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LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS' BRIEF

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Government of N.W.T.  
Yellowknife

To assist towards the amendment of the existing policy for Post Secondary funding.

OBJECTIVE

To realign funding for post secondary education to meet actual costs.

DECISIONS REQUIRED:

To fund a study to provide the necessary data to be able to determine, as objectively as possible, the actual costs incurred by post secondary students.

**Allocation of immediate extra funds to assist students who are presently in school.**

Direction to the Department of Education to provide them with the necessary interim guidelines to assist existing students now; and to prepare full documentation to provide funding to meet actual costs as determined by the study.

Direction to the Department of Education should require that they incorporate those suggestions by students for HOW the monies should be allocated. The present system leaves the student unable to meet necessary financial obligations as they come due.

ANTICIPATED EFFECT:

- Increased involvement by native people in post secondary education.
- Improved success rate at school.
- Increased capability of native people to play key roles in the administration and governing of the North.
- Less training programs required in the North.
- Lower dependency on the G.N.W.T. for the rest of the students' lives.
- Increased sense that the government of the Northwest Territories belongs to the native people of the North.
- Improved quality of life in the communities.
- More time for department staff to fill with more useful activities than refusing daily requests for more funds.

NOTES:

- Last allowance rates for students were made in 1982.
- Inflation rate since then is about 30 per cent.
- Find out why current funding arrangements are a deterrent to students remaining in school. The attached documents spells out some of the reasons. Please read it carefully.

Mature University/college  
Students Interim Committee  
1707 Henderson Lake Blvd.  
Lethbridge, Alberta  
T1K 3C1

Mr. Don Morin  
M.L.A., Tu Nede  
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Dear Mr. Morin:

Mature University/college Students Interim Committee (MUSIC) is a group of northern mature students whose goal is to assist each other and other northern mature students to adjust to life as students and to improve the probability of successfully completing our post secondary educations. MUSIC's major concern is inadequate methods and levels of funding for native students.

The last time the N.W.T. student allowance rates were modified was in 1982. Adequate time has since elapsed to evaluate the efficiencies and/or deficiencies in the system. Inflation has also risen by over thirty percent in that time, but the rates have not increased to reflect that. It is time for an evaluation and for revisions to be made where necessary.

#### FUNDING METHODS

Speaking from experience, current funding arrangements are a definite deterrent to students remaining in school. Before anybody receives any funds they must send confirmation of their registration to the Department of Education, which entails getting forms filled out by the respective university financial offices. Because there are so many students requiring services from these offices, this can take up to a week to get done.

It takes another week for the confirmation to get to Yellowknife, and only God knows how long to get processed after that. In the meantime we need a damage deposit, the first month's rent - in some cases two - and deposits for the phone, electricity, and gas companies. Students also don't live on air. Money is needed for groceries, diapers, baby milk, books, the kids school supplies, and so on. Students with families can actually need up to two or three thousand dollars just to get started. This automatically eliminates many people who otherwise would go back to school.

#### SUPPLEMENTS & ALLOWANCES

And what do students receive? The first payment of around \$1,000, some of which is for books and for travel time, is received towards the latter part September. In Lethbridge the regular allowance of \$740 per month for a family of four will barely cover the rent, so if the student knows about it, and if he knows how, he will apply for a supplement. If he doesn't know about it, too bad; what you see is what you get.

When applying for a supplement one needs actual receipts, so that's another six to eight weeks waiting for utility, gas and other bills, then finding the time to put together a proposal. In the meantime the student and his family still haven't learned how to live on air, so they're paying for groceries with money they haven't got. If they're lucky they can get the application out by the end of October.

Then, it has to go to student services for approval. Once the people in student services receive the application, even if they want to give the person what he actually needs, they can't. Their hands are tied, because the maximum supplement they can recommend for a student to receive is \$400 a month, even if the actual receipts come to \$1000 more than the original allowance.

From student services the application goes to the Minister for approval, back to student services, to finance...The student will get his extra \$400 a month in mid-November or December. Let's review: if the student had the needed \$2,000 to \$3,000 to begin with it is spent in September. Most don't have that kind of money up front. With the supplement, we only receive \$1,140 a month to live on, and expenses are \$1500 to \$1600 a month. That's not counting any outstanding loan payments the person may have for his vehicle, house back home, or what-have-you. By this time, if he hasn't already done so, the student may be ready to drop out.

