



March 6, 1989

Red Pedersen
MLA - Kitikmeot West
Yellowknife, NWT

Flight Connections between Coppermine and Kitikmeot East

On behalf of the Kitikmeot Board of Education (KBE), and the KBE office staff in Coppermine, I want to express my concern about the planned flight changes scheduled to take effect April 3/89 which will affect Coppermine and the communities of Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay and Pelly Bay.

As the KBE indicated in its petition that was sent to you last fall, 70% of the students and the staff our board serves live in the communities east of Coppermine, and 43% live in the three eastern communities of Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay and Pelly Bay. Because the Board Office is located in Coppermine, any flight changes that make it more difficult and expensive for our board members and staff to get into and out of the eastern communities can result in A) fewer board meetings; B) poorer educational services to our eastern communities and/or C) proportionately more money being spent on travel than on our school programs. At the moment, the schedules are not the most convenient because we often have to utilize charters or route people through Yellowknife just to get into the eastern communities for an adequate stay.

With the new changes planned for implementation on April 3/89 by NWT Air and First Air, it would appear that our transportation problems will be increased considerably from what they are now. Some examples are:

- o It will be virtually impossible to hold any kind of a three day meeting in Coppermine with only Tuesday and Thursday flights connecting Coppermine with the four Kitikmeot communities to the east. The only way it can be done is to charter people into Coppermine or to route them through Yellowknife and have them spend a total of five days travelling to attend a three day meeting. Both options are poor choices as they represent considerable increases in cost and inconvenience. Monday and Friday flight connections between Coppermine and Cambridge Bay are essential for our board to operate with any kind of efficiency from our present location.

- o Let me give you a more specific example: We like to try and hold our regular Board meetings in Coppermine since that is where our Board Office facilities and staff are based. We have consistently found that three-day meetings are necessary in order to get through the business on our agendas. Ideally, this would mean that we would travel to Coppermine on Mondays and leave for home on Fridays. Because of the flight changes earlier this year (and the limited connections between Coppermine and Holman), we often have to charter members into Coppermine and, in an effort to save money, we try and use the scheduled air service to get our members home. However, with the planned flight changes, we will have to charter members both ways unless we want to bear A) the added inconvenience of keeping members away from home for three extra days after our meetings are completed (you can't get into the eastern communities until the following Monday) and B) bear added expense of routing members through Yellowknife and the covering honoraria and expenses for an extra three days. The added honoraria and expenses costs alone would total a minimum of \$4200.00 for our four eastern member for each meeting. Since we schedule three KBE meetings and six KBE Executive Committee meetings per year (three Executive Committee members are from the eastern communities of Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay and Pelly Bay), it will cost the board at least an additional \$30,000 in travel costs each year just to hold its meetings. This cost increase is a direct result of the planned schedule change in comparison to the present schedule. I would like to point out that we would save even more (estimated \$10,000/year) if there were Monday-Friday flight connections that linked the four eastern Kitikmeot communities and Coppermine.

- o Our Board Office staff always try to spend from three to four days in a community in order to make their visits worthwhile stays and not simply fly-in, fly-out affairs. With the new schedule, staff will not be able spend this amount of time in any of our eastern communities unless they spend at least one full weekend away from home every visit. For instance, to get into Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay or Pelly Bay for a three or four day visit, a staff member would have to travel to Yellowknife on a Friday just to get into any of these communities on the following Monday. The staff member would then leave the community on a Thursday and have to travel all the way back to Yellowknife in order to return to Coppermine on Friday. As in the example above, staff members would have to spend more time travelling to get to and from the community they're supposed to serve than they would spend in the community!



As before, there are costs both in time lost and added expenses that the board would have to bear. For instance, with the new schedule, it will cost on the average an additional 30% (approximately \$525.00) for each trip made into any of our three eastern communities. Since KBE staff members make about 30 individual trips into these communities in the course of a year, staff travel will cost the board at least an additional \$15,000/year due to this schedule change. Increased travel costs to Cambridge Bay will have to be taken into account as well, because flight connections between Coppermine and Cambridge will soon be inadequate for school visits. With the new schedule, staff visits to Cambridge Bay will cost an additional \$5000.00 per year. Also, when considering the full impact of the planned flight changes, we have to consider the human costs as well as the financial ones. We have a dedicated staff who travel extensively in order to serve the schools; however, most staff members have families and this planned schedule change will have them away from their families for many additional weekends each year. This could result in staff becoming more reluctant to travel to the eastern communities.

The ongoing reduction in airline service between Coppermine and the eastern communities has made it increasingly difficult for us serve the region in an effective manner from Coppermine. When the decentralization move first occurred in June/87, we had three Electra flights/week between Coppermine and Cambridge Bay, and these flights offered good connections to and from the eastern Kitikmeot communities as well. As of April 3/89, we are down to two DC-3 flights/week - and these flights are scheduled at times (Tuesdays and Thursdays) that are of little use to any KBE members or KBE staff. We anticipated travel cost increases of approximately 20% when we moved to Coppermine but we didn't anticipate an ongoing reduction in service that has already cost us more than the 20% budget increase we've received, and will cost us an additional \$50,000/year if the new schedule goes through as planned. Clearly, the board cannot afford such an increase and we will have to reduce our number of meetings and our number of school visits each year in order to live within our budget.

Perhaps there is some hope for change yet, however. I understand there is a meeting planned for March 9/89 between the airline companies and the MLA's. Since this meeting may be our last chance to voice our concerns about the airline schedules, I ask you to intercede on our behalf and voice our concerns about the proposed changes.

As the airlines may be open to some suggestions, here are some recommendations that our Executive Committee would like considered:

1. Ideally, we would like a return of Monday-Wednesday-Friday flights between Coppermine and Cambridge Bay. However, we have come to accept that such a schedule is history and, as an alternative to the proposed Tuesdays-Thursday links, **we would welcome Monday and Friday flights between Coppermine and Cambridge Bay, with connections to and from the east.** The eastern connections could be with either First Air or NWT Air. In addition, from our point of view, it would be ideal if flight connections could be made with Holman on those days as well. To make it clear, these flights would not be additional to the Tuesday-Thursday links but would be alternatives to them.
2. If the above is not possible, at a minium, we want a return to
 - A) the Sunday flight between Yellowknife-Coppermine-Yellowknife and
 - B) the Friday Electra connection between Yellowknife-Coppermine-Cambridge-Coppermine-Yellowknife.

Mr. Pedersen, any assistance that you can provide the board and our region in this matter will be greatly appreciated. I look forward for hearing from you in the near future.

Yours truly,



Dennis Lyall
Chairperson

- cc. Micheal Angottitauruq, MLA - Natsilingmiut
Nellie Cournoyea, MLA - Nukaput
KBE Members
Education Council Chairpersons, Kitikmeot Region
Mayor, Hamlet of Coppermine
Joe Handley, Deputy Minister of Education
KBE Board Office Staff
Helen Adamache, Regional Director, Cambridge Bay