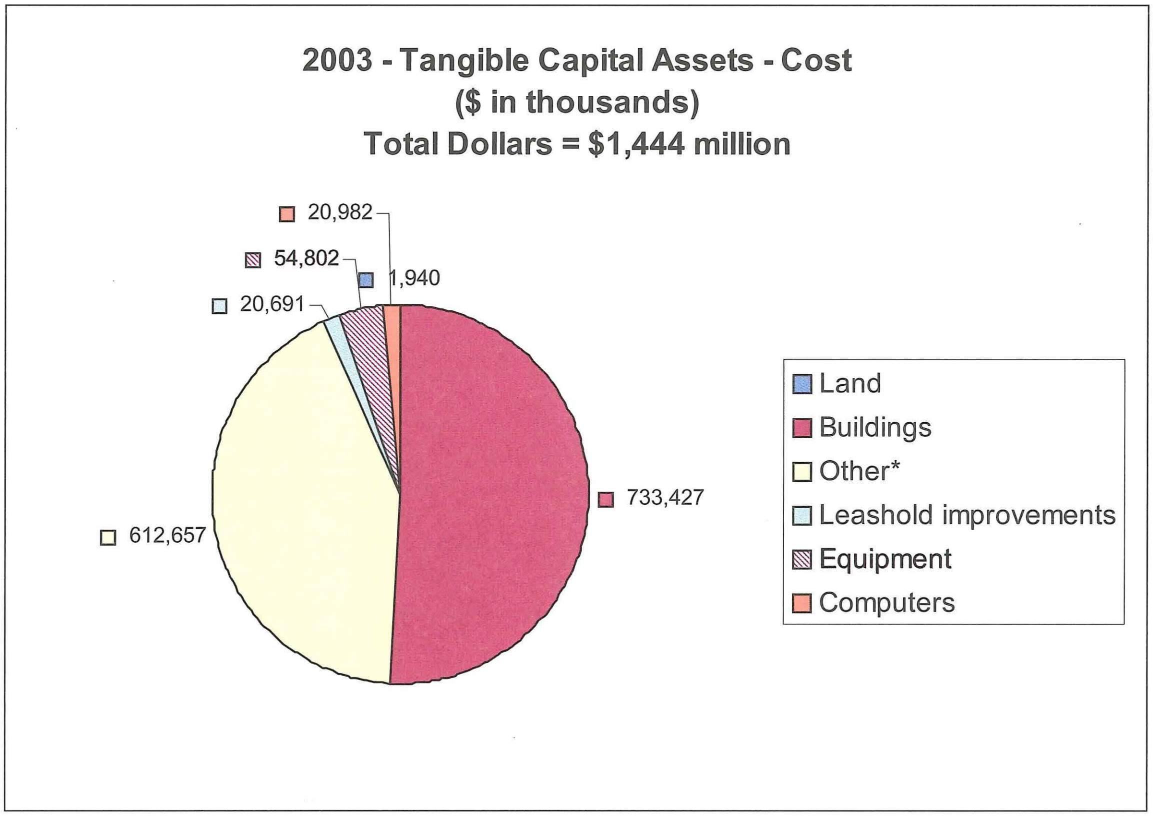
In the fiscal year 2000/2001, the Government of the Northwest Territories implemented Tangible Capital Asset accounting. In order to have meaningful comparisons, the fiscal year 1999/2000 was restated to reflect this policy. In previous years all capital purchases were fully expensed in the year the purchase occurred. The existing assets are being expensed as amortization in the financial statements of the Government based on their average useful life.



* Acquisitions do not include investments in assets that were not completed as at March 31 of any year. Such assets are recognized when completed and placed into service.

The Government must plan its capital expenditures to ensure that the existing assets are replaced and/or expanded in a timely manner and in conjunction with the Government's direction and priorities.

