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B R I E F

BY THE HAY RIVER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN REGARD TO

THE MATTER OF CENTRALIZATION OF FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN THE CITY OF
YELLOWKNIFE TO THE DETRIMENT OF OTHER
COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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The Chamber of Commerce of the Town of Hay River has recently made representation to the Minister of Fisheries in connection with the proposed plans of that Department to move the headquarters of the new Department of the Environment, which includes Fisheries and Forestry, to the city of Yellowknife. The stated reason for this plan is in order to have more and better liaison with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

In effect, this plan would concentrate the complete regional headquarters of a Federal Government Department in Yellowknife. This move would go far beyond the stated need for liaison, which liaison could be done by a very small staff, if such were necessary. In the meantime, the working members of that Department would be concentrated in Yellowknife and this is not necessarily the place where they would work most effectively. In fact, as far as Fisheries and Forestry are concerned, they could be a considerable distance away

from the proper location of their stated work.

The Hay River Chamber of Commerce feels that the various Departments of the Federal Government are failing the Northwest Territories and it's people by allowing and encouraging such concentration in the city of Yellowknife and denying other communities in the North of their rightful growth pattern for the following reasons:

1. The City of Yellowknife is the center of Government of the Northwest Territories and thus receives the impetus from this source of development.

2. Other communities in the Northwest Territories also require some of this Governmental impetus to assist in their development if the North is to be a viable operation and not a group of small, satellite communities surrounding the City of Yellowknife.

3. In the past, the headquarters of various Governmental operations were located in many of the Northern communities for good and sufficient reasons. For example, Fisheries headquarters was in Hay River because Hay River is the effective center of the fishing industry in the Northwest Territories. Forestry should be located in connection with forests, anywhere along the Mackenzie Valley from Fort Smith to Aklavik but surely not in Yellowknife where there are no forests. Water Resources also should be located where the water

sources are, in a community such as Fort Smith, Hay River or Fort Simpson.

4. With communications and transportation developing as they are in the North, it is not necessary for Federal Government offices to be located in Yellowknife only. Effective and adequate telephone links are maintained through Hay River with all Northern communities, including Yellowknife. Again, in the case of Fisheries, in doing their work in the far North, it is just as feasible and practical for Fisheries officers to travel out of Hay River as it is out of Yellowknife.

5. Communities in the north have been developing plans for community betterment of all kinds, the ingredients of a viable community, having in mind the continued growth pattern and support from the Government of Canada. Where this support is withdrawn by Federal Government Departments, the proper growth of these communities is retarded.

6. Any industry considering establishing in any community in the North first looks at the available pool of labour. Since the Federal Government has created a unique situation whereby, in the past, almost total usage of manpower in the North was to service Government establishments, this has become a pattern of life in the Northwest Territories for the vast majority of the

population. Therefore, if the Government decided to centralize their operations into one area or community they would be pulling most of the available and educated manpower to this area or community with them. It is fairly obvious then, that if an industry wishes to establish, it is left with two alternatives when it sets up a base of operations and these are to establish where the manpower pool is concentrated or bring in with them manpower from the outside leaving the available local resources and manpower unused.

7. In considering the attraction of industry of any kind to the Northwest Territories, it must be born in mind that an atmosphere of stability must prevail.

8. The placing of a Department of Government in Yellowknife, as compared to Hay River, Fort Smith or Fort Simpson, for instance, cannot be justified on economic grounds because by the Government's own statistics, it is more expensive to live in Yellowknife because the cost of living allowance has not been lowered for civil servants in that area while it has been for civil servants in these other areas.

A policy of decentralization of the headquarters of Federal Departmental operations in the Northwest Territories would enable these offices and their personnel to be on site and therefore be far more constructive and productive. A policy of decentralization

such as this would then also be of inestimable value to the long-term development of all of the Northwest Territories and not just one single location.

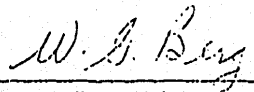
It is therefore proposed by the Hay River Chamber of Commerce that the Government of Canada should reconsider it's present policy of concentrating forces in the City of Yellowknife and move with the well-being of the whole of the Northwest Territories in mind. It is proposed by the Hay River Chamber of Commerce that the Department of the Environment be the first to reconsider it's stated plan to concentrate in Yellowknife. Other communities in the North are and can be equipped to handle the various branches of this and other Departments to the benefit of the Departments and to the communities concerned.

To point out the economic effect of relocation of Federal Government branches, it is understood that thirty-one (31) highly-trained persons will be the Department of Environment staff in Yellowknife if the present rumored plans are carried forward. It is estimated that this would mean a minimum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) yearly in community G.N.P., not to mention the capital construction involved, wherever this office is maintained. A sum of this nature would have a far greater beneficial effect on

any one of the smaller communities requiring help than it would mean to the City of Yellowknife.

Finally, and probably the most important consideration, is the social effect of draining the smaller communities in a movement to Yellowknife. It is estimated that a major proportion of the educated, working personnel in the Northwest Territories work for one government or the other. To concentrate these people in one center means the demeaning of the other communities of the North and the loss of many people who are capable of leadership and initiative which is so vital to the development of the indigenous peoples in the smaller communities throughout the whole of the Northwest Territories. The onus of the success or failure of the communities in the North is in the hands of the Federal Government and the present contemplated brain-drain, if allowed to continue, will spell the doom of many Northern communities.

Dated this Tenth day of May, 1971 at the Town of Hay River in the Northwest Territories.



W.G. Berg, President
Hay River Chamber of Commerce
Hay River, Northwest Territories.

Letters in support of this brief have been sent to the Chamber by the following, and copies of same have been attached to the brief submitted to the Prime Minister:

The Settlement of Fort Providence, Northwest Territories

The Town of Fort Smith, Northwest Territories

The Town of Inuvik, Northwest Territories

The Town of Hay River, Northwest Territories

The Hamlet of Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories