

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
6<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL, 41<sup>ST</sup> SESSION**

**SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 2-41**

**TABLED ON JANUARY 12, 1970**



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SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 2-41  
(First Session, 1970)  
*Tabled on Jan. 12, 1970*

WELFARE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEES

DISPOSITION

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

## WELFARE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEES

At the 39th Session, Council adopted a motion requesting a report on the feasibility of establishing in each area a Welfare Administration Committee comprised of three members, at least two of whom shall be local residents and, further that such local residents be given an honorarium.

The Department of Social Development has carried out an investigation in the Fort Smith Region and has prepared the following information, together with a report on the operational committee in Gjoa Haven. Investigation in other regions was impossible due to acute shortage of staff but conclusions reached will be applicable to all regions.

### Report on the Welfare Advisory Committee in Gjoa Haven

The Welfare Committee in Gjoa Haven was established in November 1964 by the Acting Area Administrator who was, at that time, principal of the local school. The Committee was set up essentially to reduce the heavy administrative burden he was required to undertake in addition to his assigned employment.

Consisting of six local residents the Committee was given responsibility for assessing and determining the needs of each applicant requesting social assistance. The Acting Area Administrator's role was then primarily that of signatory to decisions made. With changes in personnel the role of the Committee gradually changed to a more advisory one which has now crystallized in involvement in social welfare matters relating to their community.

Meetings are scheduled monthly when specific cases of concern are discussed and brought to the attention of the Area Social Worker or Welfare Representative. In some respects this Committee has become involved in policy and community action. The focus has changed from specific involvement in social assistance to one encompassing the broad area of welfare services.

The Committee now sees itself primarily as an advisory body reporting to the Area Social Worker, Cambridge Bay or Welfare Representative in Gjoa Haven. Members have stated that they are much happier occupying the advisory role than the former decision making one.

That the Committee has evolved from one making direct decisions on individual cases to one of an advisory body would appear to be significant.

### Fort Smith Region

Welfare Advisory Committees have operated in both Fort Smith and Fort Resolution but faded out following the amalgamation of Indian Affairs Branch with the Northern Administrative Branch. Their function was that of the current Advisory Committee in Gjoa Haven.

During the past few months efforts have been made to encourage the establishment of local Welfare Advisory Committees. Letters have been sent to municipal and local government bodies outlining the general framework and aims of such committees. A broad outline only was given to allow for local input and initiative. Where possible, meetings have also been held with interested groups. Response has been good and interest shown in the formation and operation of committees. It is hoped that committees will be functioning in the Town of Hay River and Hamlet of Fort Simpson by the end of January 1970.

### Local Advisory Committees vs Local Administrative Committees

The role of a decision making committee assessing individual applications is not supported by the Department of Social Development. Although an administrative committee would bring knowledge of local conditions they, themselves, would require a very much greater educational program to provide awareness of the total social assistance program and policy. Also, the confidentiality of the client must at all times be respected even though recipients may be locally known and even discuss the fact, the officer himself must not divulge such information.

In giving local committees decision making authority the N.W.T. Government would be taking a retrograde step in implementing the old system of municipal and relief committees long discontinued in Southern Canada whereas, the establishment of Advisory Committees is a step advocated and, with considerable merit although, as yet, rarely implemented. This would be a positive and constructive step forward.

Public Welfare programs function within the framework of governmental authority and are dependent upon the tax dollar. Because they are designed for the protection and well-being of people, all citizens have a stake in these programs. The use of local committees to advise on the implementation of governmental programs is a recognition of the need to keep a balance between professional and technical personnel and the people. In this way awareness of public need and thinking is matched to services provided.

Such committees have a common basic responsibility in that they serve as a link between the welfare departments and general public. Their role is that of an advisory body representing community interest in welfare programs and to serve as advocate. If at all possible committees should include a representation of clients.

It is the committee's concern whenever welfare facilities fail to serve the client. A major part of their job is interpretation, in informing the community about services available in a language they understand, and members must also speak out to the local welfare representative, for interpretation is a two-fold tool, and interpretation of local conditions as they effect clients, e.g., hunting prospects, probable economics of the hunt, grubstaking and the value to residents of country food, will be invaluable to the representative in his determination of need.

The size and structure of the committee must be in relation to the administrative pattern and size of the community. Too large a committee is unwieldy and a too small one neglects the democratic principle of adequate representation. It is recommended that no fewer than three and no more than seven local residents, dependent upon community size, be regarded as fair representation.

The method of recruitment and orientation of committee members represents a critical stage in development, function, its focus and approach to problems. Members could be nominated by the local municipal or advisory council, or elected if this appeared to be the most democratic method.

Clear terms of reference are essential and these are summarized as follows:

- an advisory body to the Senior Area Social Worker or Welfare representative;

- interpretation of the needs of the community as they effect the client and the community as a whole;
- interpretation of welfare programs to the community;
- to point up gaps in existing services;
- to recommend change; and
- to ensure that services provided meet local needs.

#### Honorarium

Council wished the Department of Social Development to consider the question of an honorarium being paid to members of committees.

It would be feasible to consider the payment of an honorarium to members of an administrative committee as, in fact, they were functioning as staff members because the local representative was unable to manage. However the question of payment to members of an advisory committee is far different.

An advisory committee is a voluntary body in the same sense as advisory councils and appeal committees who are unpaid by virtue of the work undertaken as citizen participation in community affairs. Their function can be seen as similar to that of voluntary service clubs and various voluntary welfare organizations. Payment, therefore, would not be a constructive move.

#### Local Persons Hired for Administration of Programs

In raising the question of local committees Council expressed concern that single individuals administering welfare programs frequently lacked knowledge of local conditions and circumstances which contributed to the uneven distribution of assistance.

Although local Welfare Advisory Committees will do much to mitigate such occurrences the Department of Social Development wishes to report that seven indigenous case aides are now employed in the assessment and provision of social assistance.

Further, that in the Inuvik Region a social worker has the specific task of recruiting and training indigenous personnel for case aide positions. These case aides will be responsible for the administration of local welfare programs. The first full time course with follow-up supervision will commence on January 5, 1970 with an enrolment of six trainees.

The course will frequently be evaluated and broadened in order to provide the best possible training and to offer maximum opportunity for local indigenous personnel.

#### Summary

The Department of Social Development feels that it is feasible and would be a constructive step to establish local Welfare Advisory Committees in areas of the N.W.T.

Investigation in one region has shown promising response and a great deal of enthusiasm has been generated. In the near future several committees will be functioning in the Fort Smith Region. As other regions are staffed with sufficient personnel, efforts will be made to establish committees in all areas throughout the N.W.T.

The Department of Social Development is fully committed to a policy of hiring local residents who can be trained to administer its programs in local areas. It is felt that these local people will have the knowledge of local conditions which Council was concerned that persons now administering the program did not have.

December 15, 1969

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

## 6<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL, 42<sup>ND</sup> SESSION

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