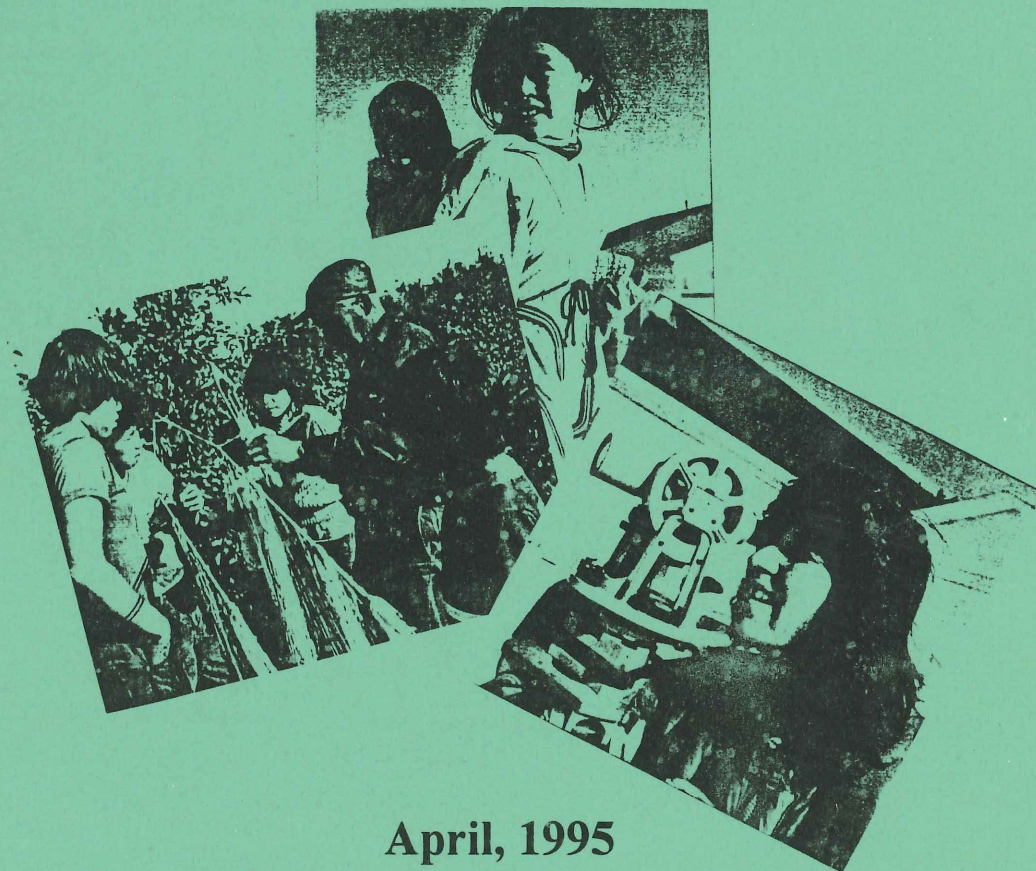


Community Choices:

Laying the foundations for income support reform

Minister's Forum on Income Support Reform



April, 1995



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Education, Culture and Employment
Hon. Richard Nerysoo, Minister

How the Dene Survived, 1895

In general Dene life style was very simple and easy to understand. They made a living according to what was around them. They came about their own way to govern themselves, since their main work to stay alive was to harvest the land for food. They invented weapons to hunt with, such as the bow and arrow. They also used different type of snares, all sizes. For fishing they braided fish net of willow bark. Fish was good for them because it freezed and dried easily.

Not all people had good fish nets. People who worked hard had long nets and caught a lot of fish, but a lot of people didn't have good nets because they didn't work enough. Those are the kind of people that depend on others.

Aboriginal people of that time were happy people; they didn't worry at all. They lived by what they created. They have a wonderful gift we don't have today, medicine power. Their teaching and anything they did was attached to medicine powers.