We have enclosed a letter from Mr. Joe Courchene, the administrator of the Business Enterprises and Self-governing Systems of Indian, Inuit, and Metis Peoples program at the University of Lethbridge. Mr Courchene outlines the figures that the Alberta Students Finance Board used for students expenses when calculating loans for the 1986/87 school term. As you can see the amount for a four member family was \$1450 a month. We feel that they have used Edmonton/Calgary prices, as this is a bit low for Lethbridge, but even this is \$300 a month more than we receive. For larger families the difference is greater still.

#### BOOK ALLOWANCES

Students currently receive \$125 a semester for books and supplies. One text book alone can cost up to \$60 and sometimes we need six or seven books. We also need binders, paper, pens, pencils, xeroxing when doing research for papers, and people who can't type also have to pay to get their papers typed. Once again, the Student Finance Board of Alberta allocates students \$675 a year for books, which is \$425 more than we receive.

Also, each time the post-secondary Financial Offices fill out our forms they are required to indicate how much each particular individual needs for books. Why is that even required if all we're going to receive is \$125 a semester regardless if the requirement is \$1 or \$2,000? Is it because if we require less we receive less, but if we require more we don't receive any more?

### SPONSORSHIP OF STUDENT'S SPOUSES

Many students spouses also want to attend post-secondary institutions, but can't because they haven't got the proper qualifications. Sometimes only one or two semesters are required to meet the guidelines, but the G.N.W.T. won't sponsor them to take upgrading, even though they already pay the spouses air travel to and from the south twice a year.

It only makes good economic sense to invest a few thousand dollars in preparing them for university/college. Native Press states that most of our people don't go beyond grade nine. It is reasonable to assume that this is the reason why the affairs of most communities and bands are poorly managed. These people can go back to their communities and assist with the administration, or move directly into positions within G.N.W.T. with a minimum of training once they've completed their education.

For many people this may be the only time they would go back to school. Up north, they would probably only dream of it because of peer pressure, the need for the second income, or whatever. We shouldn't be wasting the opportunity to educate people because of lack of money. Particularly since the more education a person receives the less support and/or training they'll need in the future from the G.N.W.T. Some people may get a decent job for the first time in their lives because of it.

The January 8, 1988 issue of Native Press states that of 13,000 native people employed in the N.W.T. only 2,600 have a grade ten or higher education. Something is definitely wrong when thousands of our people are allowed to run around with inferior educations and next to nothing is done about it by the G.N.W.T. All that is done is to stick an adult educator in a building and hope that students who must provide food, clothing, and shelter for their children will come to school with no allowances.

The "Press" also states "although two natives are enrolled for every non-native in territorial schools, the numbers are reversed by grade twelve". In other words if ten natives and five non-natives started school simultaneously, probably two of those natives and four non-natives would reach grade twelve. That means that while white kids are being properly educated, every year the situation is getting worse in terms of the number of native people with inferior educations.

Obviously something must be done, and now, not five or ten years from now. We're not suggesting that having kids graduate from school should not be a priority. But, G.N.W.T receives funding from Indian Affairs for our education. Indian Affairs sponsors hundreds of adults a year to take upgrading in Lethbridge alone; what seems to be the problem in the N.W.T.?

### EMERGENCY FUNDING

There is presently a method for students to receive emergency funding, however the method entails first spending the money, then applying for reimbursement. What good is this to students who are living from one payday to the next? They don't have the money to spend in the first place because if they spend it, they'll have to go without paying a bill, buying groceries or something of that nature. The student also has no way of knowing when or even if the request will be approved.

In addition, Student Services receives hundreds of phone calls from angry, frightened students leading to requests every semester. The sheer numbers of the requests indicates the inadequacies of the allowances and places an unnecessary, time-consuming burden on Department staff and on the Minister's office, as the Minister must approve each petition. There has to be a more efficient process than this implemented.

### FAMILY SUPPORT

Single parents cannot afford to get babysitters twelve hours a day as well as on weekends to allow themselves time to do homework, do research, study for exams, and so on. One student had to pay her parents way down here to help with taking care of the children. Students should have the option of having parents or an extended family members fare paid south for support, in the form of assistance with the children.

In addition, many students are the sole children/relatives of one surviving parent who normally lives with them back home. In some cases the parent is old and unable to maintain a livelihood by himself; the very real possibility exists of never seeing him again. Students should have the option of having dependent parents move south with them and be counted as dependents.

### NEW FUNDING FORMULA

We propose that the current funding formula be reviewed and that a new allowance structure be put into place for the next school term. Any new formula and/or policy should include, but not be limited to:

- a) increased living allowances
- b) an increased book allowance
- c) upgrading allowances for students spouses and the rest of our semi-literate people
- d) new method of emergency funding - not many students can afford to first spend the money and wait to be reimbursed.

- e) personal allowances - students are not machines. A small allowance of perhaps \$1 a day is required for coffee and recreation. Even M.L.A.'s don't go through a whole day at the Legislative Assembly without a coffee. We can not be expected to spend six or seven days a week at school with nothing but water for a refreshment.
- f) children's school requirements - our children need binders, papers, pens, and pencils as well as runners, shorts, and other gym equipment. Their classes also go on outings, such as skiing.
- g) children's extra-curricular activities - our children should not be expected to quit sports and other developmental activities because their parents are going to school. Besides registration fees, equipment is needed for hockey, baseball, and so on.
- h) children's allowances - after children reach a certain age they require weekly allowances.
- i) clothing - children grow fast. Once again, there must be some method of getting clothing allowances without first spending the money, then being reimbursed.
- j) haircuts - every member of the family requires a haircut around every six weeks. At present it seems we're all expected to be barbers as well as machines.
- k) family support - parents or extended family member to move south to assist with children
- l) personal loans - many students have payments that must be met while going to school. Some mechanism must be put into place, such as a loan that must be repaid to the G.N.W.T. The student can sign an agreement giving the government the right to garnishee his wages if payments are not met once the student is back at work. This would need careful implementation and would have to be strictly adhered to.

We feel that a revised student allowance system that includes these aspects would result in:

- 1) more native mature students going back to school.

- 2) an improved success rate at school, which in turn results in
- \*\* 3) increased participation in G.N.W.T. with less training programs required
- 4) lower dependency on G.N.W.T. for the rest of the students' lives
- 5) more local people to work in community administration
- 6) less dependency of communities on outside bureaucrats
- 7) improved quality of life in communities
- 8) more time for department staff to spend doing necessary things instead of processing hundreds of emergency requests each semester.

Your stated Affirmative Action Policy to achieve 52% native staffing in the G.N.W.T. is a commendable one. However, reaching that objective is meaningless if only 20% of those native people have an education greater than grade nine. It is also meaningless unless it is representative throughout the G.N.W.T, meaning that 52% of both senior and middle management positions should be filled by natives, not only the lower level positions such as clerk typists and secretaries. Implementation of a bold, new funding policy that includes our proposals would assist you to reach your objective much sooner than through training programs alone.

We realize that the first reaction will be "Where's the money going to come from?" That's a legitimate consideration. However, as we stated in our enclosed letter to the public we and other northern born people are the north's most valuable renewable natural resource. If we wish to control our destiny as much as possible, we need educated people, not a semi-literate populace. We need university and college graduates, not people training on the job for years at a time, then needing further training when it's time to move up.

We are not suggesting that all training programs should be eliminated. That would be foolish to even consider. Not everyone is suited for post-secondary education, but that doesn't mean that the ones who are should be wasted for a lack of money. What we want to suggest is that some of the money that is now designated solely for training should be diverted towards education, and that education culminating in diplomas and degrees should be included in the training.

It is also our understanding that the G.N.W.T. has had an operating surplus for several years, and that last year it had a

surplus of \$15 million. There is no better place to invest that money than in the north's first inhabitants. After all, we are proposing a solution to assist you to achieve your stated objective that would enable natives to fill the 52% quota not only at the "bottom of the totem pole", as the current training programs allow, but in meaningful positions within the G.N.W.T.

**DIRECTION FROM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

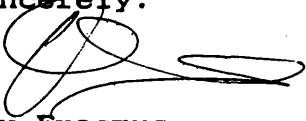
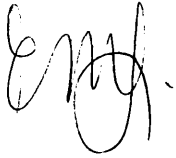
Since publication of our letter in Native Press, we have been contacted by the Department of Education in regards to meeting with them to discuss our ideas after school is out. We feel that if we wait till the school term is complete, it may be too late. It will most certainly be too late for those students who may be on the verge of dropping out right now. Also, previous to our letters publication, one of us was informed that student services has been recommending higher allowances for years, and that nothing came from it. We feel that unless direction comes from the Legislative Assembly nothing will happen now either.

We know that we needn't remind you that the Legislative Assembly is predominantly composed of natives and that you are the only ones who are in a position to assist more native students to successfully complete their post-secondary educations. We also realize that funding is a scarce commodity, but we believe that you are attempting to achieve your goal through antiquated means that should be modified.

In addition, we realize that you don't have to take us up on it, but we challenge you to dare to be innovative and to take the first step in helping our native people to take our rightful places within the bureaucracy that governs us and within our own homeland.

Do you accept that challenge?

Sincerely,

  
  
 Roy Erasmus  
 Ethel Lamothe  
 Co-Chairpersons  
 MUSIC

/Enclosures.

cc. All M.L.A.s  
 Dene Nation  
 Inuit Tapirisat  
 N.W.T. Metis Association



# Leaders worry about education

by James Lawrence

Only a tiny handful of native students make it as far as grade 12 each year in the NWT.

Although two native students are enrolled for every non-native in territorial schools, the numbers are reversed by grade 12, statistics show.

Last September, 435 of the NWT's 13,373 students enrolled in grade 12 but only 152 were Dene, Metis or Inuit.

"We're making pretty dismal progress in educating our people," says Mike Paulette, NWT Metis Association president. He and the executive of the Dene Nation want an immediate meeting with Education minister Dennis Patterson to find out why the problem exists and to work out a plan to combat it.

And Paulette has obtained other gloomy numbers to support his worry.

Statistics he got from the GNWT's Equal Employment Directorate show there are 13,000 native people employed in the whole NWT. Of these, only 2,600 have a grade 10 or higher education.

"The government has been trying to educate us since about 1950," Paulette

says. "In 35 to 40 years, that's the only results we can show?"

The problem is most urgent, says George Blondin, Dene Nation vice-president. If education levels are not improved, native children "will have a much harder time in the future."

They will not be able to compete in white society or fight to maintain continuity with their own society, he warns.

And the department of Education's enrollment statistics for last September indicate the problem is not getting any

better. Of 3,255 Dene and Metis children attending kindergarten to grade 12, only 2.5 per cent, or 82, are in grade 12.

By way of comparison, of the 4,131 non-native children attending territorial schools, almost seven per cent, or 283, are in grade 12.

Even more striking, only 70 Inuit youths are now attending grade 12 in the NWT. That's just one per cent of the 5,987 students enrolled in all grades.



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SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT  
THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES AND  
SELF-GOVERNING SYSTEMS OF INDIAN,  
INUIT AND METIS PEOPLES

February 11, 1988

Denis Patterson  
Minister of Education  
Department of Education  
Government of Northwest Territories  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
X1A 2L9

Dear Sir:

There is an organization here at the university which you should be aware of. They are a group of mature students from the Northwest Territories who have organized together and refer to themselves as the Mature University/College Student Interim Committee (M.U.S.I.C.). They consist of Dene, Inuit and Metis. Their main objective for existing is to support and offer advice to their members who are enrolled in post-secondary degree and diploma programs here at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Community College. Furthermore, they assist those students in making that important and often traumatic transition from northern life to southern life.

I have been meeting with those members of M.U.S.I.C. on a regular basis. One of their major concerns are funding arrangements with the student financial boards that your department currently administers. They feel that their student allowances are inadequate. They have informed me that the maximum allowance for a married couple with two dependents is \$1,100.00 per month plus an additional \$125.00 per semester for books and supplies. The Student Finance Board of Alberta has estimated education costs of students attending post-secondary institutions. The monthly budget guidelines which the Student Finance Board developed for the 1986-87 school year is as follows:

<u>STATUS</u>	<u>LIVING COSTS PER MONTH</u>	<u>TOTAL COST PAYMENT</u>
Single student away from home	\$ 575 x 8 months	= \$ 4,600.00
Single parent plus one child	1,045 x 8 months	= \$ 8,360.00
Married couple - no children	985 x 8 months	= \$ 7,880.00
- one child	1,260 x 8 months	= \$10,080.00
- two children	1,450 x 8 months	= \$11,600.00
- three children	1,725 x 8 months	= \$13,800.00

The above costs include one's living expenses which are the sum of:

- 1) Living costs - rent and utilities  
- food and personal care  
- clothing  
- travel
- 2) Babysitting, if required
- 3) Medical costs, if applicable

(Note: The total costs are for an eight month period, if the student were to attend school throughout the summer, his/her costs would increase by the number of months attending a post-secondary institution.)

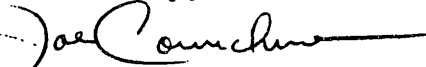
The Finance Board also adds to the total cost for living expenses, tuition costs and books and supplies which are \$950 and \$675 respectively per year. I understand that the Student Financial Boards of the Northwest Territories pays the tuition directly to the Institution of the student's choice and therefore will not be included in our analysis. Comparing the living allowances for a married couple with two children for eight months of school is as follows:

<u>ALBERTA STUDENT FINANCE BOARD</u>	<u>N.W.T. STUDENT FINANCIAL BOARD</u>
Living allowance 1,450 x 8 months = \$11,600	Living allowance 1,100 x 8 months = \$8,800
Books and supplies 675	Books and supplies 250
Total <u>\$12,275</u>	<u>\$9,050</u>

The difference between the two total costs is quite substantial. Three thousand, two hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$3,225.00) would make quite a difference to your students of the Northwest Territories.

Its important for those mature students to be adequately financed while attending a post-secondary institution. They do not need the extra burden of trying to make ends meet on their current living allowances. Higher allowances would increase their chances of achieving their academic goals so that upon convocating from their respective studies they may contribute to the social, political, and economic prosperity of their respective communities in the Northwest Territories.

Yours truly,

  
Joe Courchene  
Program Administrator  
B.E.S.S. Program

JC:ml

cc. M.U.S.I.C.  
Dene Nation  
Metis Association of the N.W.T.  
Inuit Taririsat of Canada  
M.L.A.'s of the N.W.T.

Published in Feb 5/88  
issue of Native Press

Dear Northerners:

We recently read in the Native Press that the leaders of our native organizations are concerned about the lack of natives reaching grade twelve, and that they wanted to meet with the Minister of Education.

This is a step in the right direction; however, we must look beyond grade twelve. After all, even though Ottawa has the final say, we northerners will never control our own destiny as much as we can unless we have northern born persons in top management within the Government of the N.W.T. (G.N.W.T.).

Having northern born Ministers is not good enough! The top bureaucrats have to be northern born also. No matter what the Ministers want, its still the civil servants who fulfill those wishes. And, its from the civil servants that the Deputy Ministers and the Ministers receive recommendations.

Most southern born bureaucrats are only going to live here for so long. Then they are going to move on to other jobs down south, and other southerners will take their places. It's we who are going to live and die here; isn't it we who should be making the recommendations to the Ministers?

In order to do that, we need college and university graduates. To that end, how many of our post-secondary students were actually born in the N.W.T.? To go even further, how many are natives? And how many graduate? Statistics are fine, but you have to look at the right ones to get the proper perspective.

#### MATURE STUDENTS AND ALLOWANCES

Today many of our people are returning to school or going to post-secondary institutions for the first time. You don't have to worry about these people getting their grade twelve. They already have it, plus they're already in university or college, and they'd like to remain there.

The biggest problem that most of them face is not an academic one; it's making ends meet on the allowances that they receive. If anybody keeps such statistics, check to see how many mature students have dropped out of Arctic College alone because of lack of money? You'll be amazed.

We know of several Dene and Inuit people who were receiving good marks at Arctic College, but who had to drop out because they couldn't afford it. The record can't be any better in the south. If anything, it's probably worse, because everybody can't stay on campus like in Fort Smith.

Single people live in residences or share apartments with two or three other students to get by, but many mature students are married and they don't have that option. They need large apartments, or better yet, they need houses so that they can have their own room to study in.

