

**Success in Retaining GNWT Public Servants**

Mr. Speaker, the decisions we make here in the Legislative Assembly, have real impacts on the people of the Northwest Territories. Make no mistake about it; they are watching us to find out what our plans are and how they will be affected. That puts a big responsibility on us to make sure what we say here is accurate and does not cause any public fear or misconceptions about the government's plans.

We have a particular responsibility to our staff, Mr. Speaker. We make the decisions here in the Legislative Assembly, but it is the dedicated professionals in the GNWT public service who put our direction into action. Without them, we would have nobody to plan and deliver the programs and services the people of the NWT rely on.

To provide the people of the NWT with the good programs and services they need, it is critical that we recruit the best staff we can. We are also committed to developing our employees and to making every effort we can to retain them as members of the GNWT public service.

As with any employer, our organizational structure and staffing levels change over time. Mr. Speaker, often those changes are small, but there are times when we go through a more significant restructuring process. When that happens, we make an effort to reduce effects on our employees, first by eliminating vacant positions and then through our Staff Retention Policy.

The Staff Retention Policy provides a clear process for working with affected staff to find them other employment options within the GNWT. An important feature of the policy is a commitment to give affected employees staffing priority for up to 21 weeks. This provides our employees some confidence that a restructuring does not mean the end of their GNWT

career and it gives us the opportunity to retain someone with valuable experience and training.

Through this process, Mr. Speaker, we are often able to reduce the number of employees impacted by position reductions and to accommodate the majority of affected staff.

For instance, the GNWT identified 124 positions for elimination in its 2016-2017 budget. There were 56 staff affected as part of that reduction, with 40 of them being redeployed to other positions in the GNWT. Five others retired and nine were laid off, having received a layoff option.

We have eliminated 65 positions in this year's budget. As is our normal practice, we looked at vacant positions first and initially identified 36 as affected employees. We will work toward retaining affected employees, as we have in the past.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that our 2017-2018 budget actually creates more positions than it eliminates. With new positions such as the 23 being created in Norman Wells with the opening of the new health centre and long-term care facility, the GNWT expects to have 17 more positions next fiscal year than it did this year. This Budget is creating opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Members of the Legislative Assembly, the public, and our employees that the GNWT is committed to the retention and retraining of our impacted staff. Employees are our most valuable asset and we will make every reasonable effort to retain affected employees as a part of the GNWT public service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.