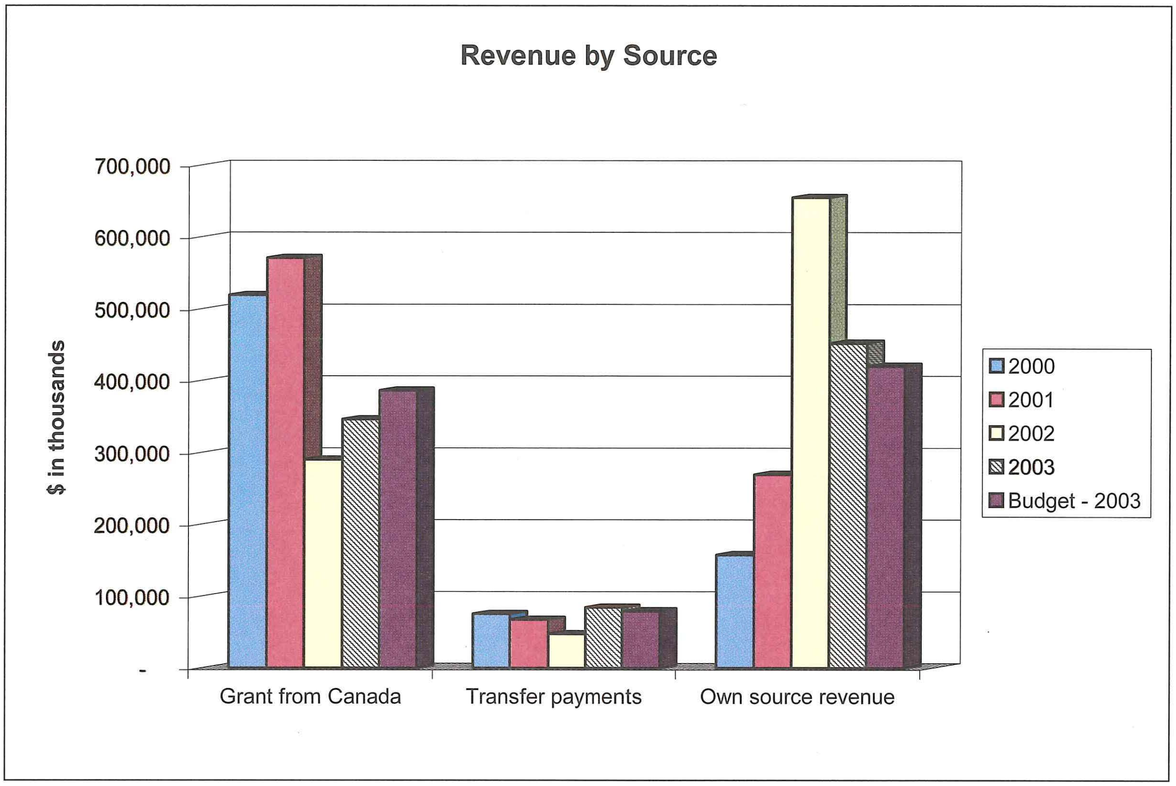
The Government should continue to invest in the replacement of tangible capital assets, at a rate that, over time, approximates the rate at which assets are being consumed. Capital asset investment planning must address two essential points; (1) maintaining existing assets and (2) providing for growth.



*Includes roads, bridges, airstrips, aprons and water/sewer works

The Government of the Northwest Territories is currently investing in tangible capital assets at a level that represents between 50% and 60% of the estimated investment needed for replacement and growth.

REVENUE BY SOURCE



In a normal year the Government of the Northwest Territories receives between 60 to 70 percent of its revenues from the Formula Financing Grant from Canada. Major own-source revenues, such as corporate and personal income tax, tobacco tax, fuel taxes, and payroll tax are approximately thirty percent of total revenues. Although the Northwest Territories has a vast reserve of non-renewable resources, it does not currently share in the revenue produced by those resources (royalties, etc). The intended result of upcoming tri-party negotiations, amongst Canada, the Government of Northwest Territories and Northwest Territories Aboriginal Governments, is the devolution and sharing of resource revenues.