Parents taught their children about Dene law. They said, "You have to obey the law. If you don't, you might die easily." Children grew up with that kind of teaching, so individuals lived by the Dene law all their life. It made good citizens out of them. One of the most important Dene laws was sharing. This law said to share sorrow as well as good times with people. The reason people all obeyed Dene law is because it was attached to medicine power; it was dangerous not to obey Dene law. It became part of their life. People looked after each other well because of the law.

I support welfare and the sharing law that the Dene used and believe it is the same thing. But the management and control are different. The modern Social Services we have today is run by the rules set up by government. If an individual goes to the welfare office and asks for assistance, the agent looks through the book and decides if he should give something or not. But the Dene way to run welfare is different, because it is not run by one government or one leader. Every family knows they have to share, so everybody follows the Dene law of sharing. Elders talk daily about the sharing law. Because they have daily gatherings, they know who need help, so leaders push people to those who need help. If an individual goes to a dwelling and asks for food or help, right away the head of the family helps. They don't have to read rules. The Dene react to the Dene law of sharing and know what to do.

George Blondin
March 31, 1995

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The members of the Minister's forum on income support reform express their sincere appreciation to all the community people who participated in the workshops. Your commitment to change, your genuine concern for people in need, and a shared vision to make your communities a better place to live was heartfelt by the forum members.

To the representatives of aboriginal, regional and interest groups, and community leaders who appeared before the forum to make formal presentations and wrote thoughtful and thought-provoking ideas about changing the current system of dependency, we thank you for your support.

We hope our work and the contents of this report are true to the ideas, thoughts and feelings you expressed and heard during our meetings with you.

Thank you. Qujannamiik. Massi.

Grace Blake

W. E. U

Jimmie

Helma Tees

Sandy Kusugak

[Signature]

George Blondin

**COMMUNITY CHOICES:
LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR INCOME SUPPORT REFORM**

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Introduction

The environment

Income support programs in the Northwest Territories do not meet current needs of northerners.

The Minister's forum on income support reform heard this message time and again in its consultations across the NWT. People gave many reasons for the need for change, emphasizing the need for community control, an expanded role for tradition and culture, the need to help youth and the need to provide better security for those who cannot provide for themselves.

The forum also clearly heard that many aboriginal people have lost their pride and self-esteem because of a system that gives them no incentives to look after their own needs. People want to recapture that pride and self-esteem, and provide ways, through education, training, and job creation in both the traditional and wage economies, to become self-sufficient again.

Giving communities control of their own income support programs means that the rules will have to change. Communities must make their own decisions based on their own realities. Leaders — MLAs, chiefs, mayors — have to get together and change the way they do business. Elders must have more say in how communities govern themselves.

Change this extensive cannot be done quickly. Careful planning,

Look at children as the beginnings of society. How we treat them determines the type of people they will grow up to be.

Grace Blake

We all know that in many communities opportunities are limited and more than ever we have to use resources to avoid the despair of poverty and unemployment.

Wilf Wilcox

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testing and evaluation must precede full-scale change. Community control must be phased in, with government and community residents as partners, to ensure its success.

Any change must also involve land claims groups as equal partners. The forum recognizes that ideally such negotiations should take place with the federal government, but that government has chosen to remain silent on its legal obligations to aboriginal people. The forum appreciates the co-operation we received in this territorial process from all the aboriginal groups who were involved.

*Control means control
by aboriginal people.*
Gina Dolphus

Although income support needs to change because programs do not now work, people must also acknowledge the current financial climate. The federal government has said there will be less money for income support in the near future. Communities must ensure any change takes into consideration reduced spending ability. We must also ensure that all income support monies are used more productively. This means governments must work together in harmony to make sure money is used where it is most needed.

If we are to overcome the frustration of dependence on welfare and other income support programs, we must find ways for people to regain their independence and dignity. We must recognize people's skills and abilities, and help them use their talents to make good choices. Only through exhaustive consultation and involvement with those who use the programs can we be sure their needs will be met.

*We really would like to put
a stop to this program
because it is degrading.*
Mariano Aupilardjuk

Change will not happen overnight. We have to answer hard

questions and be bold in our recommendations for reform. We are committed to seeing this process through, to finding long-term solutions and to seeing those solutions implemented and evaluated.