Have you ever tried to read a book, write a letter, or fill out your income tax while there is a baby screaming next to you? Some students have to do assignments and study for exams under those conditions because they can't afford better accommodations. That contributes to low marks, which in turn leads to drop outs.

Native and mature students also don't have mom and dad both working for the G.N.W.T. to rely on when the bills need to be paid. If they don't have the money, it's too bad. They're gone. They go back home in disgrace for having failed, and they probably won't be back. Every one of you probably knows a student that this has happened to.

### TRAINING

Thousands of dollars are spent every year training people. Some people move from one training position to another and never complete even one of them, thereby never becoming qualified for anything. If the training is successfully completed, everyone's happy.

Then, if that person wants to move up in a few years, he has to become a trainee again. That's not only a waste of time and money because the person has to get trained twice, but while the person is training there's still someone else being paid to do the job.

We're not suggesting that there's a conspiracy to keep northerners constantly training, but it seems that this could be eliminated simply by incorporating post-secondary education into the training.

After a person gets a degree, for instance a management degree, over time that person can move anywhere in government, with relatively little training and a minimum of cost. That's why southerners are running the N.W.T.; because they've got university degrees and we don't.

They simply move up until they're on top, then move to run another department, then move south when they're ready to retire or when they accumulate enough experience to land a good position down there. In the meantime they've used their southern based instincts, values, and judgments to run the G.N.W.T.

### SOUTHERN BASED VALUES

Here's a good example of these southern based values in operation. A student we know used receipts to prove that his expenses exceeded his allowance by about \$400 or \$500 a month, even with a supplement.

He was told by a department of education official that he had to contribute towards his education too, so the civil servant wouldn't recommend a larger supplement for him. That student's contribution should be simply going back to school and successfully getting a degree.

That student will be working in the N.W.T. for his people for the rest of his life, long after the official has moved back south. The student won't be moving anywhere after he gets tired of the north. The north is his home and that's where he'll be buried by his kids.

In the meantime we're the ones who have to live with these kinds of decisions, as well as the results of those officials' work after they leave. And it's their kids who are the ones going to university, getting degrees, and getting the best jobs in the government, not ours; ours are all trainees.

It's difficult enough for mature students just to go back to school after five, ten or fifteen years; we have to adjust to going to school again, and to living and raising kids in the city. We shouldn't also have to worry about how we're going to pay the bills. We shouldn't have to borrow money or drop out.

People are expected to pay their own way in the south because there's so many people with degrees that the government really doesn't have to expend money for their educations. But we northern born students are in a different situation. This not the south where people with degrees are a dime a dozen.

The G.N.W.T. desperately needs us to graduate and to take over the bureaucracy. We shouldn't be treated as though we were down south by some southerner who doesn't want to recommend higher supplements because he thinks that we should contribute to our education, just because he had to.

That's the type of attitude that pervades the G.N.W.T. which needs to be changed, and which won't be changed unless we have our own people running the government. We northern born people are the N.W.T.'s most important renewable natural resources; we should be treated as such.

STUDENTS NEED AMMUNITION

When a hunter goes hunting he needs ammunition; if we want to govern ourselves we too need ammunition; education is that ammunition, no matter what the cost is. Right now inadequate allowances for people with children are making us lose valuable people from the university ranks.

Higher allowances could help your neighbor, your kids, or maybe even you to make it through school when it wouldn't be possible the way it is right now. It would also encourage more people to go back for that degree or that diploma if they knew that they would receive enough to live on while in school.

The G.N.W.T.'s elected officials and its Executive Council are the only ones who can do something about this situation. They can help more students acquire that ammunition by directing the Minister of Education to change the method of distribution and raise the level of funding for students with children to a more realistic level.

Those officials have been elected by you, the people. They must listen to your requests. If you tell them that you want students to receive better allowances they'll have to do something about it.

In other words, it's up to you to change this. It's up to you to tell your M.L.A. that you don't want northern born students who are doing well in college or university to drop out because of lack of money.

If anything is going to be done for next year, it has to be done at this session of the Legislative Assembly. It starts on February 8, 1988, so phone or talk to your M.L.A. today.

Please don't let us down.

Sincerely,

Mature University/college Student Interim Committee

(MUSIC)

Lethbridge