

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
8TH ASSEMBLY, 59TH SESSION**

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Sacred Heart Parish

P. O. Box 242

Fort Simpson, N.W.T. X0E 0N0

Phone: 695-2316

To the Clerk of N.W.T. Council,
Attention: Mr. William LAFFERTY,
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

May 19, 1976

Dear Mr. Lafferty:

For the past few weeks, many concerned citizens of Fort Simpson (both Native and White, alcoholic and sober persons) have mentioned to me that they wished all Liquor Outlets be closed down temporarily, so that the community could see the difference between drinking and non-drinking situation, and so that the poor victims of alcohol abuse be given a chance to think soberly. I personally share this view and wish that the Territorial Council give to the Commissioner the authority to close temporarily all liquor outlets in a community, according to his own judgment.

But how and when could the Commissioner decide on an opportune time to take such a measure in a community? If liquor outlets closure is imposed arbitrarily, some people will resent and easily criticize the measure. Moreover, if a notice is given prior to such a closure, many people will stock-pile alcohol in their home for their own consumption or for bootlegging purpose. And this will not help at all.

I am convinced that the most opportune time to suddenly close all liquor outlets in a community, anywhere in the N.W.T., would be whenever a death has been caused by alcohol abuse, in the region served by a liquor store. This measure, I believe, would be accepted by the vendors and the consumers as a deserved measure which would be thought provoking.

Therefore may I suggest that the Commissioner be advised by the Chief of a Band as soon as a death has been caused by alcohol abuse, anywhere in the N.W.T. The Chief (Rather than a Civil Servant) would abjectly report the circumstances to the Commissioner, and would base his judgment mainly on the judgment of witnesses or on the public opinion, and not only on the R.C.M.P. verdict or medical result of autopsy, which are bounded by professional secret. All liquor outlets would then be closed temporarily, immediately and automatically in that community, upon the order of the Commissioner, as a sign of disapproval and mourning, and as a measure of community penance. Then, the decision of the Commissioner would be timely, and will provoke people to think the situation over. And 'thinking' is what really matters. The alcohol problem is in the minds, not in the bottles.

We have reached a point where the situation is not Christian anymore, not even human: we are getting used to see human lives spoiled and destroyed by alcohol abuse; people have lost their ability to think and to learn from the consequences of their habit and acts.

I have buried so many victims of alcohol abuse over the past few years in Fort Simpson, that I feel I won't have the courage to bury another one. If NO DRASTIC ACTION IS TAKEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE, I shall invite someone else, preferably a Territorial Councillor, to preside over the burial of the next victim. You will then understand how I feel and what I mean. There is no use to talk and preach. What is now needed is drastic measure. And I trust, Mr Lafferty, that you will dare take such measure, together with your colleagues, as to control the sad situation of our poor people, before it becomes hopeless.

Sincerely yours,

Father H. Posset, O.M.I.

Copy to: Don BRUCE.