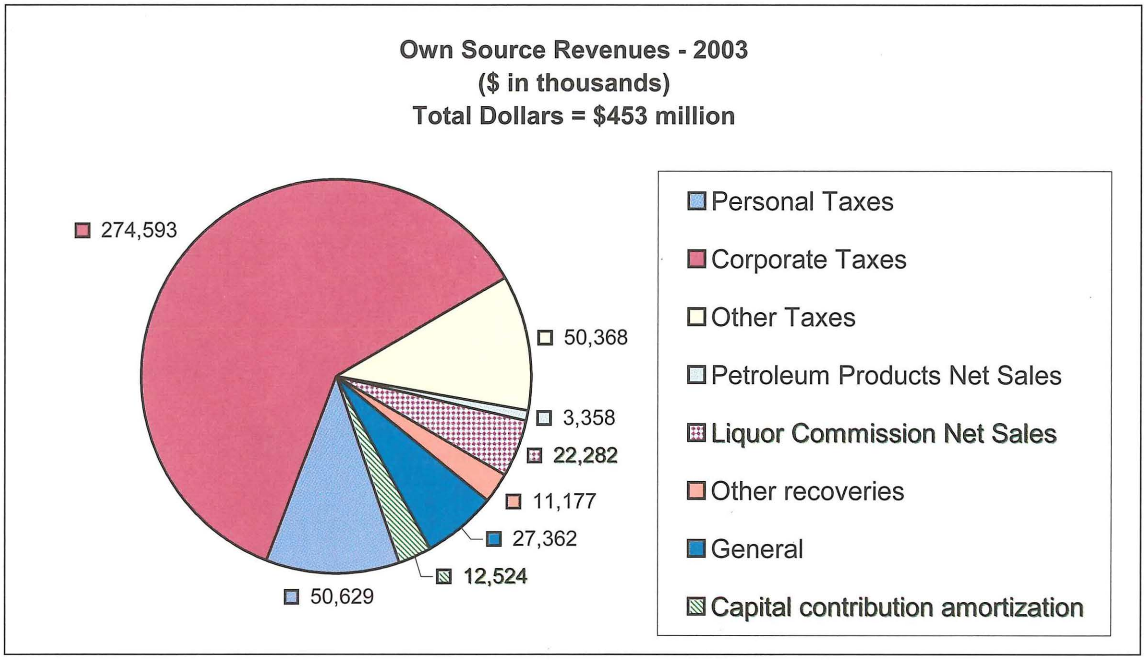
The Grant from Canada is based on a formula designed to cover the difference between expenditure needs and the Government of the Northwest Territories' revenue-raising ability. Therefore, changes to the Government of Northwest Territories' own source revenue levels will change the Grant in the opposite direction. Since the revenue-raising ability measures what the Government could raise at eighty-five percent of national average tax rates in the base year, changes in own source revenue levels will not change the Grant by a corresponding amount.

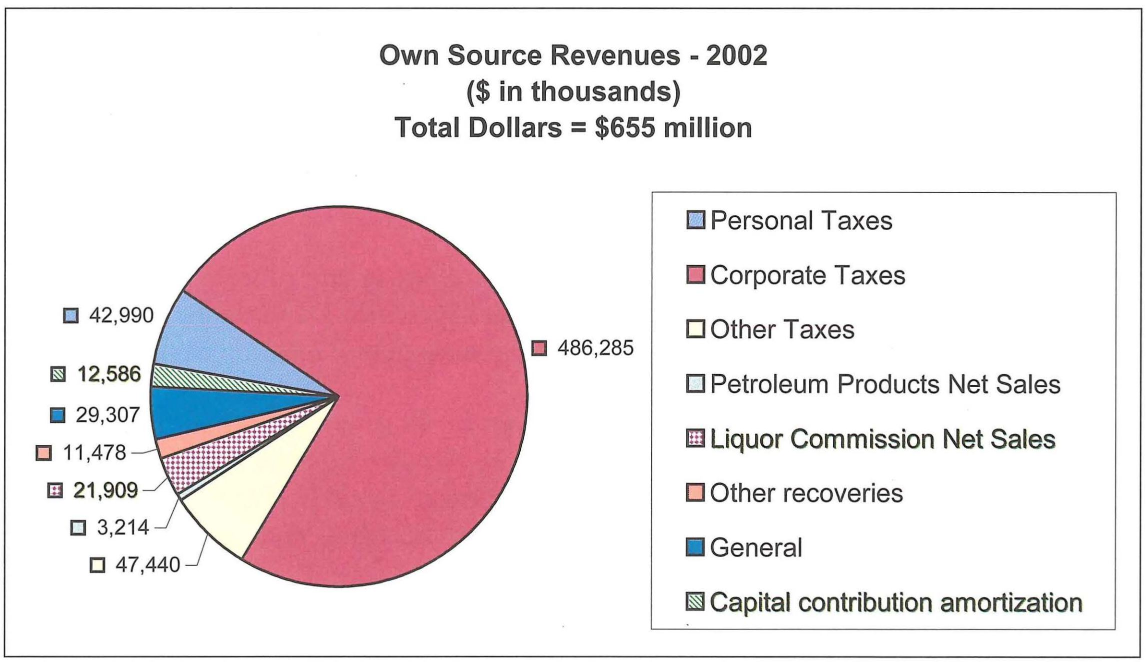
REVENUE BY SOURCE (continued)

