

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the Legislative Assembly that at the appropriate time later today I will be tabling the Department of Finance's *Strategic Action Plan 2009-2012*.

This document is the first strategic plan for the new Department of Finance, which was created on April 1st of this year by combining the previous Department of Finance and the Financial Management Board Secretariat. It is a milestone in that it represents the first strategic plan for a central agency Department in this government.

The new Department's role in this government is multi-faceted. As a central agency it provides advice and support to other GNWT Departments and the Financial Management Board. It plays a leadership role in ensuring that this government has the necessary resources to deliver required programs, services and infrastructure to residents of the Northwest Territories. It is responsible for ensuring that the government's financial results are reported to the public, so that decision makers can be held accountable. It provides services to the public through regulation of the NWT insurance industry, managing and regulating liquor distribution and sales in the NWT, and administering electricity rate subsidies.

Through *Northerners Working Together*, the 16th Legislative Assembly set out its goals and priorities. Achieving these goals will require significant resources, both human and financial. It is critical that the GNWT makes the right decisions, not only about allocating and managing the resources that we have, but also about how to increase the resources available to us, if we are to maximize our progress toward achieving these goals. The Department of Finance will play a key role in helping us make those choices.

This strategic planning document will provide multi-year direction for the Department of Finance.

Progress against its objectives will be monitored and reported back to the Legislative Assembly. Public awareness, involvement, participation and feedback are critical factors in ensuring that the Department of Finance continues to operate in a transparent, accountable fashion.

The Action Plan lays out two strategic priorities:

1. Achieving fiscal sustainability for the GNWT; and
2. Adopting a modern management approach to financial management functions within the GNWT.

The Department of Finance will need to be in the forefront to develop and implement fiscal strategies that will enable the GNWT to achieve its goals. The Strategic Action Plan describes the actions the Department will be taking with respect to revenue, spending, borrowing and saving.

The Strategic Action Plan also speaks to the GNWT's adoption of a modern management approach. To this end, I am pleased to report specifically on a key activity that supports the Department's modern management priority and the GNWT's information, analytical, reporting and business needs.

Mr. Speaker, on September 1, 2009, the GNWT began a new era in its financial administration and management when its 25 year old financial information system was replaced with SAM, the System for Accountability and Management. SAM is a modern financial and reporting system which is expandable into what is termed an Enterprise Resource Planning system, or ERP. An ERP enables organizations to more fully integrate activities such as purchasing, asset management, project management and other activities into a single information system.

This project is a significant accomplishment. It has gone through various planning stages since 2003, and work began in earnest last fall. A dedicated project team of 38 staff and contractors worked hard to bring the system into production, on time and on budget.

In addition to the dedicated team, more than 100 subject matter experts from all Departments contributed many hours helping to shape the design of the system to ensure it meets the business requirements of the GNWT.

Go-live on September 1st was not without some bumps. However, this was to be expected for the implementation of such a large and complex information system. The project team continues to work hard to address issues as they arise and will continue to do so as they are fully committed to making the system a success.

Going forward, the biggest challenge we will face is to work with this new technology to exploit its potential to improve our financial management and reporting. Financial information is a cornerstone of effective management. The launch of SAM on September 1st was an important step on the path to creating a modern management organization within the GNWT.

I encourage the Members of the Legislative Assembly and all residents of the NWT to read the Strategic Action Plan and to work closely with the staff of the Department of Finance to assist to develop and articulate the financial and strategic priorities of this government.