

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
6TH COUNCIL, 41ST SESSION**

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 1-41

TABLED ON JANUARY 12, 1970



December 31, 1969

CONFIDENTIAL - Not
for release before
1st reading during
the 41st Session of
Council.

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 1-41
(First Session, 1970)

Tabled on Jan. 12, 1970

WORK FOR WELFARE

DISPOSITION

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

WORK FOR WELFARE

At the 39th Session, Council adopted a motion requesting a report considering the feasibility of requiring all able-bodied men who are frequently or habitually "on welfare" to work for such welfare on local projects as may be necessary.

The practice of requiring able-bodied social assistance recipients to work in return for assistance granted has from time to time received considerable publicity. A work for relief policy, if implemented, would provide payments, from social assistance funds, to persons who are eligible under that program, of wages equal to the amount normally payable to them as social assistance, for work provided by or under the auspices of the welfare or social development department.

Reports are occasionally received to the effect that some recipients of social assistance are reluctant to take advantage of available wage employment. The inference here is that the individual is free to choose between social assistance and wage employment. This is not so. Social assistance is not obtainable by the able-bodied if work is available which they are physically capable of performing. As a condition of eligibility, applicants are required to make every effort to obtain employment or means of self-support. This policy has been in effect for some years now and will be continued when the new Social Assistance Regulations are proclaimed.

Financial Implications

In examining the feasibility of implementing such a work for relief scheme in the Northwest Territories it is essential that the financial implications be clearly understood. At present the Government of the N.W.T. has a cost-sharing agreement with the Minister of National Health and Welfare under the Unemployment Assistance Act and one of the terms of the agreement is that the costs which are shareable are those made on behalf of unemployed persons including their dependants. The view of the Department of National Health and Welfare is that if persons are working (whether or not it is "for welfare") they are not unemployed and therefore such costs would not be shareable.

At the 40th Session of Council amendments to the Social Assistance Ordinance were passed enabling the Commissioner to enter into an agreement with the Minister of National Health and Welfare under the Canada Assistance Plan. Under such an agreement the costs which are shareable are those related to persons who are in need. The Department of National Health and Welfare would not share the costs of a "work for welfare program" under the Canada Assistance Plan.

If a specific works project scheme is proposed for northern communities such a program would have to be financed by funds voted for this purpose.

Other Considerations

A work for relief scheme is particularly vulnerable to abuse in that it leads to "make work" projects; tends to exploit labour and frequently supplants sound long-term planning to provide short-term employment. Additional costs involved in relating work to assistance granted, overall supervision and administration would have to be included in the cost of existing assistance.

Projects chosen would have to be those outside the normal program

December 15, 1969

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Projects chosen would have to be those outside the normal program of public works and which do not compete with business. Further, they would have to be projects requiring unskilled work undertaken with an uncontrolled rate of turnover. Workers would not have protection under Workmen's Compensation nor receive other benefits available to regular employees.

A more positive and constructive approach would be a long-term program to provide employment through economic development and to expand and coordinate public works programs to provide employment throughout the year rather than a surfeit at peak periods which often necessitates the importing of casual labour.