The Grant is designed to provide an incentive for the Government of the Northwest Territories to raise revenues. Therefore, an increase in tax rates that provides increased tax revenues will not affect the Grant. For example, if fuel taxes are raised one cent per litre from the base year rate, the fuel tax revenue for purposes of calculating the Grant will still be at the lower rate. Therefore, the Government of the Northwest Territories keeps the additional revenue generated by increasing the tax rate.

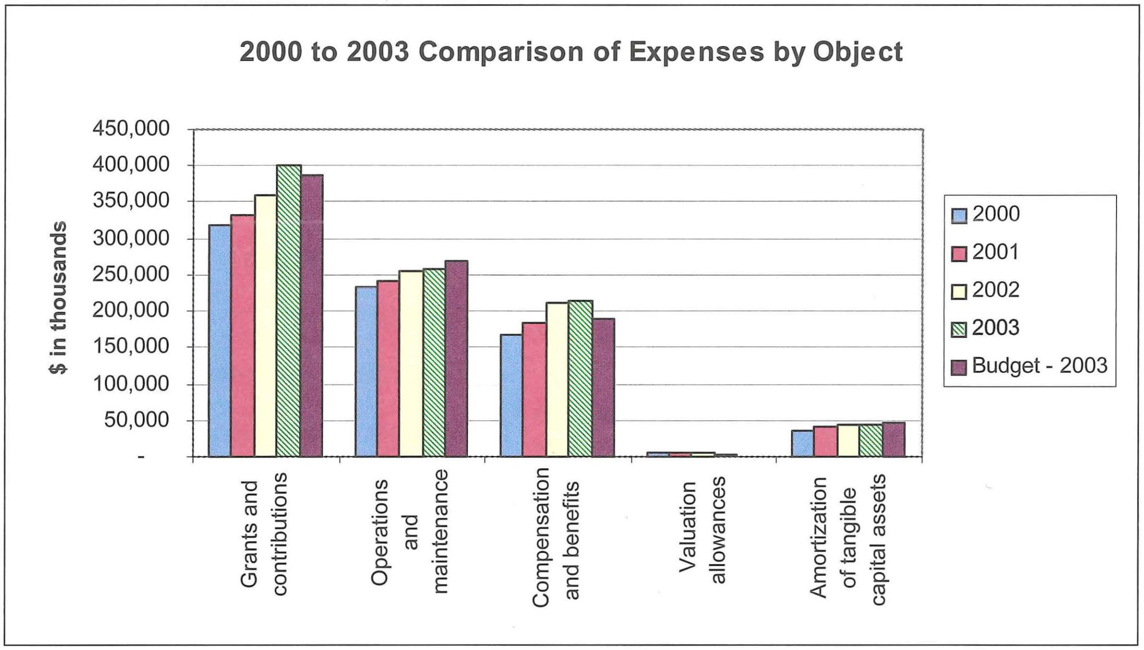
The Grant's expenditure base amount is escalated each year by the growth in provincial/local government spending and the ratio of population growth in NWT to the growth of the Canadian population. The data used to calculate these growth rates are not finalized until three years later for provincial/local government spending and five years later for population data. Therefore, adjustments to the Grant for a fiscal year can occur up to five years later. Since the escalation is cumulative, adjustments for prior years can have significant effects on total revenues. Corporate and personal income taxes estimates also take three years to finalize and require adjustments to the Grant.

