



**Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee
Report 4-18 (2): Report on the Review of the 2014-2015 Public Accounts**

Background

The Comptroller General and his staff were pleased to have the opportunity to review the Government's 2014-2015 Public Accounts with the Standing Committee on Government Operations and looks forward to reviewing the 2015-2016 Public Accounts with Committee in the near future.

In response to the Report on the Review of the 2014-2015 Public Accounts that was tabled on November 1, 2016, I provide the following responses to the Committee's recommendations contained within:

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Minister of Finance provide the Committee with the interim public accounts by August 31st, in time for Committee review of the Government's business plans.

GNWT Response

The Interim Public Accounts will be shared with the Standing Committee on Government Operations by August 31 each year.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations again recommends that the Office of the Comptroller General in the Department of Finance continue to work with the Auditor General of Canada and the GNWT departments, boards, and agencies to complete the interim and final public accounts at the earliest possible date each year, and in time for their respective statutory reporting deadlines, and to seek the necessary extensions where those deadlines cannot be met.

GNWT Response

The Department of Finance continues to work closely with the Auditor General of Canada and GNWT departments, boards and agencies to ensure that the audited Public Accounts are prepared as soon as possible and within statutory requirements.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Office of the Comptroller General include in the consolidated public accounts a list of all departments, board and agencies in the government reporting entity, their deadlines for the completion of financial statements, and whether or not those deadlines were met.

GNWT Response

The Office of the Comptroller General has included this information within the Public Accounts for the year ending March 31, 2017 and will continue to do so for future fiscal years.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories continue to provide updated timetables or schedules for the environmental assessment of all known potentially contaminated sites for which the GNWT is responsible, to be included annually in the public accounts.

GNWT Response

The GNWT will continue to track and disclose its known and suspected contaminated sites within the Public Accounts in a manner that is required to be compliant with Public Sector reporting standards. In addition the GNWT has now posted on the Department of Finance website, a list of all sites that currently form part of the environmental liability disclosed within the public accounts, including current actions being undertaken on the sites, as at each fiscal year end, March 31.

Recommendation 5

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that, in addition to reporting, on consolidated basis, on the performance measures specified in the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, the Government of the Northwest Territories report, on a non-consolidated basis, on the performance measures related to the policy provisions on Infrastructure Financing and Affordable debt.

GNWT Response

The Department of Finance has enhanced its disclosure related to the Fiscal Responsibility Policy within the Public Accounts for the year ended March 31, 2016, including disclosure on meeting the policy's performance measures related to infrastructure financing and affordable debt. The Department will continue to do this for future fiscal years.

Recommendation 6

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Minister of Finance work with the Minister responsible for Public Engagement and Transparency to develop plain language materials that report on public accounts in a manner that is understandable for an interested, non-professional reader.

GNWT Response

Plain language materials will be developed for the year ended March 31, 2017 in consultation with the Minister Responsible for Public Engagement and Transparency's Office. The plain language materials will continue to evolve and be prepared for future fiscal years.

Recommendation 7

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Finance amend the Non-consolidated Schedule of Bad Debt Write-offs, Forgiveness and Student Loan Remissions to protect the privacy of individuals by removing the names of those who have receive student loan remissions and reporting only the amount of the remissions.

GNWT Response

This information will continue to be disclosed in the Public Accounts in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and to ensure transparency of these amounts to the public.

Recommendation 8

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days.

