

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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Box 246
Vanderhoof, B.C.
March 23, 1979

Premier Bill Bennett
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Mr. Bennett:

I had the pleasure of meeting you at Prince George when I presented to you and the cabinet a brief from the Cluculz Lake Livestock Association. You stated then, "There are worse predators in the cities!"

You will soon be in Prince George attending the meeting of the Western Premiers to consider Constitutional Changes. I request that you Premiers also consider the problems of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Their development toward provincial status has been deliberately blocked by the present federal government.

Fifty years ago, Imperial Britain would not permit its colony of India to manufacture so much as a pin. Today Imperial Ottawa will not permit its colonies (nearly 40% of the area of Canada) to even produce food for their own use.

Truly, as to the colonial (territorial) area, Canada ranks second only to Russia! The western portion of N.W.T. (Mackenzie District) has over 4 million acres soil (not on perma frost) classified by the Chadian Department of Agriculture as arable. It has a good growth season, much like the Peace River or Ft. Nelson regions of British Columbia. This is much longer and warmer than the growing season of central B.C. For example, Vanderhoof has an average of 52 days, frost free, and Prince George, 68 days, while in the Northwest Territories at Ft. Simpson there are 85 days and Hay River has 106 days, frost free. The N.W.T. has cold winters and hot summers.

The potential agricultural region is largely under 600 ft. elevation and includes south of Great Slave Lake to Lat. 60°, upper Mackenzie AND (L.I.R.D) Valleys in the N.W.T. Formerly there was an experimental station at Ft. Simpson, NWT. The growing season and production there were almost identical with those at the experimental farm at Ft. Vermilion, Alberta. Ft. Vermilion is now the centre of an extensive agricultural area. There is a very small acreage of deeded farm land, probably less than 40 acres and, definitely less than 2 sq. miles, in the entire N.W.T. with an area of 1,304, 903 sq. miles.

In 1974, Don Hendry, near Mills Lake of Ft. Providence, NWT, produced over 120 tons of potatoes. Later, he had to move off his farm when his leases were not renewed, and he could not secure title, after spending \$2200 for the survey.

In 1976, Ben Greenfield (President of the Territorial Farmers) at Paradise Gardens (his farm on the Hay River, 16 miles south of the town of Hay River) produced winter wheat yielding 60 bushels per acre.

Excellent rape seed is being produced by Red McBryan of Hay River.

In the southern NWT, good garden production includes, grown out-of-doors, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers and muskmelons. Some crab apples and plums are also grown.

There is a federal land law providing for grazing leases and purchase of 160 acres by applicants, but this has been disregarded by the present Canadian government, much as you might expect under a dictator.

THERE IS NEED FOR A FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN! (A federal ombudsman was promised by Trudeau years ago.)

The federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has repeatedly demonstrated that it has neither the interest nor the ability to deal with the potential agricultural lands in the territories.

Because of Ottawa's apparent anti-development policies in the territories, may I suggest that the Premier consider:

A--Provincial Status, each, for the Yukon and the Mackenzie District, with their potential, federal-agricultural land transferred to the new provinces.

B--Alternative, but less desirable, transfer of the federal potential agricultural lands to the present territories, with each to establish land regulations and to administer the leasing or sale of such lands within their areas.

It appears that under the present federal government, like under any dictatorship, any contracts or leases in the North for agricultural land, with the Trudeau government, are practically worthless! A few leases for farm land were granted just prior to or around 1970. These were for only 5 years and were not renewed. After a delay of 3 years; in 1978, there were offers to extend some leases for 5 years, but with many restrictive clauses added, making them impossible for the lessee to fulfill.

Don Hendry, now in Pine Point, NWT, Box 556; Phone (403) 393-2986 had leases, plus a contract to purchase a tract of Crown Land, after completion of improvements and survey. His improvements were approved in 1975 and that summer he had the land (108 acres) surveyed. This was along the Horn River out of Ft. Providence. He has not been able to receive title, but has been offered another contract to provide title by the Federal Government--just like writing another rubber cheque to replace one that had bounced.

The offered new contract to provide title included the provision that Hendry promise not to sue the government or any of its employees if they did not live up to the agreement! There has been a multitude of excuses and broken promises regarding agricultural land in the territories.

In 1972, I made an application for a lease, around 30 miles from Ft. Providence. This was near Don Hendry's lease. Then, as a Canadian citizen, I was proud of our country and was gullible enough to believe that Ottawa would deal with me as honourably as if I had been dealing with a province. I had previously bought crown land from British Columbia. There have been FIVE different excuses, stalls, broken promises from the federal government, regarding the permitting of development of agriculture in the territories. At present, there is literally less agricultural and livestock production in the Northwest Territories than there was fifty years ago!

WHY?

Some believe that it is because of the Imperial policy to keep the North as a preserve for the Federal Bureaucrats. Others point out that the building of a network of roads across the North, as planned by ~~the~~ Diefenbaker and the development of agriculture would add to the Canadian defense capabilities. Could it be that there are those in the present federal government who are opposed to improving Canada's defenses?

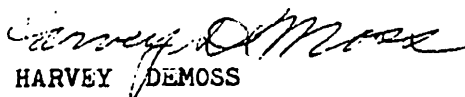
PLEASE NOTE ENCLOSURE.

If you should desire further information from me on the potentials and present policies in the North, please send message over CJCI (620 on your dial) Prince George, the evening before and I could come out, but not earlier than 2:30 p.m. (I am feeding over a hundred head of cattle and the cows are calving.) Radio messages are broadcast at 6:25 p.m. and 9:05 a.m.

I am a member of the Territorial Farmers of NWT.

Thanks for your consideration.

Yours for the development of ALL of Canada,


HARVEY DEMOSS



TERRITORIAL FARMERS ASSOCIATION
BOX 939
HAY RIVER N.W.T.

In our brief we call for the immediate lifting of the land freeze imposed on agricultural land in 1975 by the then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. Judd Buchanan. We also ask for the immediate introduction of the promised comprehensive agricultural policy promised by the same minister within 2 to 3 years of the imposition of the land freeze while the policy was being drawn up. To support our call for an agricultural policy which will enable N.W.T. residents to develop a safe and secure source of food for their own needs and export, we present the following information on the requirements to supply the estimated 20,000 population in the South Mackenzie - Great Slave Lake area, based on the formulas outlined in the government bulletin No. 1466, titled "Farming Potential of the Canadian Northwest" published in 1965.

- Eggs: Average consumption of 21 dozen per person per year - value of \$400,000.00
- Beef: Due to consumption of wild meat, based at average consumption of 65 lbs. compared to national average of 80 lbs. - total of 1,300,000 lb. of beef, current market value of \$1.625 million.
- Pork: Average consumption at 52 lb. per person - total consumption 1,400,000 lb., market value of \$1 million.
- Poultry: Average consumption 43 lbs. per person - total consumption 860,000 lb., market value of \$1 million.
- Potatoes: At 150 bags per acre, requirement would be 2,400 bags, valued at \$288,000 per year.
- Carrots: 250,000 lb., valued at \$75,000.
- Cabbage: 180,000 lb., valued at \$60,000.

The total value of these commodities is \$43 million. /

These are the needs of the South Mackenzie - Great Slave Lake area. These needs would support 107 farmers on the basis of each farmer grossing \$40,000 per year.

In addition to the above requirements for the domestic market a large export market is available to N.W.T. residents for growing rape, winter wheat, grass seeds and other cereals. During the past decade Mr. Red McBryan of Hay River has, as a part-time project, developed a farm along the Hay River by specializing in growing rape and cereal grains for export. His crops have always matured and the rape has always graded CR No. 1, the highest grade possible to obtain.

During the past several months the Government of Canada has warned the people that unless our fossil fuels are conserved, rationing will be imposed on the population in the early 1980's. Right now we have the situation of trucks running back south empty, using up more of our precious fossil fuels than it would take for the N.W.T. residents to produce this food for our own use. By maintaining the present repressive policies against residents of the N.W.T. raising their own food, how is the Government going to guarantee a safe and secure supply of food during the energy crisis and worldwide famine predicted for the mid to late 1980's and 1990's?

By comparison, in Alaska the Governor of this state released a press release on March 17, 1978 announcing the opening up of 60,000 acres of new land for Alaskan residents to utilize. These lands will be made available to Alaskan residents through a lottery system. The average size of each farm will be 2,600 acres. The state will pay for the costs of providing roads and other infrastructure. They will also pay the full costs of clearing this land. In addition, a policy of developing a

marketing system is being instituted. The product will be used to supplement the domestic Alaska market and export the rest, particularly cereal grains such as winter wheat on the world markets.

Small market garden plots being opened up in the Hay River Enterprise corridor are useless as a commercial operation. There are two gardens in the corridor operating now, but only on 10-15 acres. This acreage is not big enough for a viable full-time independent operation and this acreage will only supply a limited number of local customers. Much more land is needed for growing produce and for a residence, machine sheds, storage areas and root cellars. It must be large enough to be able to implement sizable machinery to do away with hand labour. For the size of these present gardens, they are highly successful and soil and climatic conditions are such that less than 15% of the whole operation is greenhousing.

As citizens of a democratic country, individuals should be allowed to have land to live on in such a manner as to be able to grow his own vegetables and raise his own meat, but under our present system we are all forced to depend on southern markets and wholesalers and the whims of an irresolute and irresponsible government.

It seems that as long as multi national companies of non-renewable resources can dangle cash in front of our politicians, it matters little if the ordinary citizens of the Territories pay dearly for the privilege of eating. It reminds one of Marie Antoinette when she was told the peasants were in a state of riot because they had no bread for their families - and she replied, "Let them eat cake".

In conclusion I would like to leave you with this statistic. Due to the expertise and astuteness of our governments the N.W.T. agricultural situation is now approaching 15% of the Alaskan agricultural development of the year 1900 - only 78 years behind.

Thank you.

NEWS of the north

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34th year

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'TO PROVIDE FOOD'

COUNCIL WANTS FARMLAND

By SUSAN ROGERS

Territorial Council voted yesterday to "strongly recommend" to the federal government that lands be made available in the NWT for agricultural development.

"With all due respect to land claims, agricultural development is something we must look to first to provide food," said John Steen (Western Arctic) who made the motion.

Dave Nickerson (Yellowknife North) previously asked what had happened to a resolution

calling for an NWT agricultural policy which was passed at the Hay River economic development conference last year.

Economic development minister Tom Butters (Inuvik) replied the federal government won't transfer anymore land to the NWT until land claims are settled. Only one per cent of the land is now under territorial jurisdiction.

"Without the land being transferred, it's doubtful our department can assist agriculturalists; to the extent we would wish."

In view of the lack of progress in Mackenzie Valley land claims over the past eight years, Butters suggested the federal government be asked to reconsider its land freeze.

Nickerson said it's a "disgrace" that the "fertile agricultural lands of the NWT lie dormant." A few sections close to roads, power and facilities should be surveyed for

agricultural use, he suggested.

Don Stewart (Hay River) said it has been government policy to make 10-acre plots available for farming. However, the federal government "hasn't seen fit" to release any land along Hay River.

Steen said he was "astounded" to read in a local paper the Germans are interested in growing barley near Hay River in the belief the area contains one of the best soils in the world.

"It makes me wonder why all of a sudden another country is interested in this country and we are not really interested; we are not even looking at our surroundings."

Stewart advised council a group of West Germans met with the Hay River Development Corporation and Department of Indian and northern affairs (DINA) requesting a large tract of land in the Liard Valley. Nothing has been heard since from DINA who was to study the idea, he said.

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No land for rehabilitation

Fort Providence — The idea of farming in the NWT died on January 10, 1975 with the amendment of a land freeze for agricultural purposes by then Minister of Indian affairs and northern development, Judd Buchanan.

The death knell had sounded even prior that day when several would be homesteaders couldn't get their leases renewed after the initial five-year term. Some took an out of court settlement to recover their losses and went elsewhere, others gave up. One is still waiting for the land to come open again.

That is if the government can make its mind up.

When the freeze was established, Buchanan announced it was in order to complete a study of the NWT agricultural potential and formulate a master plan for orderly development. The real reason behind the move emerged when Buchanan's successor — Warran Allmand said the freeze was implemented because of potential conflicts with land claims negotiations.

