

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
5TH COUNCIL, 29TH SESSION

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL
NO. 3-29

TABLED ON FEBRUARY 9, 1965

8 January, 1965.

Alcohol Education Programme

Problem-drinking in the Territories has aroused increasing concern in the past five years. This concern has been expressed widely by northern residents, and by persons and agencies generally interested in northern development; church spokesmen, police, courts, government officers, and private citizens of all ethnic groups. In response to this pressure of concern, a special committee under the Director, Northern Administration Branch, was established to study the problem, and to draw together informed opinion from the fields of health, welfare, education, law enforcement, Indian Affairs, and The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The deliberations of this Committee have been reviewed by the administration and by the Commissioner, and the following recommendations are put forward for Council consideration.

INTERDICTION: The Committee recommended that wider but, at the same time, more perceptive and discriminate use be made of interdiction. It also recommended that, when interdiction was employed, it be coupled with positive, helpful treatment. The changes in liquor legislation undertaken at the last session improved the effectiveness of interdiction, but, in the judgment of the administration, this improvement can be given even greater impetus if two further steps are taken. The first step is to introduce a complementary, supporting, alcohol-control programme, which would make interdiction a logical first step in a course of effective, individual treatment (See Recommendation 1, below). The second step is to develop a uniform and broadly-based point of view on alcohol problems amongst the judiciary of the Territories (See Recommendation 2, below).

The Committee also proposed:

1. That the administration impress upon government employees in the north the necessity for moderation in their personal use of liquor. (The Administration is now preparing a letter on this subject which will be circulated to all government employees in the north).
2. That more be done to prepare communities for the introduction, or expansion of liquor facilities which they may have requested. (Action on this proposal is embodied in Recommendation 1, below).
3. That the Fitness and Amateur Sport programme assist in an alcohol programme by giving priority in the matter of providing recreational activities to those communities where alcohol abuses may have become a problem, and to those communities where liquor facilities are about to be introduced or expanded. (These instructions have already gone forward to the Director of this programme).
4. That suitable material on the problems of alcohol be included in the school curriculum. (Action on this recommendation is not possible at the present time. Education programmes on alcohol are incorporated in the health and hygiene section of the school curriculum, and there is now no staff member to undertake a revision of that part of the curriculum. As soon as this difficulty is overcome, the appropriate action will be taken).

Recommendation:

1. (a) that approval in principle be given for the Territorial Government to undertake a comprehensive alcohol control programme, organized and directed by a specialist hired for that purpose, and,
(b) that the sum of \$11,900 be allocated to this programme in 1965-66 appropriations.

The Committee emphasized that the problem of controlling problem drinking requires a general "community" approach: a programme addressed to communities that encourages and enables local people to use their own resources to develop ways of their own to deal

with abuses of alcohol in their community. The planning and operation of a broad programme of alcohol control could be done most successfully by an expert who is trained in the special techniques necessary to arouse and direct enthusiasm in small communities. This specialist would initiate and conduct a continuing programme of prevention and correction in the major settlements in both districts of the Territories, not by treating individual problem drinkers, but by helping to organize and direct measures to deal with them that could be carried out by local people - local education programmes, for example, or discussion groups, or chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous, and so on. He would be an agent of the Territorial Government, paid from Territorial funds and based at Fort Smith or Yellowknife. He would report to the Administrator of the district in which he is working and his activities would be generally co-ordinated through the Welfare Division of the Northern Administration Branch.

Any programme will require the support and assistance of Branch staff if it is to be successful, and this will of course be provided without hesitation. The constant attention of a specialist is however the best guarantee that the programme will be sustained, varied in emphasis where it is required, modified to meet changing conditions, and adapted to local circumstances.

The Government of the Yukon Territory has contracted with a provincial Alcoholism Research Foundation to provide a full-time worker, who has already taken up residence in Whitehorse and commenced a vigorous programme of alcohol control work. A reasonable estimate of salary for a specialist of this order is \$9,000 and travel and other expenses in the first year could be expected to amount to an additional \$1,500. The total appropriation necessary for 1965-66 is thus \$11,900. Provision should be made also for the costs incurred in hiring the specialist and his removal to his headquarters in the Territories. These costs are estimated at \$1,400.

Preliminary inquiries indicate that, at present, matching federal grants of up to \$5,500 annually are available from the Department of National Health and Welfare to defray the cost of such a programme, provided it is carried out by the Territorial Government. Not cost to the Territorial Government for the first year operation of the programme is therefore \$5,000. In addition, there is reason to believe that the Department of National Health and Welfare would agree to increasing their future share of costs, if the programme warranted expansion.

2. that a request be made by Council to the Department of Justice to establish a programme for knitting together the administration of justice by the lay judiciary of the junior courts in the Territories - through conventions, a planned dissemination of information, and so on - in which the practical treatment of alcohol offenders could be a part.

Territorial Justices of the Peace - particularly those who have been newly appointed - have frequently expressed a wish for more complete instructions and general guidance in their duties. The administration cannot act directly in this matter since it is properly a concern for the Department of Justice. Nevertheless, an appropriate request from Council would have great influence on the achievement of this objective.