

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

10<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY, 9<sup>TH</sup> SESSION

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TABLED ON JUNE 8, 1987

JUN 8 1987

# Churchill Health Centre

CHURCHILL, MANITOBA, CANADA R0B 0E0 • TELEPHONE (204) 675-8881



February 20, 1987

①

Mr. Bruce McLaughlin  
Minister of Health  
Department of Health and Welfare  
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Date Rec'd	MAR 4 1987
ACTION req'd - (Circle)	
a) INFO for Dept. - H / S.S. / W.C.B.	
b) FILE only	
c) <u>RESPONSE</u> req'd <u>H</u> S.S. / W.C.B.	<i>EO</i>
d) HOLD for discussion - H / S.S. / W.C.B.	
e) OTHER	<u>A.S.A.P</u>
Initials / Signature	

Dear Mr. Bruce McLaughlin:

This letter is being written to express my concerns about neonatal transport in the Keewating region of the North West Territory.

On January 27, 1987 in Rankin Inlet, N.W.T., a young Gravida 3, Para 1, Stillbirth 1, 17-year old Inuit girl, whose previous pregnancies had terminated at 30-weeks and 22-weeks gestation, went into premature labor at 28-weeks gestation. After 90-minutes of lower abdominal cramps she presented to the Nursing Station with a fully dilated cervix and bulging membranes. She promptly delivered her baby in a foaling breech position. The baby was born "flat" but was successfully resuscitated, intubated and stabilized by ten minutes of age. The infant required continued respiratory assistance provided by manual bagging. While efforts were still being made to resuscitate the infant, the Nurse in Charge was directed to initiate arrangements for the child's transfer to a Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery. Several problems arose.

Winnipeg has become the major referral center for patients from the Keewatin region of the N.W.T. Patients for whom specialist services are required generally referred to Winnipeg. Tertiary care services and hospitalizations are organized in Winnipeg. Indeed, this mother had been to Winnipeg on December 31, 1986 for an obstetrical consult and an ultrasound assessment of her pregnancy. The request was made to the Neonatal Transport Team in Winnipeg to come to Rankin Inlet to transport the 1450 gram premie to the Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery at the Childrens Hospital in Winnipeg. This request was refused, as we were informed the team would not go beyond the Manitoba border; they would however, come as far as Churchill, Manitoba. It was decided to try to arrange to meet them there. The Rankin ambulance came to the Nursing Station and a pressurized plane was readied and stood by on the Rankin Inlet runway.

Some confusion ensued. After my request to Ms. Sue Pauhl, the Rankin Nurse in Charge, she called the Medical Services Zone Officer, who contacted the Churchill Health Centre physician-on-call, Dr. Skibo to arrange Life-Flight's trip to Churchill. Life-Flight apparently would only speak to the physician directly responsible for the case and so I then called the Life Flight number. I was told I had to speak to the Neonatal Team directly, which I then did. I was told that a second request had been made for the plane and that we would be duly informed to which they would first respond.

After a further half hour wait without reply from Winnipeg, it was decided to initiate the evacuation with the Rankin plane, and hope to rendezvous with the Manitoba plane in Churchill. In flight we were informed the Winnipeg plane had gone to the other Medivac first and so would be delayed a further two and a half hours getting to Churchill. We continued on towards Winnipeg. Unfortunately the baby deteriorated while in the air, and further attempts at resuscitation were unsuccessful. Little Donavin died.

First, I do not feel that it is appropriate that arrangements for a medical evacuation always be organized by the physician in charge. In this case, my skills were better employed with attention to the patient than on the telephone. While resuscitation attempts were in progress, my request was made concisely and directly to Ms. Pauhl, who I feel was clearly able, on my behalf, to relay our need for specialized transport for the sick premie.

I feel the delay in response to the request for specialized transport was unacceptable. Time was one important factor. If it had been known immediately that the Winnipeg plan was unable to respond, then the evacuation from Rankin could have been initiated at once, the plane was ready. Perhaps we would have made it to Winnipeg.

Most importantly, if we had been able to keep this infant in the warm Nursing Station at ground level until he could have been transported with the benefit of a cardiac monitor, an oxygen monitor, a temperature monitor, an intravenous infusion controlled by an infusion pump, and a respirator, I wonder if he would have survived his arduous journey to further neonatal intensive support. He needed specialized transport that was neither available in the Rankin Nursing Station, nor in the Churchill Health Centre. We did our best with what we had but it was not good enough for this baby.

What will happen to the next infant like Donavin?

Could you please explain to me the reason why the Manitoba Neonatal Transport Team and Life-Flight are not permitted to go to the aid of a patient that is awaiting transport to the Winnipeg Intensive Care Unit?

In the Baffin Region, a baby can be transported with the monitoring equipment from the hospital in Iqaluit with the supervision of a pediatric resident.

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In the Western Arctic, the staff of any Nursing Station can discuss the care of a neonate directly with the physician in Edmonton's University Hospital. The Neonatal Transport Team from there will respond to a call to any remote destination so that infants can be transported with the appropriate care. They frequently travel to Inuvik, 2,189 air miles north of Edmonton. It would take them two and a half hours by King Air, or one hour and forty-five minutes by Lear Jet to travel the 1,222 air miles from Edmonton to Rankin Inlet.

If the Keewatin District of the N.W.T. and Manitoba cannot come to an agreement with regards to the transportation of sick neonates, then the Keewatin region settlements should consider seeking such assistance from the University of Alberta's facilities in Edmonton. The Edmonton Neonatal Intensive Care Unit physician, Mr. David Schiff has assured me the team would be able and willing to fly to the Keewatin area.

The Medical Services Regional Evacuation Officer, Mr. Robert Knight of Yellowknife, has also assured me that Medical Services in the Keewatin is not limited to seeking their tertiary care resources in Manitoba. If such a medivac flight was made to Edmonton, the costs would be covered.

I feel this situation needs to be re-examined by those in a position to make appropriate changes.

As I will be travelling in the next little while, I would appreciate if you could direct your response to me at P.O. Box 308, Sackville, N.B. EOA 3L0. I look forward to your reply.

Yours truly,



C.J. (JEAN) CAMERON, M.D., C.C.F.P.

CJC/vg

- c.c. College of Physicians and Surgeons, Prov. of Manitoba  
Mr. Larry Desjardins, Minister of Health, Prov. of Manitoba  
Mr. Esmond Smith, Zone Director Keewatin Region, Medical Services, Churchill  
Ms. Jo MacQuarrie, Keewatin Health Co-ordinator, Rankin Inlet  
Dr. Brian Postl, Director N.M.U.  
Dr. Ian Morrison, ObsGyn. St. Boniface Hospital  
Dr. Eric Stearns, Dept. of Obstetrics, H.S.C. Winnipeg  
Ms. Sue Pahl, Nurse-In-Charge, Nursing Station, Rankin Inlet  
Dr. Patrick Brown, Chief of Staff, Churchill Health Centre

# Manitoba



Minister of Health  
Minister Responsible for Sport

7th Floor  
475 Hargrave Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA  
R3C 3R8

RECEIVED  
MAR 23 1987  
FILE No. \_\_\_\_\_

MAR 17 1987

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Dr. C.J. Cameron  
Churchill Health Centre  
Churchill, Manitoba  
ROB OED

Dear Dr. Cameron:

I am responding to your February 20, 1987 letter concerning neonatal transport in the Northwest Territories Keewatin Region which this office received on March 2, 1987.

I understand from Dr. M. E. K. Moffat, Associate Director, Medical Division of Community and Northern Medicine, that this case will be referred to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Perinatal and Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Committee for review and recommendations. I will be requesting information concerning the outcome of the Committee's review.

Regarding the other points raised in your letter, I assure you that they are under our active review.

Thank you for writing me about your concerns. You can be assured that they are receiving the attention they merit.

Yours sincerely,

ORIGINAL COPY

L. D. Desjardins

- cc: College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba  
The Honourable Bruce McLaughlin, Minister of Health, N. W. T.  
Mr. Edmond Smith, Zone Director, Keewatin Region, Churchill  
Dr. Brian Postl, Director, N. M. U., Winnipeg  
Dr. Ian Morrison, St. Boniface Hospital, Winnipeg  
Dr. Eric Stearns, Obstetrics, H.S.C., Winnipeg  
Ms. Jo MacQuarie, Keewatin Health Co-ordinator, Rankin Inlet  
Ms. Sue Pahl, Nurse-In-Charge, Nursing Station Rankin Inlet  
Dr. Patrick Brown, Chief of Staff, Churchill Health Centre



Northwest  
Territories Minister of Health

91 200 104

MAR 20 1987

(3)

C.J. (Jean) Cameron, M.D., C.C.F.P.,  
P.O. Box 308,  
Sackville, New Brunswick,  
EOA 3L0

Dear Dr. Cameron:

Thank you very much for your letter dated February 20, 1987, regarding the medical evacuation of neonates out of the Keewatin Region.

Clearly the manner in which the Neonatal Transport Team in Winnipeg and the Life - Flight air ambulance service dealt with the incident on January 27th is cause for grave concern. Accordingly, I have instructed my staff in the Department of Health to investigate the incident and to explore means of avoiding any recurrences.

Yours sincerely,

Original Signed By  
Bruce McLaughlin

Bruce McLaughlin,  
Minister.

*R*  
KNIGHT/hs *R*



**DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AND NORTHERN MEDICINE**

- J. A. Hides Northern Medical Unit
- Postgraduate Training Community Medicine
- Special Premedical Studies Program

The University of Manitoba  
 Faculty of Medicine  
 61 Emily Street  
 Winnipeg, Canada  
 R3E 1Y8  
 (204) 788-6711

5

April 8, 1987

Dr. James B. Morison  
 Registrar  
 College of Physicians & Surgeons of Manitoba  
 1410-155 Carlton Street  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba  
 R3C 3H8

Dear Doctor Morison,

Although I am in receipt of a copy of your letter to Jean Cameron regarding the infant from Rankin Inlet who died in flight over Manitoba, I would like to request again that the Perinatal and Maternal Welfare Committee be asked to review this case.

The Keewatin District has to be considered a medical extension of Manitoba even though it is a separate jurisdiction. The physicians who work there are all licensed in Manitoba and all serious medical cases are treated in Manitoba. The referral patterns are very clear. I feel we have a moral obligation to do everything we can to improve the quality of care for the people of the Keewatin.

I am enclosing copies of all the documentation we have, and would hope that you will respond favourably to this request.

Sincerely,

M.E.K. Moffatt, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C)  
 Associate Director, Medical  
 Division of Community & Northern Medicine

MEKM/lf  
 cc. E. Smith  
 L. L. Desjardins  
 J. MacQuarrie  
 I. Morrison





Northwest  
Territories Minister of Health

91 200 104

88 - 7 1987

(1)

Mr. Maurice Aked,  
Regional Director,  
Medical Services Branch,  
NWT Region,  
Bag 7777,  
Yellowknife, N.W.T.  
X1A 2R3

Dear Mr. Aked:

You will find attached correspondence relating to the medical evacuation of a premature baby from Rankin Inlet to Winnipeg in late January of this year. I expect you may be familiar with this case already.

The Honourable L.L. Desjardins, the Minister of Health for Manitoba, wrote to Dr. Cameron stating that this case had been referred to the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons (Perinatal and Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Committee) for investigation. I would be pleased if you would keep me informed of the outcome of that committee's investigation, and of any investigation that your own staff may undertake in the Keewatin Zone.

Yours sincerely,

Original Signed By  
Bruce McLaughlin  
Bruce McLaughlin,  
Minister.

Attachment

3 KJ/IGHT/ml *PK*



**THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF MANITOBA**  
1410-199 Carlton Street  
WINNIPEG, Manitoba R3C 3H8  
Telephone (204) 947-1694

Address all correspondence to  
the Registrar

AMR 9 Feb

April 1, 1987

Dr. C.J. Cameron  
Churchill Health Centre  
Churchill, Manitoba  
ROB OEO

(7)

Dear Dr. Cameron:

I have discussed your letter of February 20, 1987 with Dr. Ian Morrison, Coordinator of our Perinatal & Maternal Welfare Committee.

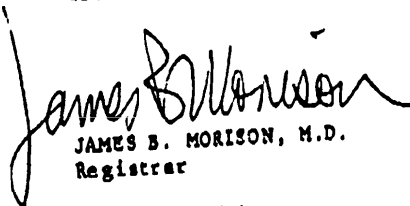
This letter concerned the evacuation of a neonate from Rankin Inlet.

Many matters raised in your letter are really not the responsibility of the College or the Perinatal & Maternal Welfare Committee, but rather are for the Manitoba Department of Health, which is responsible for the medical evacuation services, and the government of the Northwest Territories.

In his letter of March 17, the Minister of Health, the Honorable L.L. Desjardins, stated that the matter would be reviewed by the Perinatal & Maternal Morbidity Committee of the College. This is a misunderstanding, as the College has not included in its studies cases occurring outside the province. We have not yet received a death certificate on this child, and presumably it was registered as a N.W.T. death, even though the baby died in flight.

Although we share your concerns in this difficult situation we are not in a position to act on the matter. We note that Mr. Desjardins states that the points within the letter which fall within his responsibility are under consideration.

Yours sincerely,

  
JAMES B. MORISON, M.D.  
Registrar

/ejm

cc: Mr. L.L. Desjardins, Manitoba Minister of Health  
Mr. B. McLaughlin, N.W.T. Minister of Health  
Mr. E. Smith, Zone Director, Keewatin Region, Medical Services  
Ms. J. MacQuarrie, Keewatin Health Coordinator, Rankin Inlet  
Dr. B. Postl, Director NMU  
Dr. I. Morrison, St. Boniface Hospital  
Dr. E. Stearns, Dept. of Obstetrics, Health Sciences Centre  
Ms. S. Pauthl, Nurse in Charge, Nursing Station, Rankin Inlet  
Dr. P. Brown, Chief of Staff, Churchill Health Centre