

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
5TH COUNCIL, 30TH SESSION**

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 9-30

TABLED ON JUNE 23, 1965



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 9

The attached brief on the need for the improvement of dental services in the Fort Smith area is submitted by the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS there is an urgent need for a drastic improvement of dental services in the Fort Smith area, and

WHEREAS the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce feels that this improvement mainly should be brought about in the fields of education and prevention, and

WHEREAS the setting up of adequate facilities and equipment for and the recruitment of para-dental personnel, preferably a dental hygienist, would greatly improve the present situation concerning dental services in Fort Smith,

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce respectfully urge the Northern Health Services Branch of the Federal Department of National Health and Welfare together with the Commissioner and Council of the Northwest Territories to alleviate the critical dental services situation in the Fort Smith area.

APPENDIX

There is a serious inadequacy in dental health services available in the Fort Smith region, despite the full-time work of a highly qualified and experienced dentist employed by the Northern Health Services Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

The nature of the problem and suggested solutions are contained in the foregoing Resolution and this Appendix.

PART 1. "HEALTH CARE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES"

The Hall Royal Commission on Health Services makes a strong plea for better health services in Canada's vast northern regions. The Hall report in Volume II devotes 22 of the 56 recommendations to the betterment of health services in Canada's North.

Recommendation No. 40: "That provision be made for regular periodic visits to Northern stations by dentists and dental auxiliary personnel".

Recommendation No. 56: "That the Contonial Commission as a centennial project survey the possibility of adopting the implementation of a demonstration project, in two northern locations, of community development including adequate housing, proper sanitation services and essential education, health and other facilities." The Commission urges that "we must plan now and act as soon as possible."

To meet health needs in the Northwest Territories the Commission said it is necessary to secure the required personnel, equipment and facilities, in addition to making these resources physically available when and where they are needed.

Standards of medical care are constantly improving in Canada, but there may be a concern about these standards in areas where the Doctors' time is overtaxed. The solution advocated by the Commission is that paramedical personnel be allowed to play an essential role in maintaining quality health care.

Conditions for medical practice in the Northwest Territories are different from those in Southern Canada;

- 1) The isolation of the communities makes it impossible for the professional man to associate with his peers;
- 2) The average Southern Canadian Community may have an incidence of medically indigent people of 3% to 5%; in some northern communities it may be as high as 90%;
- 3) Fees for medical services to the medically indigent are paid out of public funds and hence are assured.

PART 2. "FORT SMITH REGION DENTAL (SERVICES) SITUATION"

The Fort Smith region includes the settlements of Fort Chipewyan, Sweetgrass Landing, Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Resolution.

Without considering the outlying districts, the Fort Smith area has approximately 800 school children. Studies have shown that the average Canadian child develops 2 to 4 new cavities per year. This applied to the 800 Fort Smith children means a minimum of 1,600 new cavities per year.

A year contains approximately 240 working days, which means that one dentist would be occupied eight hours a day with the task of keeping the yearly increase of cavities under control for the children alone; In addition there is a backlog of dental work and the emergency service to adults. Dental services also include dental examinations, which would bring to light signs of systemic disorders and anomalies. These examinations include the taking of radiographs where necessary.

To carry out examinations on the school children and initiate preventive treatment at the rate of 15 to 20 patients per day would take approximately three months. At the present time no examinations are done nor are preventive treatments administered. We do not take into consideration the orthodontal work found necessary as a result of the examinations.

Extensive studies in Canada have shown that certain measures can be taken to attack these problems.

"Proper oral hygiene will reduce the incidence of new cavities by 30%. Topical applications reduce the number of new cavities by 50% and the procedure of cleaning and the application of prophylaxite twice a year will have the effect of a 70% reduction in new cavities."

The ideal dental program today should place emphasis on prevention and education.

PART 3. "RECOMMENDATIONS"

To provide the same financial incentives for furnishing professional services to the residents of northern Canada, arrangements for medical professional and para-medical people should be set up so as to equalize the incomes of the northern practitioners with comparable groups in the south, thereby allowing for differences in costs of living and transportation.

While treatment and relief-of-pain dental services will still be necessary for many years to come, consideration should be given to implement the education and prevention phases of the dental program in the Fort Smith region.

Also, the terms of reference for the dentist should be changed to read "all dental care be his responsibility" instead of the present "emergency or relief of pain only" reference.

There is a second dental unit in storage in Fort Smith. This unit should be set up and put into service as soon as possible to assist in patient flow and appointment planning.

In addition there is a fairly well equipped travelling kit on hand in Fort Smith for field use.