

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

8TH ASSEMBLY, 60TH SESSION

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 11-60

TABLED ON Oct. 25, 1976

11-60
Tabled Document No. 1160
Tabled 00 25/76

REPORT OF THE ECUMENICAL TASK FORCE
ON COLLEGE EDUCATION
IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Submitted to:
STUART M. HODGSON
COMMISSIONER
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

By:
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June 18, 1976

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OVERVIEW

For a number of years, Concordia and similar Christian colleges have served students from the Northwest Territories and the northern sectors of various provinces. Nearly a year ago, the President and Director of Admissions at Concordia College met with Commissioner Stuart Hodgson to explore how Concordia might be of greater assistance to students from the Northwest Territories. Out of this conversation came a request by the Commissioner that Concordia investigate, in a preliminary fashion, the possibility of church involvement in a community college in the north.

A task force of three persons was named to conduct this preliminary investigation and to visit various northern communities: Dr. Lothar Schwabe (Master Plan Consultant to Concordia), Dr. Paul Otke (Chairman of the Board of Control and Director of the Mill Woods Campus, Grant MacEwan College) and Paul Scott (Director of Admissions and Public Relations at Concordia). Due to the pressures of prior obligations, Dr. Otke was unable to serve and was subsequently replaced by Dr. Howard Mills, Secretary of the Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education for the United Church of Canada.

The specific mandate given to the task force was to tour several communities in the Northwest Territories to meet with government, community and church leaders for the purpose of exploring the idea of ecumenical involvement in a community college in the Northwest Territories. As was mentioned in the original Planning Assumptions, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed in principle to opening a two-year community college within the next three years.

A basic assumption on the part of the task force was that if sufficient support for the idea could be generated within the Northwest Territories, ecumenical church involvement in the proposed college would offer not only a positive Christian value-orientation, but also a caring environment in which dedicated instructors would assist students from various parts of the Northwest Territories to cope with the trauma of beginning the process

of higher education in a new community. It was assumed that Christian instructors, administrators and staff would be sensitive to the special needs of native northerners from communities where there is no history or tradition of higher education.

The task force visited three communities within a four-day period in late May: Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife. Approximately forty persons were interviewed during this period. A list of persons interviewed is attached.

One distinct limitation of this initial trip was that there was not sufficient time to visit communities in the far north, such as Inuvik and Cambridge Bay. Consequently, we had little opportunity to meet with leaders of the various native groups.

In general, we encountered positive reaction to the idea of ecumenical involvement in a northern college. We heard no outright opposition to the idea in principle. There seemed to be ready acceptance of our group once our role as facilitator was explained, once our commitment to local initiative and genuine involvement of community leaders, both native and white, was understood, and once the implications of ecumenical involvement were discussed.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Philosophy of education: A college program for the Northwest Territories will need a carefully delineated philosophical base that attempts to answer questions such as: What and who will the college system be for? Will the college enable students merely to cope and adapt or will it encourage development of innovative and creative leaders? Will college education be simply a matter of providing a transitional step to further education in southern centres, or will it meet the unique needs of northern Canadians, including the majority that is not white?
2. Needs of native peoples: A southern-style post-secondary system may not carry much appeal for the Indian, Metis and Inuit population. For example the task force was told there is some lack of information available to these groups regarding vocational opportunities and their direct link to programs of higher education. The rising sense of identity on the part of native groups will result in some demand for a system of post-secondary education that addresses itself in part to the unique concerns and expectations of the native peoples.
3. Implications of the present student grant system: The present system, in which the government pays for education at southern Canadian colleges and universities, involves virtually no expense to students and their parents. Some may react negatively to development of a college in the north because of a vested interest in providing their children with a free transition to the southern system of education and to southern culture. The present grant system adds significantly to the real income of northern (mainly white) families.
4. Economic factors: The present structure is significantly less expensive for the government than building and operating a college in the north. There will be high costs, initially, in setting up a new college that has comparatively few students. This may produce a significant political backlash.

