



GJOA HAVEN COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL

Gjoa Haven, NWT

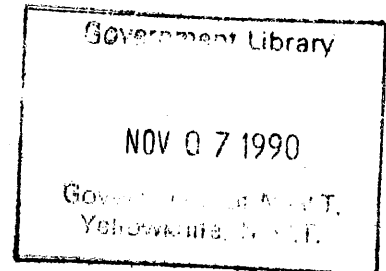
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September 24th, 1990

Mr. John Ningark
 MLA, Kitikmeot East
 Pelly Bay, NWT



Dear Sir,

I am writing you at this time concerning the proposed construction of a school link which was to join our two buildings together. I am sure you will recall the public meeting in May of this year with the Minister of Education at which time the Minister not only gave his assurance that the link would be constructed but added that this construction would start and be completed in 1990. Following this meeting I was assured that the departments involved would treat this matter with some urgency to ensure that the contractor involved would have plenty of time to order the supplies and have them shipped here by the barge. I was told that someone would be getting in touch with me in the next two weeks. (This phrase was one which I was soon to be accustomed to hearing)

To bring you up to date sir, this is September 24th. The barge left our community two days ago and I am still being told that "We are still confident that the construction will go ahead however I can't commit myself for another two weeks, I WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED."

It may be helpful to you if I was to offer a more detailed history of the events leading up to today, as I understand them to be.

You are aware that prior to our meeting in May/90 someone from the department of Public Works had researched the project and offered an estimated construction cost of "450,000.00" which was almost 1/2 the cost of a brand new gym. We spoke to two separate contractors who offered estimates at 1/4 of that of D.P.W.'s price.

The months of June and July proved to be a period of my calling Mr. Handley's office, leaving messages, being switched over to Mr. Moffat's office, leaving messages, being switched back to Mr. Handley's office and being told that someone would be getting in touch with me.

In the first month of August, I finally reached both of the earlier mentioned people, and finding me to be quite upset, they advised that the preliminary plans were now drawn and would be wired to me. They requested I contact the (only) local contractor and, after allowing him a chance to view the plans, request he offer a further estimate of costs to complete the construction this year. This was done and returned via FAX. Again I was assured that the construction would be going ahead and advised that once D.P.W. have had a chance to review everything "someone will get back to me"

When no one got back to me again, I initiated further calls to Mr. Handley's office. At this time though, I was beginning to feel that our concerns were being supported by Mr. Handley's office and that of the Minister of Education. It appeared that the retarding source was coming from the office of the Dept of Public Works. It is my understanding that they oppose the construction of this link. This is a position that they have held from the start, I would suggest, when you consider the totally unreasonable price estimate that they initially offered to the Dept. of Education. It would appear that it was their office that caused the two month delay in having the plans drawn and they have even gone so far as to falsely represent the local school principal by suggesting to Mr. Handley's office that he felt that the inconveniences of construction during the school year would warrant postponing the project until next summer.

I was advised that the Minister of Education was fully supporting this project and would push for financial approval when the legislature sat on the week of August 20th. The decision would be made by the Thursday of that week (August 23) at the latest and "I WOULD BE ADVISED OF THE OUTCOME." When I did not hear anything by the following Thursday, I called Mr. Handley's office. On the second call I learned that the decision was postponed until Friday August 30th. It was expected to go ahead and "I WOULD BE ADVISED OF THE DISPOSITION OF THIS MEETING." When I was not advised I called Mr. Handley's office again on Sept.3rd. This time he was out of town. His assistant would find out what happened and "HE WOULD CALL ME BACK LATER IN THE DAY". By September the 5th it became clear that this call was not going to be made so I called Mr.

Handley's office to learn from his assistant that he was again out of the office. He advised that the matter has not yet been spoken to and has been set over until September 14th. "IT IS EXPECTED THAT IT WILL BE APPROVED AND MR HANDLEY WILL CALL YOU WHEN HE GETS BACK INTO HIS OFFICE TOMORROW!!!".

That was three weeks ago and was the last contact I have had with anyone concerning this project. At this time I am totally frustrated and disillusioned. I realize that to most departments (with the exception of the cost estimator for the D.P.W.) this is a small project and with all their other concerns this cannot always be a priority. I realize that we are in a time of budget restraint and that our community cannot expect to receive preferential treatment. I realize that there are times when officials, such as the Minister of Education, make assurances that they cannot always come through with. I realized from the start there was a real chance that this project would not be able to be completed by year end. Having said this, the foundation for my concern is not that the link is not going to proceed this year but rather the way that this Community has been treated in connection with the same. I am left with the impression that the involved officials had no real intention of going through with the project as was committed by the Minister of Education. It was felt that with weather and manpower limitations that all that would be necessary would be to delay the project for a couple of months until it was impossible to proceed and the people of Gjoa Haven would not have the intelligence to understand what has happened to them. There was no reason for the ridiculous initial cost estimate, there was no reason for an urgent project to take two months to go to an architect for preliminary drawings, there was no reason for all of the other hurdles that D.P.W. placed before the project and above all there is no acceptable excuse for the lack of courtesy with respect to the number of unanswered phone calls. This community should have been kept up to date with respect to this project without having been placed in a position where they had to beg for information.

In my position as the Chairman of the Community Education Council, I have received many inquiries from contractors and local people requesting an update of the project. Obviously I have nothing to offer. I am now faced with having to address the public at our General Meeting which is scheduled for next month. At that meeting I can only pass onto the public my opinions as to how they have been treated by the Ministers involved. Prior to doing this, I have chosen

to document my concerns and forward the same to you. I have made my last phone call to the Minister of Education's office for an update and have concluded that if it was their desire to delay us until we quit, then they were successful.

I am open to any other explanations for the way that this project has been handled and would appreciate your responding if you feel that any of the earlier made statements are incorrect.

Yours truly,

Art Crockett, Chairman
Gjoa Haven Community Education Council