The Forum

The Special Committee on Health and Social Services, convened in November 1991, released its report, *Talking and Working Together*, in November 1993. The committee made specific recommendations on the adequacy and management of income support benefits.

The findings of the special committee prompted Cabinet to move social assistance to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, linking welfare more closely with education and training to promote independence and self-sufficiency. As well, Cabinet directed the formation of an income support reform task group, and named the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment as lead minister for reform.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment released a public discussion paper, *Creating Choices: Solving the Income Support Puzzle* in July 1994. The discussion paper framed the context for income support reform in the Northwest Territories, focusing on individuals, families and the community.

In January, 1995, the Minister convened a seven-member forum on income support reform. This forum will provide advice to the Government of the Northwest Territories on reform and involve

People told us that this system is tough to get into and even tougher to get out of. Every step should be taken to encourage pride, a desire to work and a sense of initiative in people who receive income support.

Report of the Special
Committee on Health and
Social Services

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Northerners in developing an agenda for change.

Focus group sessions with community representatives, in Nunavut on March 4 and 5 and the Western Territory March 25 and 26, 1995, were the first steps towards changing income support for future years and generations to better reflect today's realities in the North. As well, regional organizations, aboriginal groups and special interest groups made presentations to the forum on March 28, 1995, in Yellowknife. Other groups and individuals mailed in their comments, and forum members consulted with communities and spoke to many people about these changes.

In these consultations the forum heard a vision of what a changed income support system would look like. We were able to begin laying the foundations for income support reform.

Back to the future

This vision includes families and communities supporting people and encouraging pride in language, culture and traditional land-based activities. People want elders to play an important role in teaching young people survival skills and language out on the land, work which they are paid to do.

In this vision, income support is used to pay community members to hunt for those who cannot, and mentoring programs help new parents learn skills to take responsibility for their children's cultural and emotional growth from those who are already skilled at parenting. People in adult basic education receive adequate

*By understanding our own
history, we can piece
together the future.*

Bill Erasmus

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support. Training is designed and offered at the community level, and relates directly to jobs available in the community. All jobs, including those in the traditional and wage economies, are valued equally and equally supported through income support programs.

Outpost camps and land-based activities play a large part in the vision of the future. People supplement social assistance with earnings from carving, hunting, trapping, sewing and other traditional activities without financial penalty. People also know that they have support for any risks they take to become independent; that they might not be successful the first time but will be encouraged to try again. They have a safety net to be able to plan effectively, rather than always operating in crisis.

In this vision, welfare as we now know it doesn't exist. There is help for people in need and people receive income support incentives according to their own choices and effort, and based on community direction. Communities are responsible for looking after those who can not provide for themselves and are accountable to their residents.

The forum has put a human face on reform. Nonetheless we still have much to do. We must talk to people who receive benefits from the system to find out what their priorities are. We must build stronger partnerships with business. We must insist government departments work together so programs work for communities. We must see the process through.

If we look hard enough, I think we can come up with ideas to make things better.

Michael Amarook

If we are really serious about looking after ourselves, it takes a lot of hard work and dedication.

Mariano Aupilardjuk

Principles

When the forum started its journey into changing the income support system, we adopted certain principles. As we heard from people, we saw these principles reinforced and expanded.

1. Change to the income support system is needed, change will be difficult and change will be phased in over time.
2. Community healing is the first step in income support reform.
3. Communities must control the design and delivery of income support programs which affect them, and be accountable primarily to their residents.
4. Income support programs must be flexible and reflect long-term planning and funding.
5. Income support programs must recognize the role tradition and culture plays in people's lives, and the integrity of the family unit.
6. Income support programs will be linked to jobs and training in both wage and traditional economies and will encourage people to make responsible choices.
7. Income support programs will make the best use of available money.
8. People will have fair and easy access to income support programs in communities.

What We Heard

The foundation: community control of social programs

Communities want to control the design and delivery of community-based income support programs. Communities understand that there is a limited amount of money. Communities also understand the need for accountability.

People told the forum that communities are insisting they take an active role in making the rules for social programs and ensuring these programs reflect community needs. Communities are frustrated with all the rules, and with programs that don't work well together. Communities want the power to make income support work for their residents — to encourage them to take training or a job. Real community control will allow grass-roots design, and will promote programs like harvesting and other traditional activities as practical alternatives to welfare. Communities want to answer to their residents, not to government. They want enough money to do a good job of starting programs as well as running them, and want few strings attached to funding arrangements.

Communities want block funding for programs. They realize the importance of strategic community planning, and want training for community people so they can negotiate skillfully and plan with community interests in mind. Block funding must include rewards for good performance — communities should retain surpluses and manage deficits — and should be negotiated on a multi-year basis

You have to get those programs and services and deliver them on your own terms.

Charlie Furlong

We need to loosen the strings attached to programs; programs need to be driven by the community.

Tom Zubko

Working together is the key to success.

Eddie Kolausok

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based on negotiated principles. Block funding should be indexed to the cost of living, and should include evaluation of programs and financial arrangements.

People said turning control over to the communities needs to be phased in, with enough training for community resource people, good strategic planning, and a long-term vision of what the community wants to accomplish. Community development training needs to include teamwork, with all parts of the community working together towards common, well-defined goals which provide equity and fairness for residents. The process of turning control over to communities must take into account land claims agreements and self-government initiatives.

People said social workers just give them a cheque, not the advice and counselling they need to get off welfare. The forum heard that welfare has spoon-fed an otherwise independent and proud people and has caught people in a web of generational dependence, drawing people away from the land and into communities with the promise of "free money." The elders said that welfare is very powerful. People said government set the rules for income support programs without consulting communities.

Members spoke about people feeling powerless in the welfare web and demanded changes, including real community control and delivery of a new income support system that recognises and rewards traditional values and skills. Members were also very aware of the fiscal realities of government restraint and cutbacks.

*Communities want to
make their own rules;
people don't understand
all the laws and
regulations.*

Elijah Erkloo

*There's no need for them
to go hunting because
they have income support
money to feed them.*

Simon Nataaq

*Welfare did a lot of
damage to Inuit.*

Joy Suluk

**Recommendations: community control of social
programs**

1. Block funding for social programs will allow communities the flexibility to use existing resources according to their social agenda.
2. Community strategic planning will be the cornerstone to setting local priorities in social programming.
3. Training in social program design and delivery will ensure qualified community staff are trained to meet community needs.
4. Communities will set the timetable for change.

Community choices: community priorities

Traditional and culture

Traditional activities are real jobs.

Language, hunting, trapping, sewing, carving and fishing are the cornerstones of a traditional lifestyle, instilling pride and passing skills from generation to generation. Today in many cases dependence on welfare is passed from parents to children. *All* jobs are good jobs, but today, many programs do not recognize traditional activities as legitimate occupations. Jobs must recognize the skills and talents of aboriginal people.

Welfare brings people to town and keeps people in town. People want welfare to provide incentives to get back to the land. People don't have enough information about harvester's support programs offered by aboriginal groups and the government. Teaching traditional knowledge should take place out on the land, not in a classroom setting. For example, welfare could be used to subsidize outpost camps for teaching, making products for market, and providing the community with food.

Each individual needs to start to stand on his own two feet and become more independent. That should be our objective.

Mariano Aupilardjuk
Elder

Welfare should be used to get people back to the land. People need grubstakes to get gas and bullets.

George Porter

Recommendations: tradition and culture

5. Recognize harvesting, carving, sewing, crafts and teaching on the land as valuable jobs in the local economy.
6. Combine the use of harvester's assistance and social assistance

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help expand and build more outpost camps; encourage the use of outpost camps for employment, teaching and fostering the development of young people.

7. Provide income support to residents to harvest country foods for those in need.
8. Promote the use and trade of traditional products.

Youth

Youth are in crisis and need positive incentives and direction to change the course of their lives, or they will continue to be caught up in the welfare web fiasco; there are too many dropouts. Young people need to be more responsible, people said. They need to spend time on the land with elders. They need to be more productive in their home communities. People want programs that encourage youth to stay in school and also learn survival on the land. But young people need to know that the skills they learn will get them jobs to support themselves.

The forum heard that youth often find themselves between two cultures without adequate knowledge of either. Youth need a solid grasp of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal culture if they are to succeed. People said that to get welfare, young people have to make positive choices like providing meat, fish and wood to seniors. Youth need to be connected to the wisdom of elders. Parents must take more responsibility for teaching young people about their traditions, language and culture.

*Youth are caught in the
welfare web fiasco.*

Joanne Deneron

*They (youth) are right in the
middle of two cultures and
they're having a hard time
joining either one.*

Celine Ningark

Recommendations: youth

9. Youth's access to social assistance will be conditional on:
 - staying in school;
 - learning parenting skills;
 - pursuing training programs or community service;
 - working with elders;
 - working at outpost camps in traditional pursuits.

10. Support day cares in schools.
11. Pay student financial assistance monthly and help students manage money.
12. Provide tutoring services for children and parents to encourage learning at home and success at school.

Education, training and jobs

People told the forum that training must relate to real jobs and opportunities in the community, and that these jobs must use the skills and talents of aboriginal people. People said there should be more training programs designed and delivered at the community level. People talked about putting training centres, where people can be taught skills, in communities. People told the forum it is difficult to travel to large centres for training; students need the support of their families and the community to succeed. People said pilot projects that pay community residents to learn survival skills and traditional activities are a good idea; there should be more of them. People also said communities should check on the success of students who use student financial assistance.

People want income support programs used as incentives to encourage residents to go out on the land, and want more markets for traditional products like wild meat, fish, and clothing. People want more community hunts, more inter-community trade and better partnerships with business for local training of a northern workforce. People described their frustration with some programs that are difficult to use, like unemployment insurance.

People want more community economic development which uses the resources of the community in a sustainable manner. People want more harvesting industries, small business and entrepreneurship development and support from business for local training of a northern workforce. They want communities to develop an inventory of local skills. People said welfare pays better

A lot of people here want the kind of jobs that are related to the environment, the cold weather, the animals.

Lisa Ipeelee

Each person has a gift and we must concentrate on their potential.

Stella Gargan

than many jobs; people don't receive rewards for making good, responsible choices.

People recognized the opportunities for jobs in tourism and in government building projects, which must be tendered with the local labour force in mind.

People also wanted better counselling and assessment of the individual's skills and strengths. People also said day care or an alternative should exist in every community and care providers must receive adequate training and have adequate resources.

Daycare is not always the answer. The community has to work together.

Eva Noah

Recommendations: education, training and jobs

13. Provide secure, long-term funding to programs that create working and learning opportunities available at the community level.
14. Local job creation and training programs must reflect community talents, skills and traditional occupations.
15. Training in tradition and culture needs to take place on the land.
16. In the past, government-sponsored community employment projects have largely provided work opportunities for men rather than women. Equality of women and child care needs must form a basic part of all programs.

Investing in People is for two years. What happens to people for whom two years is not enough?

Barb Paquin

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17. Forge stronger partnerships with business and industry.
18. Develop an inventory of local skills and abilities and provide career counselling.
19. Offer more entrepreneurship training to encourage small business development.
20. Establish culturally relevant day cares in all communities and provide early childhood development training to staff.
21. Ensure adult basic education has a high profile in each community with strong programs geared to individual needs and a clear relationship with a parent organization.
22. Offer more courses in traditional occupations, such as sewing and guiding.
23. Combine federal and territorial programs and eliminate confusion and duplication.

Healing

People said that healing is the first step in the income support reform process, and that the community wellness strategy must be closely linked with changes to income support.

*I think people are really,
really suffering because they
see no way out.*

Ruby McDonald

People suffer from addictions and hopelessness; after a proud past, they can see no future. Members stressed the importance of family and community support. Healing takes time, and each community must find its own way.