5. Location: Although the question of location was not within the mandate assigned to the task force, this question will need to be carefully examined by a planning group because of regional interests and because of the implications of location with regard to racial composition, economic stability, cultural and religious environment, and the extent to which the chosen location reflects a unique "northernness".
6. Research interests: Many southern universities have a vested interest in retaining grants for research in northern Canada. They may interpret the development of a northern college as a threat to their interests and therefore may lobby against the proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force recommends the following on the basis of its initial tour of northern communities:

1. The Government of the Northwest Territories should appoint a Planning Committee, to include the following persons or groups:
 - a. The Most Rev. Paul Piche, Bishop of the Mackenzie Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, or his designate;
 - b. The Right Rev. John Sperry, Anglican Bishop of the Arctic, or his designate (possibly the Rev. T.M. McCollam, Archdeacon of the Mackenzie Diocese);
 - c. The Rev. Gary Sartain, Lutheran Pastor-Pilot in Yellowknife;
 - d. The Rev. Jim Ormiston of the United Church in Yellowknife;
 - e. A representative of the Presbyterian Church;
 - f. Several leaders from northern communities, including Mayor Paul Kaeser of Fort Smith, who has indicated his interest in serving on such a committee;
 - g. A representative of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories;
 - h. A representative of the NWT Metis Association;
 - i. A representative of the Inuit Tapirisat.

It would seem desirable that the committee be allowed to name resource consultants, either from northern or southern Canada. For example, church representatives would be interested in having resource people from their respective systems of higher education. Community leaders may wish to designate someone from their respective educational advisory boards. Certainly, government education officials such as Warren Rongve of the Department of Education should be available in a resource capacity particularly in view of past involvement in studies with regard to a northern college. In terms of the connection between occupational pursuits and higher education, another resource might be a representative from the Federal Public Service Commission's Northern Careers Agency.

Most of the groups and individuals named above have indicated initial interest in this project, including the aspect of ecumenical involvement.

2. Consideration should be given to engaging the services of a professional educator to serve as committee convenor for organizational purposes, and also of a process consultant to assist in the initial planning stages. The task force is prepared to suggest possible candidates for the two consulting positions.
3. Travel and other expenses incurred by members of the planning committee as well as consultant fees and expenses, should be borne by the Government of the Northwest Territories, but the various groups represented on the committee should be responsible for staff salaries for whatever time commitment is involved.
4. To ensure a high level of commitment on the part of church and community leaders named to the committee, the territorial government should indicate priority commitment to the development and funding of a college with ecumenical involvement.
5. A definite timetable should be established for the planning stage of the committee's work.
6. The committee should begin with an examination of the philosophical base for a northern college: whom it is to serve and what purpose it is to fulfill.
7. The committee should consider from the beginning how it will relate to the question of developing a college with a uniquely northern program, direction and atmosphere.
8. The committee should be encouraged to visit additional communities, particularly northern native communities, to gain some understanding of the expectations of Indian, Mētis and Inuit peoples with regard to higher education. There should be significant native input into both planning and programming.
9. The planning committee should be encouraged to consider the implications of location, particularly if one centre is to house technical, vocational and academic programs. For example, Fort Smith has much to offer in the way of facilities and community involvement. However, if Fort Smith is designated as the centre for higher education, planners will have to take into consideration the fact that it is significantly

different from Inuvik or Cambridge Bay. The same would be true of any other community. Once again, the task force is not recommending a particular location; we wish merely to state that any location raises questions that must be faced honestly.

10. Once the planning committee has recommended a particular location and that location has been officially designated as the centre for higher education, the committee should encourage a high degree of local community involvement in the next stages of planning, so that the designated centre does not come to view the college as merely another industry being "airlifted" into their community.
11. The planning committee should take into consideration other potential constraints on the development of a northern college, including those indicated earlier in this report, under "Special Considerations".
12. The planning committee should attempt from the start to convey a clear understanding of the role of the ecumenical community in the proposed college. The combined experience of the various church bodies in fostering growth and development of individuals in smaller church colleges across Canada should be emphasized. It should also be emphasized that ecumenical involvement will be on a non-catechetical, non-doctrinal basis, and that the ecumenical community is ready to cooperate not only with each other but also with community leaders throughout the north.

