

MLAs to fight budget cuts

Regular MLAs say 'austerity measures' which are expected to be unveiled next Wednesday are not the way to jump start territory's economy

by John McFadden
Northern News Services

MLAs will discuss and debate it with the various departments. At the end of the day, cabinet needs the support of at least three of the 11 regular MLAs in order for the budget to pass.

The operations and maintenance budget will lay out how the government expects to spend about a billion dollars over the next year to operate its programs and services.

McLeod has made it clear on several occasions earlier this year that the government is looking to trim about \$150 million in spending over the next five years in order to prevent excess revenue.

The coming session is a relatively lengthy one - running until June 29.

After the budget is introduced,



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"We're not accepting that approach. The term austerity measures keeps coming up or aggressive reductions. We've not run a deficit in years," Vanthynne said. "We're not seeing the necessity of a hard thing to do to take drastic measures and reductions at this point in time. We want to see a more sustainable approach."

Vanthynne said he would not be surprised if taxes are raised on alcohol and tobacco in the budget and

what she describes as badly needed social programs and services.

"Trying to generate a surplus in order to build roads is not my preferred way of spending any extra money that we have," said Green. "Given the existing needs for seniors, housing for homeless people, affordable housing for other people, we have a lot of human priorities so I hope the government has received the message that it needs to continue its investment in people and not go the route of austerity measures in order to build infrastructure."

Green said she does expect to see cuts to programs and jobs but she is not about to predict what that is going to look like.

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JULIE GREEN, Yellowknife Centre MLA, says there is room for cuts but they should come from bureaucracy.

in the right areas, adding that the government is top-heavy and it is the senior levels of the bureaucracy where there is room to trim.

"Education, Culture and Employment for example - even after 75 per cent of its budget goes out the door for seniors, housing for homeless people, affordable housing for other people, we have a lot of human priorities so I hope the government has received the message that it needs to continue its investment in people and not go the route of austerity measures in order to build infrastructure."

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