



Northwest
Territories Minister of Education

MAR 20 1990

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

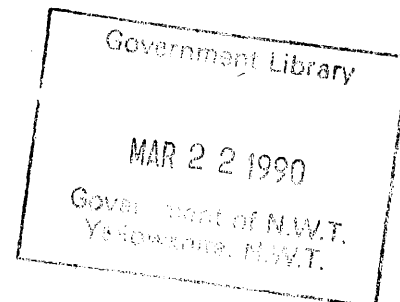
Petition Tabled by Mr. Pudluk

I am filing the attached response to the petition tabled by Mr. Pudluk on February 27, 1990, concerning student financial assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Kakfwi'.

Stephen Kakfwi
Minister

Attachment



Petition tabled by Mr. Pudluk on February 27, 1990.

Response by the Honourable Stephen Kakfwi
Minister of Education

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In response to the petition tabled by Mr. Pudluk, Member for High Arctic, my officials have met with the Arctic College students in Fort Smith in December 1989 to discuss their concerns. There are certain concerns raised by the students that we have been able to take action on while other concerns will take longer to resolve.

The following is a summary of the concerns and issues raised in the petition and a response to each concern.

1. The administration of financial assistance should be decentralized to the regional campuses of Arctic College to avoid extensive delays in issuing funds to students from Yellowknife.

Response - the recommendation is not feasible because: (1) the resources are not available for the campuses to administer the program; (2) with many campuses involved, there is a risk that campuses may not administer the program consistently; and (3) less than 25% of the Program's students attend Arctic College, therefore, moving the administrative functions to the campuses would not help the majority of students.

- instead of decentralization, the Department is reviewing its administrative systems to see where improvements can make the process more efficient. New procedures are planned for the 1990-91 school year that would benefit all students, not just those at Arctic College.

2. The petition calls for information on special allowances and appeal procedures to be included on the application form because the information is currently not advertised widely.

Response - information currently available on special allowances and appeals needs to be amended. We have amended the brochures that accompany the applications to make the availability of special allowances more self explanatory.

- starting in the 1990-91 school year, the availability of special allowances will be reinforced in correspondence with students, media advertisements will be undertaken and the current information on appeal procedures will be expanded.



3. The petition calls for the University College Entrance Preparation Program agreement (U.C.E.P.) between the Government of the N.W.T. and Indian Affairs to be signed before August each year so students can receive prompt confirmation of funding

Response - arrangements have recently been made with Indian Affairs to have the U.C.E.P. agreement signed by March 31, 1990. This will allow for early confirmation of funding to eligible candidates.

4. A settlement allowance should be provided for students off the highway system to help compensate for the cost of living.

Response - this is not necessary. The existing Student Financial Assistance program includes special allowances to help students living in high cost communities. Rather than providing a flat rate settlement allowance, the existing program is sufficiently flexible to take into account the unique circumstance of each student.

5. Local students at the regional campuses should be provided with G.N.W.T. housing and subsidies.

Response - due to limited accommodation the College has a policy that reserves subsidized housing for out of town students. Local native students can be provided with an accommodation allowance to help meet the cost of renting through the private market.

6. The G.N.W.T. should provide student financial assistance to all native people to upgrade themselves to the Grade 12 level and to influence the federal government to do this as well.

Response - the Student Financial Assistance Program only has resources to fund post-secondary education, therefore, there does not appear to be any immediate alternative to the U.C.E.P. program which is administered on behalf of the federal government. In accordance with the U.C.E.P. guidelines, only status Indian and Inuit students who are 20 years of age and who have completed Grade 11 are eligible for sponsorship.

- the Department will research the feasibility of providing U.C.E.P. type benefits to Metis and non-status Indian students.

7. The petition calls for a 13% increase in grants and loans and that the assistance levels be indexed to inflation.

Response - the Department increased the living allowance rates for native students with dependants on January 1, 1990. The increase was provided to all students regardless of location even though the review of students' financial needs concluded that students in the north face less costs than their southern counterparts due to the availability of subsidized housing.

- in 1988, the Department introduced the Needs Assessed Loan program that enables all students to apply for extra loan assistance if they are not receiving sufficient assistance in the form of grants, primary loans or secondary loans to meet their educational and living costs.

- no immediate plans have been made to introduce an inflationary factor into assistance rates. However, the Department will conduct a review of the rates every two years to ensure that the assistance levels are adequate to meet the needs of students.

8. The petition requests that non-native students on loans receive the same level of monthly assistance as native students.

Response - the supplementary grant program is an affirmative action program designed to ameliorate the conditions of native people by providing extra allowances to native students.

- non-native students receive adequate assistance as a needs assessed loan is available to supplement the primary loan and secondary loan awards.

- the Department is reluctant to increase loans due to a concern over the debt load that students will face upon graduation. Throughout Canada, provincial and federal officials have raised concerns over the debt load of students and their inability to repay large debts.

9. The same policies and procedures should be utilized to process funds for all students because there is a perception that non-native students receive their funds slower than native students.

Response - it is not possible to use the same procedures to process funds for natives and non-natives because they receive different types of funding. Loan funds take longer to process because students must submit a witnessed loan agreement before a loan cheque can be requested for the student. The loan agreement specifies the amount of the loan and includes the terms and conditions of the loan.

- grants, on the other hand, do not require an agreement to be signed, therefore, grants funds to natives and non-natives can be processed more quickly than loan funds.

10. The G.N.W.T. and Arctic College should determine the day care facility and allowance needs of students and Arctic College should administer day care allowances.

Response - the Department provides a childcare allowance to native students with dependants under twelve years of age. All students can also apply for assistance through the Interim Child Day Care Assistance Program which is administered by the Department of Social Services.

- in terms of facilities, Arctic College does not have the resources to operate childcare facilities, therefore, students must utilize childcare services available in the communities. The College will not compete with private day care facilities.

In closing, my officials are reviewing administrative systems and procedures to see how improvements can be made to facilitate the funding process for all students. My officials are also modifying the information brochures to provide details on all funding and appeal procedures in a more self-explanatory manner. The funding levels will be examined every two years to ensure that assistance levels are adequate to meet the needs of students. I am confident that our Student Financial Assistance Program is and will continue to be the best student aid program in the country.