It should be readily acknowledged that some perceive the church as having exerted a negative influence in the north on occasion. It should also be acknowledged that some of the church bodies involved have had only minor involvement in the north until recently.

Certainly, the strengths of a value-oriented, personalized approach to education should be emphasized, including the potential for helping to develop leaders for northern society who have a commitment to an ethical, moral approach to life.

CHURCH LEADERS WHOM WE HAVE CONTACTED
CONCERNING COLLEGE EDUCATION IN THE NORTH

The following church leaders received our Planning Assumptions and an indication of our plans for a tour of northern communities, prior to the tour. Those marked with an asterisk responded in writing. All responses have been of a positive and supportive nature. A number of excellent questions concerning the planning process were raised.

- * The Most Rev. Paul Piche, Bishop of the Mackenzie-Fort Smith Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church
- * The Most Rev. J.M. MacNeil, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Edmonton
The Rev. Father Giles Mousseau, Roman Catholic Priest in Fort Smith
The Rev. Father Jaques Monet, an education official of the Roman Catholic Church in Ottawa
- * The Right Rev. John Sperry, Anglican Bishop of the Arctic
The Ven. J.C.M. Clarke, Anglican Archdeacon of the Arctic
The Ven. T.M. McCollum, Anglican Archdeacon of the Mackenzie Diocese
- * The Ven. Thomas L. Leadbeater, Anglican Archdeacon of the Edmonton Diocese
- * The Rev. Hugh McCullum, Anglican Director of Project North
- * The Rev. Donald MacDonald, Secretary, Administrative Council, Presbyterian Church in Canada
The Rev. Philip Cline, Executive Secretary, Alberta Conference of the United Church of Canada
- * The Rev. Dr. Howard Mills, Secretary, Division of Ministry, Personnel & Education of the United Church of Canada (Dr. Mills replaced Dr. Paul Otke on the task force).
- * The Rev. Peter McKellar, Secretary, Northern Co-ordinating Committee, Division of Mission in Canada, United Church of Canada
- * The Rev. Curtis Satre, Executive Director, Division of Canadian Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada
The Rev. Norman Threinen, Lutheran Council in Canada
The Rev. Dr. George Rode, President, Alberta-British Columbia District, Lutheran Church - Canada
- * The Rev. J.M. Zimmerman, Executive Secretary of the Lutheran Church of America - Canada Section

PERSONS INTERVIEWED DURING TOUR

Fort Smith

Mayor Paul Kaeser

Roman Catholic Bishop Paul Piche of the MacKenzie-Fort Smith Diocese

Town Councillors Yvonne Hooper, John Vogt, Lou Gauthier, Leon Peterson

Ruth Reese, Director of the Academic Upgrading Program, Adult Vocational Training Centre

Several instructors and other staff at AVTC

Advisory Board of Education members Norm Larson (Chairman), Anne Hutchinson, John Lee, Irene Gilmour, Luther Ferguson, Bob Shone (Vice-Principal of the high school), Matt White (Principal of the elementary school) and Paul Grimard

Town Secretary-Treasurer Dan Gilchrist

Hay River

Rev. T.M. McCollum, Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of MacKenzie

Jim Mahar, Principal of the high school

Yellowknife

Arnold McCallum, Minister of Education, Territorial Government

Peter Ernerk, Minister of the Department of Social Development, Territorial Government

W.C. Rongve, Gerard Muldars and Brian Lewis of the NWT Department of Education

Peter Liske of the NWT Interpreter Corps, a member of the Dogrib Tribe

Rev. Jim Ormiston of the United Church

Rev. Gary Sartain of the Lutheran Church

Terry Forth, Bill Eades, and Dave Sandhu of the Northern Careers Agency of the federal Public Service Commission

Sister Mary Lillian and Fred Nakonechny, Principal and Vice-principal of St. Patrick's School

Georgina Blondin of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories

