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LABOUR POOL STUDY TO BE TABLED

YELLOWKNIFE (JUNE 20)- A COMPREHENSIVE FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE ESTABLISHING OF LABOUR POOLS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WILL BE TABLED IN THE N.W.T. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, IT WAS ANNOUNCED TODAY BY NORTHERN AFFAIRS MINISTER JEAN CHRETIEN AND STUART M. HODGSON, COMMISSIONER OF THE TERRITORIES.

The study, prepared by the consulting firm of Gemini North, was undertaken at the request of Mr. Chretien and was financed by the federal and territorial governments.

One of the major conclusions of the researchers is that the N.W.T. suffers not only from under-employment of its labour force, but from seasonal employment as well.

The study suggests establishment of labour pool pilot projects at Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Fort Norman and Fort Franklin. It states that, with the exception of Inuvik in the Mackenzie Delta, most of the labour force is employed on a part time basis only and that "the number of permanent jobs available to male and female workers is very small."

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However, the report notes that the number of males willing and able to work in the survey area may be lower than generally anticipated. The effective male labour force - less those permanently employed either in wage employment or living off the land - was found to vary between 459 to 615, depending on the season.

The study resulted from field trips to the Mackenzie settlements of Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Fort Franklin.

"With the exception of Inuvik, most job opportunities exist outside the communities, posing problems of communication and mobility," the study explains. "Growing demand for labour outside the settlements basically reflects increased oil and gas exploration and transportation activity. Demand for labour within the communities usually depends on such government-financed activities as house construction, spring clean-up and winter works projects."

While the number of people willing to work is lower than generally anticipated, Gemini North concludes that more people may be available for employment in the future.

"This assessment was borne out by our discussions in the settlements", its report states before relating two schools of thought researchers encountered during the survey.

"In communities where people are accustomed to work at wage-paying jobs, many expressed a desire for permanent employment regardless of seasonal hunting and trapping activities. But, in communities with limited exposure, the bulk of the

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male labour force preferred to alternate between living off the land and wage employment - depending on fur prices, wage rates and job opportunities.

Gemini North notes that this trend supports the view that in time, given appropriate training and job opportunities, a stable and productive northern labour force will increase at the settlement level.

"But we are not so naive as to imply the attainment of this goal will be easy," the report states.

Gemini North's proposed labour pool concept was designed with the advice and approval of those most directly involved, northerners seeking employment, community councils and government personnel charged with administering policy.

Its study included circulation of a questionnaire to companies operating in the N.W.T. which covered such matters as hiring and re-hiring practices, labour requirements, problems with northern personnel, job rotation, labour qualifications, possible use of an employment pool and types of jobs available.

The report states that, among other things, many of the companies warned they did not feel use of a labour pool would reduce their employment costs and that some of the respondents were unable to make a judgement on the matter. The consulting firm, however, concluded that the companies were not familiar enough with the proposed operation of labour pools to properly assess their usefulness and that a major information program must be launched to encourage their co-operation.

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For its part, the study strikes thirteen recommendations which it considers relevant to the establishment of labour pools.

Among them is the recommendation that the government should make no attempt to establish a centralized employment agency for the settlements at this time.

"We suggest that such an agency should be allowed to develop naturally as the settlements learn to work together. Adequate telephone and travel budgets and an annual meeting of labour pool officers and settlement council representatives might serve as a preliminary step", the report states.

It also recommends government and industry should be encouraged to utilize the pools, if only to reduce the number of visits and contacts now being made by individuals and that the Territorial government should appoint a field officer to monitor the pilots and to provide continual assistance to both the councils and government personnel in the field. However, the contact should provide support, not management, if the objectives of the program are to be met.

The proposed labour pool concept hits at the settlement level and would see establishment of settlement-controlled employment agencies within the community which would reduce the need for persons to seek work on speculation, and at great cost in distant hiring centres.

Canada Manpower offices exist at only two northern locations - Yellowknife and Inuvik - and the report suggests the the labour pools be linked to these agencies for the benefit of employees who prefer to operate from traditional hiring centres.

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Gemini North's survey estimates employment opportunities for the period of November 1971 to November 1972. Its statistics are based on field trips to the six survey communities during November and February and with the exception of Inuvik did not include white residents in any of the settlements who were there specifically for administrative or professional purposes.