In the meantime several farmers and would be farmers lost the land they worked on.

Ted Collinson, 39, was one of them.

In the four years he operated the lease beginning in 1964, he broke 100

acres, built two houses, a corral, and stable, putting almost \$30,000 into it. Most of the buildings have since been destroyed by vandalism.

Ironically enough, when others didn't have their leases renewed, Collinson's file, unknown to him was still kept open although he says he wasn't informed of the fact three years ago.

He still wants to try his hand at farming. He's the only one left of the original Mills Lake homesteaders. One other person finally did have their lease renewed after a three year wait. But Don Hendry, now working in Pine Point, has indicated he doesn't want to go back farming and he hasn't signed the lease the federal government offered him last spring.

The Fort Providence Band Council has supported Collinson in his efforts. In 1975 they asked him to plant potatoes for them in the fields behind the settlements mission where at one time cows grazed and land grew crops. But that was in a more distant and less political time.

Gas for potatoes

The Band Council donated two barrels of gas as their contribution to Collinson planting about three acres of potatoes that year.

This year it was a different story. Collinson, his son Scotty, together with the band council decided to try another approach to farming. The band wanted an alcohol rehabilitation program to dry out drinkers outside of a settlement setting. There is no renewable resource industry in the area apart from hunting and trapping. There's no lumber or mining or any project where people could work at while they dry out.

The band decided that farming would provide a good outlet for people in the rehabilitation programs and at the same time set up a project that could become financially independent.

But now "there's a lot of work I could be doing (in getting this going) if I knew where I'd stand," said Collinson.

Verbal assurances again

One level of government has given him verbal assurances.

Collinson has already put in six acres of potatoes and two acres of small vegetables in the Mills Lake area on Crown land. Right now it doesn't belong to anybody. He worked up area that had been worked in previous leases.

Collinson estimates he'll get 40 tons of spuds and he's already had several parties interested in buying the product. The Bay in Fort Providence assured him they would buy all his crop and even supply plastic bags for the potatoes.

Several other outlets in Providence are interested as well as the Hire North camp operating out of Fort Simpson.

The market is there

He's got the market so far but not the financial backing needed for fuel, some equipment and labor.

The Band should be helping fund the project he said but they only have \$500 in their bank account at any one time.

They've helped a bit providing fuel and food but that isn't enough. Collinson works as a mechanic at the Big River service station at the junction of the Fort Providence access road. He's already put \$2,000 of his money into this year's crop but because of his full time job he doesn't have the time to tend the acreage himself nor does he have the money to hire somebody to do it for him.

Under the rehabilitation program, Collinson would just provide the expertise in getting the farming end in operation.

Negative government reception

The trouble here is the federal government. There is no trouble getting a land use permit from the federal government for alcohol rehabilitation projects, says Collinson, but mention agriculture to them and they hem and haw.

He tried to get a lease in February when the snow was still on the ground so all the red tape would be over and done when planting was ready to start. The seasons don't wait for anybody. When the time to plant comes, you plant, otherwise you don't grow anything, he said.

Collinson said he received verbal assurances from the federal land use officer Joe Ganske to go ahead.

Ganske when asked of it said it wasn't his place to have verbal discussions on verbal discussions. On the other hand he said the opinion of the department was quite clear — any programs that are suitable to the territorial government would get a favorable hearing from the land use department.

At the moment, Collinson is caught in limbo. He has the full support of the Fort Providence band council for the project, they want him to go ahead. The governments are holding back. At the same time he went ahead and started work planting his crop based on verbal assurances but nothing has come through.

From previous page

he would run in a leadership election when the new organization is formed. McNeely said it is "not likely" he would enter a leadership race in the unified organization.

The two organizations have been under pressure from the federal government for several months to come up with a joint land claims negotiating position. Indian and Northern Affairs minister Hugh Faulkner has said he was cutting off federal funding to both groups as of last June 30 unless they could get together.

No federal response

Neither Erasmus nor McNeely has heard from the minister since the Drum Lake meeting, they told the press conference.

"The people in the federal government that normally work on funding are on holidays," Erasmus said.

But, he said, federal pressure will not effect the pace of unification. "The process will be as fast or slow as it makes sense internally."