REVENUE BY SOURCE (continued)





EXPENSES BY OBJECT

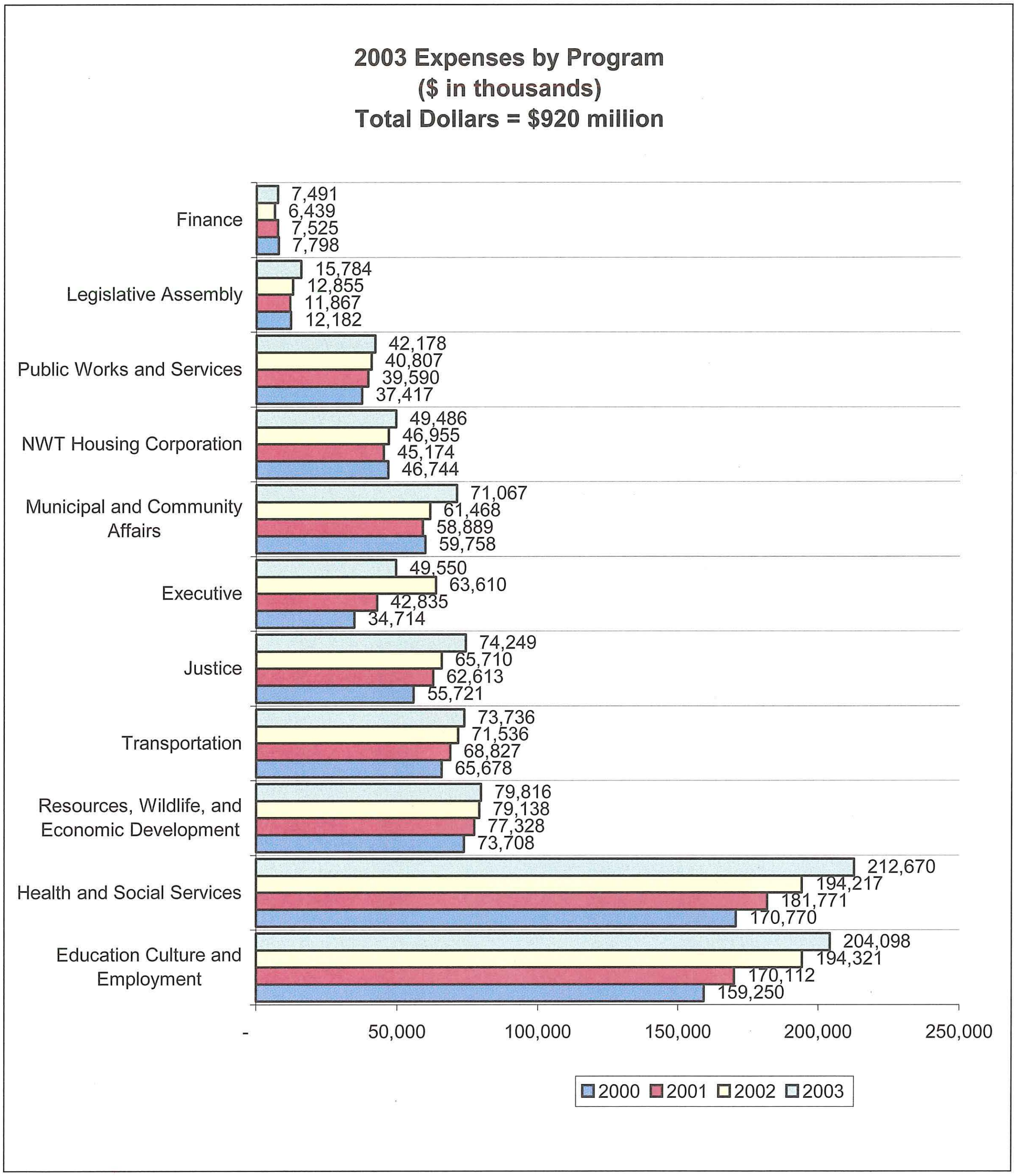


The expenses of the Government are such that a large percentage of its costs are fixed. Grants and contributions to third parties also have many components that are fixed and as the major (or sole) provider of funds, the Government cannot vary the funding without affecting the level of output by these boards and agencies. Approximately 43.5% (2002 – 41.3%) of the Government's total expenditures for 2002/2003 were for Grants and Contributions. Many of our social and educational programs are funded by these contributions.

Additional types of fixed costs are long-term, such as lease and other commitments as disclosed in the note 17 to the Consolidated Public Accounts. Department's operational expenses do not include principal payments on long-term debt (including capital leases).

The Government is also vulnerable to inflation as it is an important factor when negotiating compensation and benefits. Not only are the direct wages of the Government (approximately 23.3% (2002 – 24.1%) of the government's total expenditures) vulnerable to this but wages also make up a significant portion of the grants and contributions given to third parties.

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM

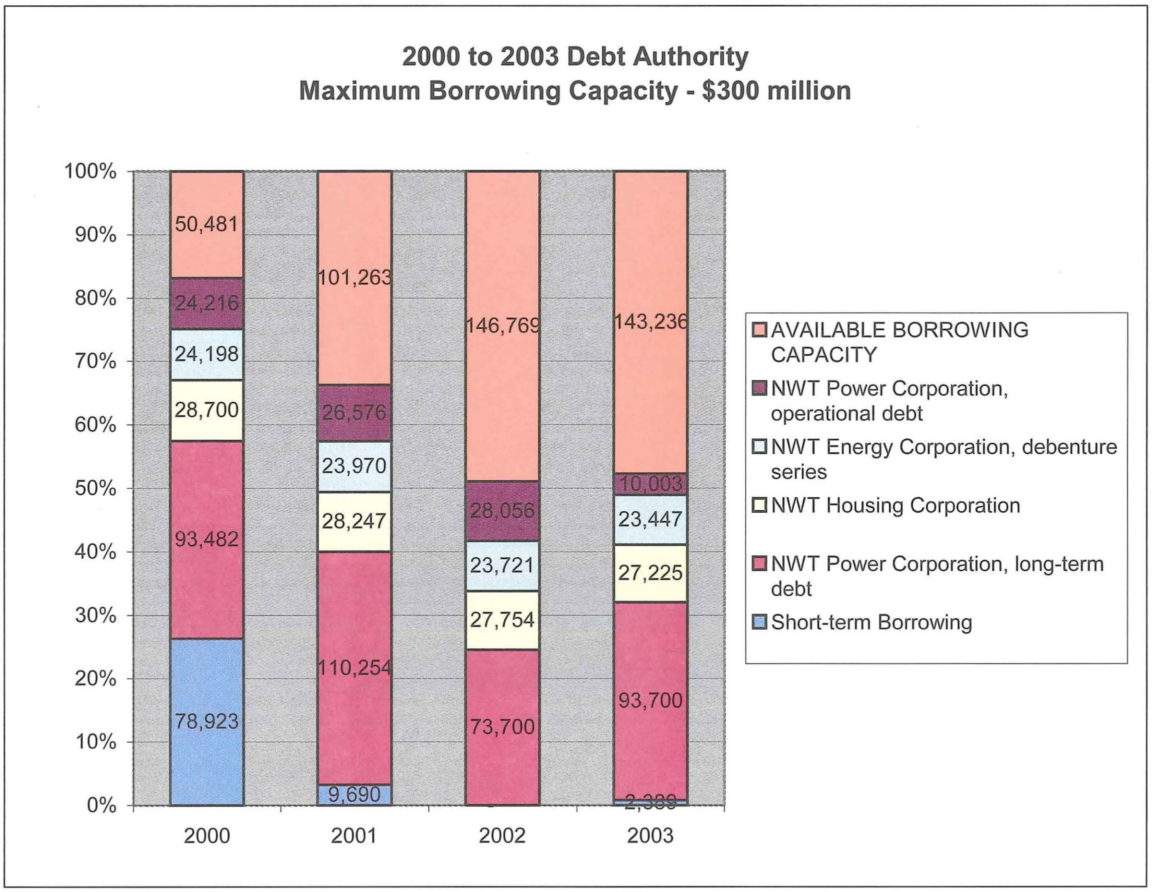


In the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the Government spent 60% (unchanged from 2002) of its total budget on social programs (education, health, justice and housing). Most of the remaining budget is allocated to infrastructure, natural resources and economic development. Any additional resources to improve a service often have to be made at the expense of other important needs. Balancing a budget entails not only controlling expenses but also finding the most effective and efficient mix of programs.