People need to regain their dignity and respect. If they are treated as independent, they will see themselves as independent people. They need to find pride in their skills and abilities and escape from the stigma of welfare.

*I think we should try to
develop an income
support program that
would allow nurturing and
development.*

Elizabeth Kidlapik

Each community should have a family healing centre which deals sensitively with the process of healing. Where people receiving welfare are facing difficulties with budgeting, or abuse of drugs, alcohol or gambling, communities want to use a voucher or direct-to-store system.

Young people need to be more responsible, people said. Youth need to be connected to the wisdom of elders; they need to spend time on the land with elders. Youth must have incentives to escape the system, and adopt productive, healthy lifestyles.

Recommendations: healing

24. The community wellness strategy must be linked to changes in income support.
25. Each community should have a family healing centre.
26. Income support programs must foster independence and self-esteem.

The three pillars of income support reform are the family unit, healthy communities, and education, culture and employment.

Mike Paulette

Welfare and security

The forum heard very clearly that the social assistance program is long overdue for change. More and more people use the program. People face two types of barriers which prevent them from getting off the system: personal barriers, and barriers the government erects. People said welfare creates dependence and people's dependence is like a self-perpetuating industry for government. People want incentives for training and employment built into the welfare system, so people can be encouraged and motivated to be more self-sufficient.

The forum heard that welfare has destroyed the independence of aboriginal people. In the past, people worked hard and enjoyed the fruits of their labour; now in many cases welfare pays more than jobs.

Rules for welfare were not set by the communities; they were set by government in the 1960s. People clearly said communities and families must make sure those who cannot provide for themselves have enough to live on; the needy should be put first. Community residents should share food with elders and others unable to hunt, and those people should receive enough money to live on with dignity, not just at the poverty line.

In many extended families, one income earner is not enough. People said they should be allowed to supplement welfare with money from carving, other traditional activities, or jobs. People should be allowed to keep more income so they can live above the

*If you label people, they
live up to their labels.*
Grace Blake

*Because of social
assistance, a lot of our
people are suffering;
they are also taking
advantage of it.*

Joe Migwi

*Maybe we should give a
new name to welfare.*

Geela Gerioux

*The aboriginal people
were self-sufficient before
the government came in,
and it's my goal to see
them self-sufficient again.*

Rita Arey

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poverty line. People should also be encouraged to save money so they can look after their children and provide for more of their own needs.

Welfare should be easier to get for those who need it. People aged 55 to 65 and those who are disabled and unable to work should receive automatic payments without going into the office every month. People should also look to the family and the community for security. As well, social workers should not write welfare cheques, so they will have more time to help and counsel people. Cheques should come from the same place as other government or community cheques to reduce the stigma of receiving welfare.

People said welfare should be more difficult for able people to get. People must be required to take money management and life skills programs if they want welfare. Youth should not receive welfare if they drop out of school, and the extended family must take more responsibility for its members in need.

People also said children need security; that parents should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their children through parenting courses, partnering new parents with successful parents and teaching practical and emotional life skills. Child support should not be deducted from welfare.

*We must create a positive
attitude for our children.*

Celine Ningark

Recommendations: welfare and security

27. Identify those most in need of income support and make sure their needs are met first. Provide direct and secure payment of benefits, i.e. payroll.
28. People on income support reform need more than a cheque; they also need advice on budgeting, money management and some basic life skills.
29. Rename welfare. Cheques should come from the same place as other government and community cheques to reduce the stigma of welfare.
30. Provide a transitional period and incentives to help people get off welfare: rent protection, incentives to go back on the land, incentives to hunt for others.
31. Change the current rules and increase income exemptions; allow people to keep and save more money. Encourage them to take advantage of incentives and opportunities which will improve their levels of income above the poverty line. Decrease income support gradually as earned income increases.
32. Use welfare to get people back on the land.
33. Protect elders from abuse and share renewable and community resources with elders.

