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Proposed Taxation Initiatives

Mr. Ramsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to my colleagues. I am excited to be back in the House speaking about the issues that are important both to my constituents and the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Over the past few weeks I have received numerous emails, phone calls and input from residents in regard to the government's proposed new tax options. Mr. Speaker, the single largest issue facing our residents across our territory is the cost of living. To me there seems to be a disconnect between what the government is saying and doing, and our people.

I have spoken in the past in this House about the 3300 migrant workers and the \$330 million that leaves with them every year — a place where the government should be doing everything in its power to persuade these workers to live in the Northwest Territories. Not only do we need to attract workers here, but we must ensure that the people who are here are going to stay here. That the government would communicate a proposed new tax initiative or strategy without first having a thorough examination of its own programs and services is absurd.

The easy target for government, Mr. Speaker, is the public. I know I won't stand for that happening, nor will the public. I am not a fortune teller, Mr. Speaker, but I know last winter was tough. This winter will be very, very difficult for residents. It will be our own winter of discontent.

This government set out on a course to reduce spending by \$135 million over two years. They will come nowhere close to that mark. Instead, they propose to find \$40 million from somewhere else. This simply is poor management. Where are the zero base reviews department by department? Why does this government continue to take misstep after misstep?

Instead of taking money from the pockets of our residents, we should focus our energy and our efforts on three key areas. Reduction of migrant workers and retention of existing population, for obvious reasons, Mr. Speaker; people equal money and \$22,000 in transfer payments from Ottawa. Number 2, a meaningful examination of government-wide spending, not just some cost cutting exercise overseen by deputy ministers. And number 3, resource revenue sharing and devolution.

Why is this government so silent on these big ticket items? In case the government hasn't heard — I know the Premier mentioned it in his sessional statement — there is an election going on, and someone over there should be jumping up and down demanding a deal. At the very least demand that the hundreds of jobs located in Ottawa pertaining to northern development, held by many people who have not even stepped foot north of 60, be transferred to Nunavut, the Yukon ... They should be demanding that the federal government transfer the jobs pertaining to northern development to the Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, people equal money. If we continue on the track we're on right now, we won't have anyone left to tax, because everyone is going to be gone. Mahsi.