LONG-TERM DEBT BORROWING CAPACITY

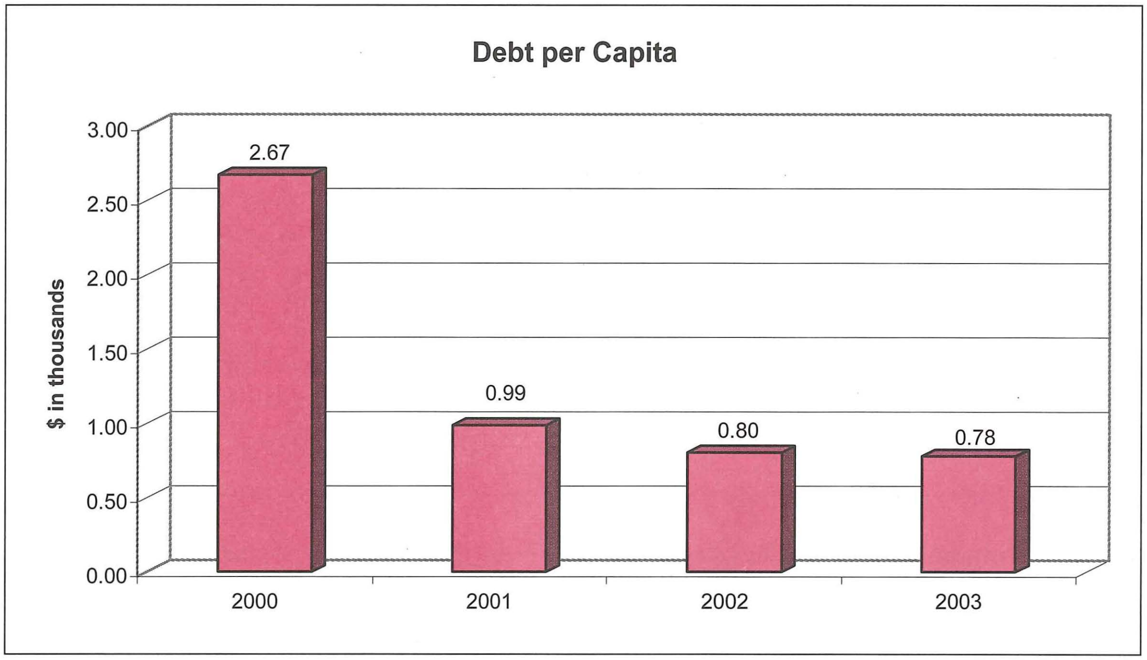
Canada, pursuant to subsection 20(2) of the *Northwest Territories Act,* has approved Government borrowing up to $300 million. This includes all debt of the various Government entities' that are consolidated. These entities include the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and the Northwest Territories Power Corporation. If future monetary requirements should require borrowing in excess of the approved amount a review of the Government's overall borrowing capacity with Canada would be required.

The borrowings of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation (NTPC) and the Northwest Territories Energy Corporation are serviced through revenues generated by the NTPC and Northwest Territories Energy Corporation and, as such, do not require the Government fund the related interest expense or principal repayment.



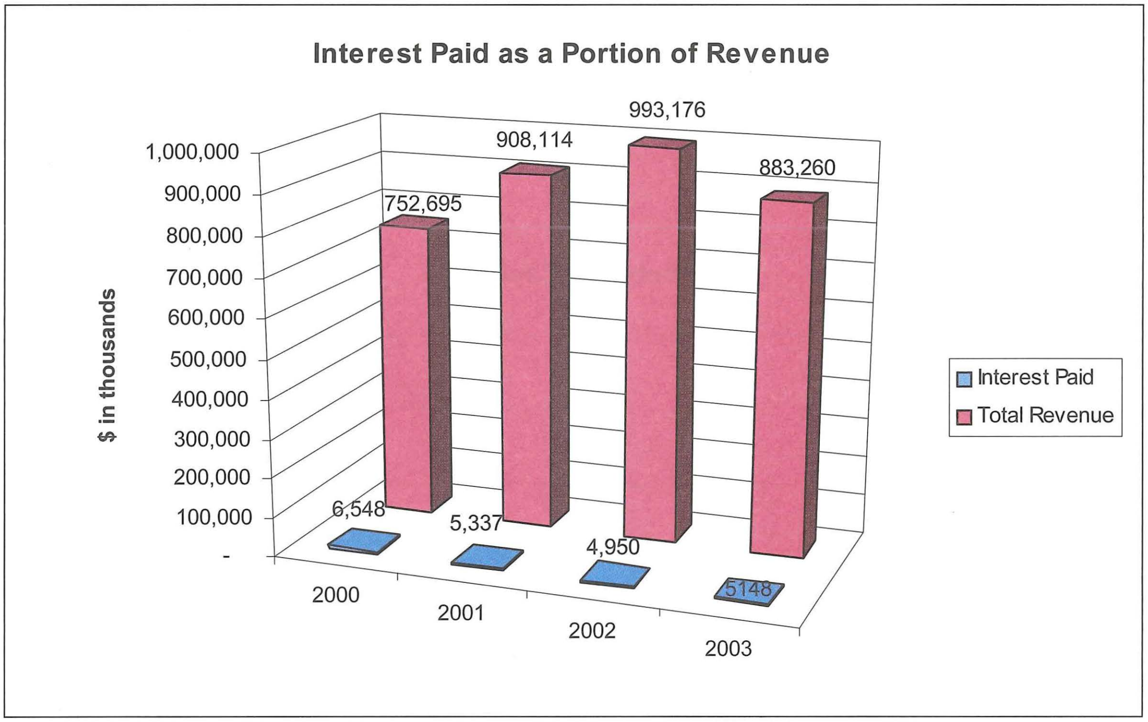
DEBT PER CAPITA

The following chart depicts the debt per capita with respect to the entire debt load that the Government of the Northwest Territories is directly responsible for. This debt is defined as short and long-term borrowing. At March 31, 2003 the long-term debt was $32 million, with no short-term borrowings.



Based on Statistics Canada population as at July 1, 2002

INTEREST



The Government of the Northwest Territories is in the enviable position of having less than 1% of its total revenues expended to service its debt load.

CONCLUSION

As described in the Introduction, the CICA has suggested that a government's financial health should be measured in terms of sustainability, flexibility and vulnerability. The preceding measures have attempted to illustrate how the Government of the Northwest Territories' fiscal health measures up from this standpoint. The following conclusions are suggested:

Sustainability – at the end of the 2002-2003 fiscal year the Government of the Northwest Territories enjoyed a surplus of financial assets over financial liabilities of $84 million. These net financial resources were equal to about 9.1% of the year's expenses, or 4.7 weeks of operations. The Government's long-term debt was $32 million or 3.6% of the Government revenues for that year and less than 1% of the Northwest Territories Gross Domestic Product. These measures suggest that the Government of the Northwest Territories can maintain current programs without increasing the debt burden on the economy, at least for the short-term.

Flexibility – this pertains to the Government's ability to increase its financial resources. The Government of the Northwest Territories raised 51% of its 2002-2003 revenues (65% in 2001-2002) from its own sources. While at first glance it may appear that our revenue sources have deteriorated, closer inspection shows a sharp decrease in corporate income tax as the major cause, all other sources remain fairly constant. This was due to a the 2002 tax filing by large corporations, with large one time capital gains, wishing to take advantage of favourable corporate income tax rates. The balance of revenues came largely through the formula financing agreement with the federal government. The Government does not have access to resource royalty revenues as the federal government continues to control all Northwest Territories subsurface resources. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a federally imposed limit on its borrowing of $300 million, and although it is currently under its limit, $300 million represents only 33% of 2001-02 expenses or 17 weeks of operations. The Government of the Northwest Territories' flexibility is severely constrained by these factors.

Vulnerability – this is a measure of how dependent a government is on sources of funding outside its control or influence. To assess the Government of the Northwest Territories vulnerability it is not necessary to look further than the Government's limited own source revenues, their volatility related to corporate income tax and their effect on the Formula Financing Agreement. This agreement is renewed every five years at which time it is subject to negotiated or federally imposed changes. The current agreement expires March 31, 2004.

In summary, the Government of the Northwest Territories is financially healthy at this point in time but it has limited flexibility to raise new revenues or incur debt and it is very vulnerable to federal changes to its future revenues.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Government of the Northwest Territories produces several other documents and web sites that may be referenced for additional information.

Sources include:

- Government of the Northwest Territories Web Site at www.gov.nt.ca
- Government of the Northwest Territories Public Accounts
  - Section I – Consolidated Financial Statements
  - Section II – Non-Consolidated Financial Statements
  - Section III – Supplementary Financial Statements
- Government of the Northwest Territories Main Estimates
- Business Plans
- Geographic Tracking Report
- Results Report