Implementation: the essential steps

Challenging the system

People made it clear that change will not happen overnight. Individuals and communities must heal before real change can occur. Communities must develop a vision, and plan how they can attain that vision. They must combine resources and focus them on social agenda priorities.

However, people recognized that communities cannot change all programs at once. They recommended that change begin with social assistance — using welfare to provide incentives for people to get training and jobs, and making sure those most in need are able to live with dignity and independence.

People spoke very strongly on the failure of government to communicate clearly with NWT residents. People want to know about change as it affects them, and feel government has not told them enough about its plans for change.

People want to know more about what programs currently exist and how they work. People also want government to listen carefully to what they say and not change their words to suit its needs.

People have heard that the federal government is changing income support programs and that the financial arrangements between the

We're trying to chew the whole chicken right now, feathers and all. We should be careful and chew it slowly. Let's start at social assistance because it needs the most work.

Eddie Dillon

The plight of our communities is very obvious. At every annual assembly we hear the same cries and we have appeared before many task forces, but to no avail.

Bertha Allen

federal and territorial governments will change. People see this as an opportunity to set their own agenda for change and develop principles for block funding.

Recommendation: challenging the system

33. Basic principles for block funding for social programs must include:

- easy and understandable access to income support programs;
- a secure level of income support which will encourage and motivate people, especially youth, to seek work, training and harvesting activities;
- programs designed to foster independence;
- community accountability to government limited to financial arrangements;
- sound management practices;
- multi-year funding;
- right of appeal.

It seems that our people are lost and they don't care any more about trying to achieve. They have to wake up to realize that they have to do something for themselves, and that's where our leaders come in, to lobby and stand up for us.

Helen Squirrel

Pilot projects

To phase in changes to the income support system, communities and governments should negotiate pilot projects. The projects will allow communities to gain valuable experience about block funding and develop programs that reflect the community's social agenda.

Programs can combine existing resources and test and evaluate change in income support reform, such as:

- increasing the amount of earned income residents can keep;
- community job creation;
- back-to-school programs which use new or expanded school child day cares;
- programs for youth which combine harvesting with renewable resource training;
- developing entrepreneurial projects and strengthening partnerships with local business.

Recommendation: pilot projects

34. Pilot projects should be negotiated with communities prepared to manage their income support agenda.

The continuing role of the forum

Many of the changes recommended in this report will run up against the core of systems and administrative details of government. The forum recommendations, while presenting realistic and necessary direction to income support programs, also seriously challenge government to follow up. Although fiscal pressures may make government more willing to transfer income support programs, communities require a results-oriented action plan which is not burdened by administrative detail and bureaucracy. People expressed the fear that bureaucracy would not like many of the recommendations, and would resist entering a supportive partnership with communities, throwing up obstacles to change.

People wanted the forum to receive continuing support from government to act as advisors to government and confirm the government's implementation plan based on the recommendation in this report. People see the continuation of the forum as a guarantee that income support changes will be a priority of the new government elected this fall.

People also said that the timetable and scope of the forum's work are too limiting. While the report is to be a foundation for change and has met that mandate, much work remains. More community consultation, specifically with those most affected by the changes — students, harvesters, welfare recipients, and people facing the challenges of disabilities and poverty — needs to occur.

I don't want to be sitting around here 10 to 30 years from now talking about these issues. Government needs to act now.

Gary Bohnet

People understand the findings of the report will form the backdrop

for negotiations between the territorial government and the federal government on future financial agreement for income support programs. People want the government to tell them the results of these negotiations in clear, understandable language.

Recommendation: continuing role of the forum

35. Appoint the forum as an advisory committee to the government of the Northwest Territories to monitor and confirm the implementation plan.

Conclusion

The most consistent message the Minister's forum on income support reform heard during consultation sessions was the need for communities to control social programs. This is the foundation for reform. Community control has significant consequences for the way government currently manages programs and presents a considerable challenge to communities and their leaders.

