

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
5TH COUNCIL, 33RD SESSION

RECOMMENDATION TO
COUNCIL NO. 3-33

TABLED ON NOVEMBER 2, 1966



October 13, 1966.
Confidential - Not
for release before
tabling during the
33rd Session of
Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL NO. 3-33
(Second Session 1966)
Tabled on November 2, 1966

A REVIEW OF TRAPPERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

DISPOSITION

Tabled	To Committee	Accepted as Read	Accepted as Amended	Deferred (to Session)	Rejected	Noted not Considered

A Review of Trappers Assistance Programs

Background Information

Sessional Paper No. 11 on the Amalgamation of Trappers Assistance Programme was presented at the June, 1965 Session of Council, and rejected, as it did not cover all of the points requested by Council. The Administration was instructed to prepare a paper covering the points brought up by Council. A meeting was subsequently held in Fort Smith attended by Mr. Paul Kwaterowski, Superintendent of Game, Mr. Henry Mann, Game Branch, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Mr. N.K. Ogden, Regional Director of Indian Affairs Branch, Fort Smith.

At this meeting, it was evident that a total resource management and utilization program is necessary to provide a year-round income to trappers. This program must encompass utilization and some management of other resources such as tourism, timber, commercial fishing, sports fishing, etc. To operate a beneficial Trappers Assistance Program, other urgent problems must be considered, and therefore, only after an all embracing resource management and utilization program is designed and implemented, will it be meaningful to amalgamate existing Trappers Assistance Programs.

It is recognized that to function to the full benefit of all peoples, assistance programs should probably be administered by one agency or service. As the entire program is seen as one of management, it would appear that the Game Management Service is the logical administrative unit to administer the service and it should be organized accordingly.

Settlement Problems

Trappers living in settlements are today faced with social, economic, health, housing and educational problems that were not evident some years ago. Trappers' families now, for the most part, remain in the settlements as a result of pressures exerted on them for higher education. Improved housing conditions have made it more attractive to remain in the settlement than to proceed to traplines for the winter months. Various Works Programs have imposed a wage economy that previously did not exist in some areas. Consequently, because of the trapper's concern for his family, he now appears to remain in the settlement for longer periods.

Trapper's Problems and Assistance Programs

The lack of sufficient credit from sources other than Government has had the effect of holding trappers from proper trapping methods. Low fur prices, coupled with rising merchandise costs, do not provide sufficient incentive for trapping, mainly because of the absence of a proper trapping program, the lack of traps and the general shortage of sufficient equipment to maintain a trapper on his trapline for any extended period of time.

Assistance and encouragement should be given, to establish good base camps on the traplines and grub stakes should be provided and loans made available for equipment, including sleighs and dogs. The initial responsibility for transportation to and from the trapline must rest with the trapper, and in consultation with him, encouragement should be given to use the method of transportation applicable to his area of operation. Assistance for aircraft charters should not be extended too readily, as it has the effect of reducing the trappers mobility once he reaches his trapline and it is a form of luxury that most trappers cannot afford today. In consultation with trappers, an adequate transportation procedure should be worked out on a local basis to provide camp trade and to market furs during the peak buying periods which normally take place when the trapper is not in a position to return to his settlement with the furs. It is essential that annual trapping plans be worked out with each group of trappers; this to be done during the summer months, and preferably at the annual trappers' meetings. Communications between trapping areas

and home settlements present many problems to the trappers, and it is proposed that a system of periodic visits be paid to trapping areas by Public Health Nurses and Game Management Officers, as a means of overcoming this problem and keeping trappers in touch with conditions at their homes. Advantage should be taken of annual Winter Works Programs as a means of cutting trails suitable for tracked vehicles from main settlements into major base camps. However, this work should only take place in the period between the winter and spring trapping seasons, and should not be allowed to conflict with peak trapping or detract in any way from trapping as a livelihood.

Resources Management and Development

It is admitted that knowledge of the natural resources potential in many areas is meagre. It is difficult to encourage trappers to go into these areas.

The Game Management Program differs somewhat from other programs. To ensure continuity, it is necessary to have staff who will remain with the management service for extended periods. To help accomplish this more promotional opportunities within the service must be provided. At present staff cannot be held long enough to become fully familiar with their work areas. The present staff is insufficient in number and has not had the advantages of proper training in resources management.

The present trapping and licensing system does not provide proper trapping opportunities or incentive for those who depend on trapping. People who hold General Hunting Licences, and are employed full-time can take vacations and trap during peak periods in areas occupied by bona fide trappers, thus depriving bona fide trappers of badly-needed income.

To assist in providing a program for the proper management of the game resources, and to stimulate a greater interest in trapping as a way of life, the following is required:

1. A complete inventory of fur and game resources and potential to be undertaken for all areas in the Northwest Territories.
2. Fur management areas to be established within each group area.
3. A program to rehabilitate fur stocks, and wherever feasible, habitat improvement should be undertaken in conjunction with the game inventory.
4. Fur resources should be harvested in accordance with an annual trapping plan for each group area. Such a plan to be prepared in consultation with the trappers.
5. The possibilities of white fox trapping on a managed basis by prediction of population cycles should be examined. Marten and lynx could possibly be treated in the same manner.
6. Traditional hunting and trapping areas should be retained. Any changes should be by agreement between the peoples concerned.
7. Consideration should be given in consultation with trappers to the establishment of areas around the settlements for the use and benefit of the aged, incapacitated and widows.

