

15th Legislative Assembly
Fourth Session
February 10 - March 2, 2006

FEB 2, 2006

Reflections on Budget Address

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that our Finance Minister has delivered his budget address today, I feel compelled to comment on some observations that I have had after having now listened to the last three budget addresses.

I find it very ironic that the Finance Minister has delivered his budget address on Groundhog Day. I wonder if he has ever seen the movie Groundhog Day where Bill Murray plays a weatherman who lives the same day over and over again. Every day is Groundhog Day. It would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that each budget that has been delivered by this government seems eerily similar to the one before it. It is like we are living in a very bad dream that has lasted 13 years. No fiscal surety, no deal on devolution, no deal on resource revenue sharing, no substantial new vision or focus. We continue as a government to just roll along.

Thankfully for our residents, our economy continues to flourish. How can our economy grow 20 percent last year and yet we still struggle to balance our books year in and year out? How can we break the cycle of each budget being a mere image of the one before it? We need to focus our attention on the three big priorities facing the Northwest Territories: devolution, resource revenue sharing and fiscal surety.

With the new government in Ottawa, it is time for us to finally wake up from the bad dream that we were in and focus on the future. I take the issue of fiscal responsibility very seriously. I take any opportunity I can to try and tell the government that we have to look very closely at how we spend our money. There are many examples of how restructuring and so called efficiency and effectiveness initiatives do not actually save the government anything but end up costing much more. When a department seems set to lose a few positions, they miraculously appear as new initiatives under a new heading.

We need a thorough examination of our operations. We need to have a vision, a focus, and be able to spend more money where it is needed on areas like social issues, and economic and business development. We have to take every opportunity to realize efficiency in our operations. From what I have seen so far, no opportunity is ever taken to realize efficiency and cost savings, and that cost savings seems like a foreign concept to the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will ask the Minister questions at the appropriate time.
Thank you.

---Applause