

15th Legislative Assembly

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Pre-Budget Consultation

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past September, for the first time ever, the Legislative Assembly took the budget process to the public. We encountered many ideas, thoughts and concerns from residents around the territory. For one full week, half of the Regular Members on this side of the House went north, while the other half went south to visit communities there. We also had two full days of discussions here in Yellowknife.

From the feedback we received, this type of public involvement was long overdue. I will certainly be looking for ways going forward that we can find where the government can open up the budgeting process. We need to allow more public presence in the lead-up to our budget discussions that ultimately end up here on the floor of this House.

I don't really understand the necessity, Mr. Speaker, to keep all of the good work in the business plan review process behind closed doors. As a public government, we have to be more transparent and open about how we do business. The pre-budget consultation exercise was a step in the right direction.

Now we have to examine how we can increase our exposure, and the scrutiny that comes along with it, to the public that we serve. Our budget process and committee structure does not normally allow for any type of public participation. Now that we have the door slightly ajar with the pre-budget consultations, we have to look at ways to let the public in on the business plan reviews.

The public deserves, and has to have the opportunity, to see MLAs doing committee work. This will do two things, Mr. Speaker. First, it will increase public trust and lead to a more open and accountable government. Secondly, it will ensure Members take a more active and involved role in committee work. Ultimately, what you would achieve is better government. Isn't that why we are all here today? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause