



Northwest
Territories Minister of Finance

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MAR 13 2014

MR. MICHAEL NADLI
CHAIR
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Committee Recommendations – Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Liquor Act

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has reviewed the Standing Committee on Government Operations' (SCOGO) report on the review of Bill 24: *An Act to Amend the Liquor Act* dated October 22, 2013. In particular, the GNWT has reviewed and given consideration to the fifteen recommendations contained within the report. Attached is the GNWT's response to those recommendations.

As mentioned in the report, the recommendations go beyond the limited scope of Bill 24. I hope that the information in this response helps to confirm that the GNWT is committed to working with all Members of the Legislative Assembly, community leadership, individuals, and agencies in efforts to combat alcohol abuse across the Northwest Territories.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J.M. Miltenberger".
J. Michael Miltenberger

Attachment

- c. Premier
- Ministers
- Secretary to Cabinet
- Deputy Minister, Finance
- Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services
- Deputy Minister, Education Culture and Employment
- Deputy Minister, Justice
- Deputy Minister, Transportation
- Deputy Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs
- Clerk, Legislative Assembly
- Committee Clerk
- Committee Members



GNWT RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS - BILL 24

1. ***That the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, and the NWT Liquor Commission increase awareness and prevention programs related to alcohol consumption and abuse. The NWT Liquor Commission must live up to its mandate to “promote the development of a healthy and responsible drinking culture,” and to “encourage and support the responsible use of alcohol”.***

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The NWT Liquor Commission will be seeking to increase NWT residents' knowledge and change behaviour about the socially responsible consumption of beverage alcohol. This will be reflected in the Department of Finance's new strategic plan and annual business plans. The NWT Liquor Commission will work with the departments of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) as part of this initiative.

The NWT Liquor Commission participates on the Canadian Liquor Jurisdictions social responsibility committee in support of socially responsible liquor retailing on a nationwide basis. The NWT Liquor Commission actively promoted the following programs last year:

- Techniques of alcohol management, a liquor store server program,
- Liquor server training is mandatory in all NWT liquor stores;
- Check 25, a program intended to prevent service to minors;
- Alcohol warning labels, a program with messaging targeted to pregnant mothers and operators of motorized vehicles;
- In conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, a Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) poster and brochure program was developed, “No Alcohol during Pregnancy”, “We can all help prevent FASD”, was promoted in stores and licensed establishments;
- A booklet titled “Be Prepared to Talk to Your Children about Alcohol” was distributed through the liquor stores and supplied to medical clinics, schools, and drug and alcohol committees throughout the NWT;
- In support of Mothers against Drunk Driving, all liquor stores participated in the Red Ribbon program, “It’s Time to Change the Meaning of Tie One On”, “Drive Safe, Drive Sober”;
- #TAXI, a program that facilitates the easy access to taxi services through a common cell phone number; and
- Supported a poster campaign in conjunction with nine other Canadian Liquor Jurisdictions called “Moderation is always in good taste”.

The Department of Health and Social Services' (DHSS) updated Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, *Pathways to Wellness*, lays the foundation for all of the work DHSS does to strengthen addictions awareness and service delivery. DHSS continues to undertake initiatives that aim to increase prevention and promote awareness of abuse, addictions, and treatment options, including:

- expanding the *My Voice, My Choice* (MVMC) campaign to create awareness of alcohol and drug related harms among youth (aged 13-18) and motivate NWT youth to make positive choices with respect to alcohol and drugs;
- supporting communities in offering on-the-land and traditional healing options for mental health and addictions programming; working with regional Health and Social Services Authorities to facilitate inter-agency professional development events focused on youth addictions issues;
- celebrating National Addictions Awareness Week; and
- promoting community counselling through good news stories of healing and recovery across the NWT.

Through the Healthy Choices Framework ECE will collaborate with our interagency partners to continue to educate and advocate for children to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

2. *That the Department of Health and Social Services make on-the-land addictions treatment available in every community in the Northwest Territories.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

A key element of the updated DHSS Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan is more programs based on Aboriginal culture and spirituality. DHSS partnered with Aboriginal Governments on three different on-the-land healing pilot programs scheduled for March 2014:

1. Tłı̨ch̨ Community Services Agency.
2. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) through the BDHSSA.
3. YK Dene First Nation.

The lessons learned from these pilot projects will be used to expand on-the-land healing programs across the NWT.

3. *That the Department of Health and Social Services re-establish a residential treatment facility in the Northwest Territories.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

Improving the availability and access to services is one of the primary goals of the updated Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.

Currently, residents can access residential addictions treatment through southern treatment. To ensure that our residents have continued access to residential addictions treatment, DHSS has streamlined the treatment referral process. Applications can now be approved within 24 hours of being received by DHSS.

DHSS is also exploring the potential for other approaches to residential treatment in the NWT. A Request for Proposal (RFP) to design and deliver a mobile treatment program is currently being developed.

4. *That the Department of Health and Social Services provide detox programs for any resident who is referred.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The development of detox programs and services was a one of the key recommendations stemming from the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness, *Healing Voices*, and is outlined as an area for action in the updated Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan. DHSS recognizes the importance of including both medical and social withdrawal management in the continuum of addictions services available to residents of the NWT.

Stanton Territorial Hospital, HH Williams Hospital, and Inuvik Regional Hospital will continue to provide medical withdrawal management services on an as-needed basis.

DHSS is reviewing withdrawal management services to determine the best options for the NWT going forward. The report will be completed by March 31, 2014, and will include:

1. A review and assessment of current medical and social withdrawal management services offered within the NWT;
2. Information on best practices in other jurisdictions; and
3. Options to improve and enhance existing services at 3 levels: small isolated communities, regional centres, and territory-wide.