Time and again the forum heard that people are fed up with rules and regulations designed elsewhere, that do not reflect culture or community priorities, that foster dependency. People know that the current spending trends on welfare and other income support programs are going to cause serious financial problems for government budgets. Fiscal restraint and less money are realities that communities see. Their solution is to make existing money work better.

Land claims and self-government negotiations and agreements prepare communities to take on more responsibilities. Community control of the social agenda is seen as an integral part of this transition.

Changing the rules does not mean decreasing accountability. Communities want to be accountable to their residents, not a system of rules that doesn't work. They see the role of government as providing sound financial arrangements based on negotiated principles and accountabilities.

Given this flexibility, communities can direct income support towards programs that strengthen traditional activities, motivate youth to make productive choices, create jobs, further education and training through expanded child care and incentives, provide healing for communities and families, and ensure secure income for those most in need.

There are no quick fixes. The welfare system and other income support programs have created strong dependencies and expectations that will be hard to change. This will take time, training and planning. Governments and communities will need to develop a different kind of partnership. Government's role will change as communities accept more responsibility for planning and delivering their social agenda.

The government has heard most of the contents of this report before. There is nothing new here. However, the recommendations in this report present this government with an opportunity to act, to be bold and to be on the leading edge of change. Aboriginal communities and federal-provincial social ministries and agencies outside the Territories could look to this government as a leader in income support reform.

We are prepared to work with you to respond to this challenge.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
MINISTER'S FORUM ON INCOME SUPPORT REFORM**

Purpose

The Minister's Forum on Income Support Reform will provide advice to the Government of the Northwest Territories on reform and involve Northerners in developing an agenda for change.

The Forum will consult through regional focus groups on how changes through income support reform relate to social assistance, student financial assistance, child day care, unemployment insurance, harvester's assistance and social housing.

Goal

The Forum will provide first-hand, face-to-face information to people, involve them, community and special interest groups in discussions and get first-hand public opinion and advice on reform issues. The Forum will report to the Minister after consultation on their observations and recommendations.

Mandate

The Forum will advise the Minister on income support reform, broaden the understanding of reform issues and stimulate public discussion and debate on reform. The elements of reform include work and learning, access and opportunity, and security.

Objectives

The Forum has the following objectives:

- to provide information to the public on income support reform;
- to increase public awareness and understanding of reform issues;
- to provide the Minister with a cross-section of public opinion on reform issues;
- to lead focus group discussions in each regional centre;
- to report progress to the Minister and the Legislative Assembly.

**Community Choices: Laying the Foundations
for Income Support Reform**

Meetings in Deline March 7-9, 1995

Gina Dolphus, Deline
Charlie Jeremick'ca, Wha-Ti
Walter Bayha, Deline
Elizabeth Yakelaya, Fort Norman
Mary Adele Rabesca, Wha-Ti

Judy Tutcho, Deline
Morris Modeste, Deline
Isodore Yukon, Deline
Sarah Cochon, Colville Lake

Presentations to Grades 7, 8 and 9 in the school for Education Week.
Many house-to-house visits by George Blondin.

Participants at public hearing, March 28, 1995, Yellowknife

Presentations:

Inuit Taparizat of Canada
Metis Nation
Association for Community Living
Keewatin Chamber of Commerce
Dene Nation
Aurora College Board of Governors
Literacy Council

David Gladders
Gary Bohnet
Lanny Cook
John Parker
Bill Erasmus
Steve Richards
Barb Paquin

Mailed responses:

NWT Chamber of Commerce
NWT Association of Municipalities
Native Women's Association of the NWT
Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated
Status of Women Council of the NWT

Randy Mulder
Dennis Bevington
Bertha Allen
Leena Evik
Rita Arey

Written submissions

Aklavik Renewable Resources Council
Canadian Mental Health Association - NWT Division
Hamlet of Pond Inlet
Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
Inuksuk Infant Development Centre
Keewatin Chamber of Commerce and Keewatin Business Development Centre
Metis Nation - Northwest Territories
Native Women's Association of the NWT
NWT Chamber of Commerce
NWT Literacy Council
Status of Women Council of the NWT