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*Serving the
Communities
of*

November 7, 1988

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Honourable Nellie Cournoyea
Minister of Health
Government of the N.W.T.
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Baker Lake

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Dear Ma'am:

*Chesterfield
Inlet*

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It has recently come to our attention that decisions made by the Keewatin Regional Health Board are being overturned by outside health agencies.

Coral Harbour

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We are particularly disturbed to hear of the situation which has arisen regarding the delivery of dental services for our region. Last June our health board passed a motion whereby delivery of dental services within the Keewatin would be split between the medical unit of the University of Manitoba and a private sector firm. It was felt that such an arrangement would be an improvement over that which existed in the past. The territorial Department of Health was aware of the board's decision (the territorial dental officer, Dr. Michael Lewis was present during the meetings of the sub-committee established by the board to deal with the situation late last spring) and apparently has in no way supported its decisions. The matter seems further muddled by the interference of the Medical Services Branch of Health and Welfare Canada who ultimately overturned the board's decision.

Eskimo Point

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Rankin Inlet

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This leads me to ask, has the delivery of health services truly been devolved down to the regional level? Is ours only a token board to be given responsibilities only on the whim of governments which are ready to overturn decisions they do not agree with?

Repulse Bay

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Whale Cove

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Both the Keewatin Inuit Association and the Keewatin Regional Council have lobbied for years to get a resident dentist for our region. We are outraged at learning our aspirations, which we naively thought had been realized, have been dashed by some distant bureaucratic body.

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The private dental firm operating in Rankin Inlet has established an office at great expense and has hired a second dentist to help provide on-going services to Whale Cove and Eskimo Point (in accordance with the health board's decision). This new addition to their staff has travelled all the way from England to join the Keewatin practice. Does the government think the community of Rankin Inlet alone can support two dentists? Can they afford to absorb the travel and accommodation costs to Whale Cove and Eskimo Point without government support? Do not the wishes of these two communities have a bearing on the matter?

Are the recent rulings of Medical Services in the best interests of the Keewatin? Most importantly what are you, as Minister of Health, planning to do to rectify this situation?

After years of waiting we finally have our resident dentist. We now depend on you to ensure he remains. I trust you will act in the best interests of our people and address our concerns. Allow our health board to act in a real capacity without fear of intervention from outside sources, give them the autonomy to act independently.

Yours truly,



Mike Lightstone
Executive Director

cc Peter Ernerk - MLA, Aivilik Riding
Keewatin Regional Health Board
Keewatin Regional Council