5. *That the Department of Health and Social Services deliver coordinated aftercare support in every community for those who complete addictions treatment programs.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

DHSS continues to offer follow-up and aftercare through the Community Counselling Program, which is offered in 19 communities across all 7 regions of the NWT. Fly-in services are available to all other communities.

In 2014/15, DHSS will be developing plain language materials to promote the availability of the Community Counselling Program to all residents, as outlined in the updated Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan. These materials will be translated and distributed to health centres across the NWT.

6. *That the Department of Justice include identification of, and support for, safe houses as part of community safety plans.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The NWT Community Safety Strategy includes a mapping tool to assist communities to identify and advance their safety priorities while building on their valuable knowledge and experience.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is currently piloting the Strategy in two communities with a third in progress. A safe house can be part of any community's plan should that be identified as a priority and the resources are available.

So far, two communities have identified safe house as a priority and are looking for a house/shelter for individuals (male/female), children and/or families that may be in need due to their situation (e.g. violence, homelessness).

7. *That the Department of Justice consider legislating stiffer penalties for bootleggers, and apply for forfeiture of vehicles and equipment used in appropriate cases.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The RCMP and the DOJ are examining options for the seizure of vehicles involved in bootlegging.

There are challenges involved as this requires necessary resources in each community to tow and store the vehicle. Also, police have found that the vehicle used in bootlegging is often a family vehicle or is owned by someone else. We need to make sure that these kind of seizures have the desired impact on bootleggers and don't have unintended impacts on others.

8. *That the Department of Justice deliver an information campaign to raise awareness of potential penalties to bootleggers.*

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The RCMP recognizes the importance of raising awareness about bootlegging and substance abuse. They have committed to ensuring that community presentations and school talks on these issues continue.

Through the *Not-Us!* Anti-drug Campaign the DOJ provides support to communities to develop and sustain local initiatives to combat substance use, abuse, as well as the illegal sale of drugs. If identified by the community, information on bootlegging, including penalties could be part of the local campaign.

A Communications Officer position was created within the Liquor Licensing and Enforcement Office in 2013-14. The position will be developing social responsibility campaigns focusing on alcohol awareness and compliance with the *Liquor Act*.

- 9. *That the Department of Justice strengthen the ability of RCMP detachments to identify and intercept bootleggers, and provide appropriate tools to detect criminal activity related to alcohol and drugs (such as infrared heat sensors and dogs).***

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The RCMP will continue enforcement efforts on all winter road communities this winter season and will promote the check-stop program through the media.

Check-stops involve the efforts of detachment members, as well as the RCMP Highway Traffic Services unit, the Police Service Dog units and other specialty units such as the Drug Unit, when available.

The use of specialized equipment (such as infrared heat sensors) to detect criminal activity related to alcohol and drugs brings with it challenges such as:

- a requirement for specialized training;
- logistical issues in smaller communities; and,
- legal challenges.

One of the most effective tools to combatting bootlegging and the illegal sale of drugs are tips from the public.

- 10. *That the Department of Justice and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs assist communities that wish to establish and operate community alcohol committees to help control access to alcohol.***

GNWT Response to Recommendation

Community governments have the authority to establish committees to support their internal operations and management needs.

The GNWT fully supports any community that is taking a stance against alcohol abuse and bootleggers. Should a community government wish to establish a liquor control committee, and requests support from the GNWT, the appropriate support and advice will be provided.

11. That the Department of Justice establish an effective mechanism for anonymous reporting of bootleggers and bootlegging.

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The NWT/Nunavut Crime Stoppers provides residents with a method to anonymously report information on crimes, including bootlegging.

Reporting to Crime Stoppers is one way residents can pass information to the RCMP without putting themselves at risk.

- The toll-free number is 1-800-222-8477
- Tips can be submitted via text message by texting “NWTNUTIPS” plus the message to 274637 (Crimes).
- Tips can be submitted online at www.nwtnutips.com

Individuals can also visit their local RCMP detachment to provide information.

12. That the Department of Finance and NWT Liquor Commission ensure that liquor stores accepting orders from residents of other communities abide by local restrictions on importing alcohol.

GNWT Response to Recommendation

All NWT liquor stores will continue to ensure that all orders being shipped to a restricted community adheres to any community restrictions in place.

13. That the Department of Transportation establish thorough screening methods for passengers and cargo at all airports in the NWT, specifically related to assist detection of bootlegging.

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The Department of Transportation does not have a mandate or legal authority for screening passengers and cargo at airports. All restrictions involving airport security are a federal responsibility determined by Transport Canada and enforced by the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) and are related to aviation safety.

14. That the Department of Finance, through the NWT Liquor Commission, consider restrictions on sales of large quantities of spirits that are not supported by ongoing or special licenses; and that individuals purchasing large quantities of spirits be required to identify themselves and sign for their purchases.

GNWT Response to Recommendation

Under the *Liquor Act*, the Commissioner, on the recommendation of the Minister of Finance, has authority to pass regulations respecting hours, the type (nature, form) and capacity of liquor containers, quantities, and ordering from a liquor store.

A community with a liquor store could look for the support of that community regarding restrictions on sales from the liquor store. A community can approach the Minister of Finance to look at certain restrictions; however the community needs to support the proposal.

15. That a fixed percentage of the government's profit from liquor sales be allocated to augment addictions awareness and treatment programs.

GNWT Response to Recommendation

The GNWT consolidates most revenues (including those of the Liquor Revolving Fund) into the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) and allocates the financial resources from the CRF on the basis of government priorities as determined annually through the budget process.