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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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Return to Oral Question

Asked by Mr. Nerysoo on June 17, 1986

Reply made by the Honourable Nick Sibbeston,
Government Leader

Commitments Made During Mackenzie Delta Tour

On June 17, Mr. Nerysoo asked me for the details of the commitments made during my recent tour of Mackenzie Delta communities, particularly with respect to the cost and time it would take to meet these commitments. Although Mr. Nerysoo specifically mentioned six items in his question I would like to indicate to the Member that in total over 40 issues were raised with me by the communities of Aklavik, Fort MacPherson, Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik. Many of these issues fell within the responsibility of other Ministers and where this was the case I wrote to them, giving details of my discussions, within a few days of returning from the Region.

To answer the specifics of the Member's question I would like to inform him of what has been done about the matters he raised. In regard to the present downturn in the oil industry, the Executive Council today began consideration of a report prepared by the Inuvik Region staff on the effects of the downturn and the possible actions this Government could take to assist the Region's economy. Decisions will be made in the coming weeks on this matter and I will ensure that Members of this house are kept informed. In addition, the Honourable Tagak Curley and I will shortly be approaching the Prime Minister and some of his Cabinet colleagues to encourage the Federal Government to provide further incentives for continued exploration and development in the Beaufort.

The matter of the role of the Regional Director was raised by a number of communities. I think this reflects the good work that the present Regional Director, Dan Norris, has been doing. I explained in some detail the changes that had been made in the Regional Director's role to bring it into line with increased Ministerial responsibility. At the same time I emphasized the continued importance of the Regional Director as a co-ordinator of Government programs. I confirmed my confidence in the good work done by Mr. Norris. I also indicated that there would be an increased Ministerial presence and accessibility in the Regions. Generally communities seemed satisfied with this.

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The matters of a new office complex for the Hamlet Council and erosion control in Aklavik are both matters under the Honourable Gordon Wray's responsibility. I passed the concerns on to him and asked that he consider dealing with them in his capital plan. In particular, I indicated my support for the idea that the community's expertise with respect to erosion control be fully utilized.

The office complex proposed in Fort MacPherson is a somewhat different matter. There the Metis Development Corporation wishes to construct an office complex and is seeking commitments from the Government to rent portions of it. I gave no commitment to do so but did instruct the Regional Director to do a thorough review of the Government's office needs in the community. This should be completed shortly. With respect to the request by the community to have their office complex expanded so that both Band and Community Council can be accommodated, I have passed on this request to the Honourable Gordon Wray for his consideration. I also intend to approach the Honourable David Crombie on behalf of the Band to see if funding for an office can be provided by the Federal Government. I will do this in the next week or two.

I have raised the matter of the use of outside contractors not hiring local people with my colleagues on the Executive Council as well as with Regional staff. This is a very serious matter and we will be examining ways to ensure that contractors live up to their commitments to hire local people. This matter will be dealt with in the very near future.

So the majority of the matters mentioned by the Member have been followed up on. In those areas under my responsibility I have already taken some steps to fulfill my commitments. In other matters my sole commitment was to raise communities' concerns with appropriate Ministers which I have done. Responding to those concerns may take some weeks or months depending on the complexity of the issue. Most matters likely can be dealt with using existing budgets and programs. I would point out to the Member that the purpose of myself or any Minister going to communities is not to make unreasonable or extraordinary commitments. Rather it serves two purposes. On the one hand it helps ensure that communities are kept fully informed of Government policies and actions affecting them. The question of the role of Regional Directors is a good example of that.

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On the other hand it provides communities an opportunity to tell Ministers about problems they are experiencing so that solutions may be sought either through existing programs or where the problem is serious or widespread, through new initiatives.

For the Member's information other matters that were dealt with as a result of my trip to the Delta are as follows. I have asked the Honourable Bruce McLaughlin to review concerns raised over existing alcohol and drug programs. Specifically, I directed the Regional Director to seek ways of dealing with specific problems raised in Fort MacPherson through existing regional programs and resources. I passed on information to the Honourable Dennis Patterson about education concerns in both Fort MacPherson and Inuvik. In Fort MacPherson I was able to assist the Adult Education Program by transferring a Government of the N.W.T. building to the community for use for this purpose. This building was scheduled to be demolished but I have directed the Regional Director to ensure that minor repairs and maintenance are provided to permit the building to operate at least for another year. The costs involved are small and can be met within existing budgets.

If the Member wishes I will provide him with a full report of the results of my meetings in the Delta once I have received responses from other Ministers and other agencies to whom I referred these matters.

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