Trapper Education

As a means of recreating and stimulating interest in trapping as an honorable vocation and a desirable way of life, an immediate start must be made on a trapper education program. In addition to educating the adult trapper, such a program could be useful in motivating young people towards trapping as a full-time vocation. A staff training program for Game Management Officers must be undertaken to better equip them to act as instructors in this program.

The following items should be included in the program:

1. The importance of being properly organized; for example, putting up an adequate supply of fuel wood at home and in the trapline base camp, putting up sufficient food for himself and dogs, setting up of adequate camps, maintenance of equipment and cabins.
2. The principles and the advantages of modern fur management, cyclical trapping and protection and improvement of game habitat.
3. The advantages of taking all species of fur in a trapping area instead of selected species, improved methods of pelt preparation and the importance of primeness of fur in realizing good market prices.
4. Proper methods of beaver management.
5. New trapping techniques and new trapping equipment.
6. An educational program should be carried out in all schools, covering the basic requirements of all aspects of fur, fish and wildlife resource management and utilization.

Fur Marketing

There are areas where the lack of competition in the fur marketing field has worked to the detriment of the trappers. As is to be expected, fur prices paid by dealers are considerably lower than market prices on most occasions.

To help provide better prices and make trapping a more attractive occupation, a system of fur marketing should be provided as an integral part of the overall fur program.

Fur marketing as such must be on a voluntary basis. Procedures for the receiving, packing and shipping of furs should be established in each community. Provision should be made for immediate advances to the trapper of approximately 40% of the value of fur being shipped and for the payment of royalties.

The procedures set up should also cover the distribution of proceeds to trappers after collection of advances are made.

The establishment, on an annual basis of a fur tariff based on market prices, should be provided.

Information on current fur prices at various locations across Canada would be provided from time to time for the trapper.

Financial and Staff Requirements

The Territorial Government is making provision for the allotment of funds to carry that part of the program participated in by Metis and White trappers. Through the amalgamation of Northern Affairs and Indian Affairs funds are now available to carry out that part of the program which affects the Treaty Indian trappers.

A careful study has been made of additional staff required to effectively carry out and develop the program. The approval of the Northern Administration Branch is being sought concerning positions requested in the 1967-68 Staff Estimates.

Recommendations

1. As the Territorial Government has assumed responsibility for the administration of a single Assistance Program for all trappers in the Northwest Territories, to give equal opportunity for all trappers to use to the maximum, the renewable resources of the N.W.T., the Commissioner recommends that the following action be taken to implement the Program as previously outlined:

- (i) To establish the total annual cost for the efficient administration of the Program.
 - (ii) To establish the criteria to be applied in determining each trapper's need and the total amount of assistance to be made available to each trapper requesting assistance.
 - (iii) To establish the criteria for forgiving advances not repaid by trappers.
 - (iv) To determine the administrative level on which the Program is to be administered and on which each individual phase of this Program is to be administered.
 - (v) To obtain approval from the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in respect to the requested staff additions to the Game Management Service, in order to efficiently and effectively administer the amalgamated Trappers Assistance Program.
 - (vi) To obtain approval of the Department of N.A. & N.R. to provide for efficient training programs for Game Management Officers.
2. It is recommended that approval in principle be given for the Game Management Service to conduct studies into the following new areas of assistance to trappers for the purpose of placing proposals before Council, at a later date, on their implementation:
- (i) A complete inventory of fur and game potential in the Northwest Territories;
 - (ii) introduction of a program of habitat improvement and fur stock rehabilitation in areas where over trapping and inadequate trapline management have depleted resources;
 - (iii) provision of transportation to service base camps with supplies and to bring out furs at prime market periods. Initial transportation of trappers by aircraft charter or otherwise to or from traplines should be only granted after assessing the situation in full detail.
3. Approval in principle should be given for the Game Management Service to prepare studies for Council's consideration at a later date on the need for and feasibility of long-range programs in the following areas:
- (i) Provision of technical advice to assist trappers to work out long-range trapping plans and efficient harvesting methods utilizing the principles of cyclic abundances.
 - (ii) A study of existing regulations to eliminate "holiday trapping" during peak periods by fully-employed persons with General Hunting Licences. This needless encroachment on the persons who trap full-time is extremely discouraging.
 - (iii) Instruction in resource management and harvesting including resource protection and habitat improvement and proper handling of pelts.
 - (iv) Introduction of trapping as a subject in northern schools so that young potential trappers will not lose touch with the industry. In addition, provision must be made for the families of the trappers to remain behind in the settlements or alternatively provision must be made for the children to live in a residence while both parents are on a trapline.