

February 20, 1996



To:  
Jake Ootes, MLA

From:  
John Poirier  
Box 2541  
Yellowknife  
X1A 2P8

Re: Amendments to Public Service Act

Dear Jake;

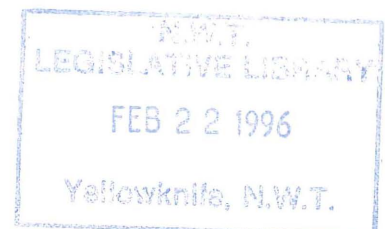
I am writing to you because I am very concerned about the proposed amendments to the Public Service Act and particularly about the process by which they are being handled.

In terms of the actual amendments, I fully support the comments that the Union of Northern Workers has made.

With regard to the process, I have some serious problems, as follows:

1. As the leaders of a "consensus" government, our territorial politicians have been careful to consult with important sectors of our society such as the business community and native groups in formulating policies in areas of mutual concern. The government has staked the credibility of consensus government on these consultative processes. By excluding another important sector of society- its own employees- from any sort of non-adversarial consultation regarding this legislation, the government has called into question the credibility of consensus government.

Many people will remember this when development of the Western constitution resumes. A lack of faith in consensus government would be divisive or disastrous for the constitutional process.



2. The Legislative Assembly has taken a very strong stand against social abuses of all kinds. Mr. Todd himself has stated that he views the relationship between the government and its employees as a partnership. A partnership in which one partner misuses power and intimidates the other is abusive. If the Assembly passes legislation that abuses its employees, its credibility in fighting other forms of abuse will be significantly weakened.

If I remember correctly, Mr. Todd is a former "Bay Boy". Most of us would consider the treatment of these individuals by the Hudson's Bay Company to be abusive. As a victim of this type of abuse during a formative time in his life, I suspect that Mr. Todd has a rather skewed view of labour relations- and, as with many victims of abuse, he has become an offender. I think this theory is strengthened by Mr. Todd's behaviour in the Assembly yesterday.

3. The government has no mandate to take such drastic action against its employees. While budget cutting was an election issue, union busting was not. By acting in an arbitrary and hasty manner the Assembly is subverting both consensus government and the democratic process itself.

4. Viewed as part of the larger process of cutting government costs, the focus on union members as the main target is unfair and ineffective.

Mr. Morin has said that "everything is on the table". The Business Incentive Policy has not been on the table- and it costs the taxpayers enormously in terms of expensive and/or poor quality goods and services. If everything really is on the table, the private sector must be made to bite the bullet just as hard as the public sector.

Thank you for listening. I have noted that you have raised issues such as morale in the public service, which I appreciate very much. I hope that you will be able to discuss my concerns with your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Poir".

Re: Amendments to the  
Public Service Act.

February 20, 1996

Jake Ootes  
MLA - Yellowknife Centre

Dear Mr. Ootes:

As a member of your constituency, I would like to voice my concern over the recent bill to amend the Public Service Act. I am concerned with the changes being proposed and the way in which it is being presented.

I, as so most residents of the NWT, recognize that we must share the responsibility to take part in the need to balance the budget. However, to do so while removing the arbitrating process in collective bargaining really concerns me. By removing the arbitrating of disagreements occurring in negotiations, and replacing it with the "right to strike", I feel we are moving to a confrontational attitude which will cost everyone in the long run. No one wins in a strike, and I think the residents of Yellowknife know that better than anyone. Arbitration is a costly process, there is no doubt, but I feel that it is less costly than facing a strike, with its potential for economic fallout and extreme human costs.

I also feel that, to remove 30% of the membership from the bargaining unit, or saying that they are members but cannot strike, you are trying to sugar coat what is being done. I don't think that most UNW members will swallow it.

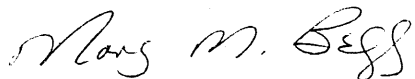
I would also like to comment on the announcements that have been made regarding rollbacks and benefit cuts. I feel that it is really unfair to try and solve the deficit problem on the backs of the Civil Service. All residents of the North need to share this burden. A more equitable way of doing this would be to apply a sales tax. We would all be faced with sharing the load that way.

By privatization and lay-offs, all we are doing is moving people to another part of the system. People will have to rely on UI, and in the worst case scenario, Social Assistance, to support themselves and their families. To think that this is a cost saving is rather short-sighted and narrow minded. At least, when people are employed, they are contributing by the work being done and the money they are putting into the economy.

I hope that other members of the UNW and residents of your constituency will also let you know of their feelings and opinions. I feel that these issues are crucial and will have a very long-lasting effect on the economy and the quality of life in the North.

Thank-you for taking time to read this letter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marg M. Begg".

Margaret M Begg  
5106 - 52nd Street  
YELLOWKNIFE, NT