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Mr. Nick Sibbeston  
Government Leader  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories  
XLA 2L9



Dear Mr. Sibbeston:

On May 25, 1987 I wrote to you concerning some important concerns that had been raised regarding the delivery of services to aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories, and status Indians in particular. At the same time I wrote to Mr. Wray on the subject of capital assistance to band councils (copies attached). As I mentioned in my earlier letter these concerns were raised at the Dene Leadership meeting held in Yellowknife in February 1987.

In my meetings with Dene Chiefs since that time, the same concerns have been brought to my attention. I understand that the Government of the Northwest Territories has been reviewing its position on this matter and that we have resolved some specific issues, such as post-secondary education. However, I do feel that it is important to the aboriginal people to clarify as soon as possible the overall responsibility for the delivery of public government services to them. It is my belief that this is an excellent opportunity to look afresh at our government institutions in the Northwest Territories to see if we can improve in our delivery of services to aboriginals in the North. This process would continue to reflect and recognize the reality of the aboriginal population in the North, while at the same time improving areas of weakness and building upon areas of strength in service delivery. I know that the Government of the Northwest Territories is equally anxious to clarify this, and my hope is that the Government of the Northwest Territories can affirm its responsibility for the delivery of services to status Indians and other aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories.

We have provided you with some background material surrounding the move North of the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1967, and the assumption at that time of service delivery in the Northwest Territories on behalf of DIAND, although no formal agreements for service delivery were negotiated. We would be

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- 2 -

happy to provide you with any further background material or assistance that you require and work with you to clarify the issues.

Insofar as it affects other areas such as claims and devolution I consider it important to clarify the areas of responsibility as soon as possible. I hope that it will be possible for the Executive Council to consider this issue as soon as possible after October 5, 1987.

Yours sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY  
ORIGINAL SIGNÉ PAR  
BILL McKNIGHT

Bill McKnight

cc: Commissioner J.H. Parker  
W. Erasmus

WILFCRD/CDEP/994-0976  
Revised September 29, 1987  
tb/wp/TB0017

Internal copies:

- J. Gérin
- J. Stagg
- P. Chilton, Regional Director, NWT
- J. Rayner
- B. McLennan

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PA

Mr. Gordon Wray  
Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories  
X1A 2L9

Dear Mr. Wray:

Thank you for your letter of March 24, 1987. Following your Executive meeting on September 22, 1986, I reviewed the issue of capital assistance to band councils.

The clearly stated policy of the federal government is for the delivery of services in the Northwest Territories (NWT) to be provided to all residents by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). This includes services to the Dene Indians of the NWT. As you know, the department has never delivered capital assistance to band councils in the NWT and, since the inception of the GNWT in 1967, funding has been provided to the GNWT by the department for the provision of all community services to NWT residents including the Dene. It is the policy of the federal government that the provision of capital assistance to on-reserve bands south of 60° will be managed by this department. North of 60°, the GNWT acting on behalf of this department has this responsibility. I feel that there is sufficient funding within your fiscal framework to carry out this responsibility.

The alternative would be the establishment of a program of direct service delivery by the department to an identifiable group of northerners. I must say that I share the view of the Commissioner that it would be a shame if there were two modes of service delivery by the federal government to residents of the NWT. As I have indicated, the Government of Canada's clearly stated policy is that the GNWT should provide services to all residents of the NWT.

Consistent with this policy, it is up to the GNWT to decide upon its own spending priorities where services to bands are concerned. As you review these priorities, I would draw to your attention the requirements of one or two band halls and offices, particularly at Aklavik which have been outstanding for some time. The needs of these bands have been brought to my attention, and I would appreciate your meeting with the Dene representatives to decide on how to deal with these needs within the next year. My Regional Director is willing to assist in any way possible.

Yours sincerely,

Bill McKnight

WILFORD/CDSP/994-0976

April 8, 1987

LAJOIE/Exec. Sec./994-2368

April 24, 1987

jw/AL28448.a

c.c. J. Gérin

c.c. R.D. Glass

c.c. P. Chilton, Regional Director, NWT

c.c. John Rayner

c.c. Bruce McLennan

c.c. Commissioner John H. Parker

c.c. Mr. Stephen Kakfwi

Mr. Nick Sibbeston  
Government Leader  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Box 1320  
YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories  
X1A 2L9

Dear Mr. Sibbeston:

The recent Dene Leadership meeting held in Yellowknife in February 1987 raised some important concerns regarding the delivery of services to aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories (NWT), and status Indians in particular.

I am impressed with the level of services and extent to which the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) delivers these services to aboriginal residents of the NWT. Officials of my department have, in conjunction with your officials, reviewed the services offered in the NWT to status Indians and those offered on-reserve to status Indians south of 60°. We have shared this information with the Dene Nation and in general their view is that the level of service provided by the GNWT is at least equal, and in some respects superior, to the level of service provided by the department south of 60°. It goes without saying that the support of the Dene, as well as the Métis and Inuit, is crucial to the development of public government in the NWT.

We have been working with individual Ministers on specific issues raised by the Dene, for example, Mr. Patterson on post-secondary education, but I feel that some further steps may be required. As you know, when the GNWT undertook the provision of services to NWT residents twenty years ago, no formal agreements were made. However, there was a general understanding at the time that any service provided by the department would be provided by the GNWT.

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One of the concerns raised by the Dene Nation at their leadership meeting was the lack of any formal commitments by the GNWT to deliver services to status Indians on behalf of the department. I feel that it may be a very useful initiative at the present time if the GNWT were to indicate its general responsibility for the delivery of services to status Indians as well as other aboriginal residents of the NWT on behalf of the department. As I have said, the vast majority of those services are already in place and I would view such an indication by the GNWT as progress towards more responsible government in the NWT. It would also further cement the relationship between the Dene and the GNWT that is indicated by the MOU on devolution, as well as clear up any misunderstandings about responsibility for delivery of services in the NWT.

I would appreciate your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

Bill McKnight

WILFORD/CDSP/994-0976

April 9, 1987

LAJOIE/Exec. Sec./994-2368

April 24, 1987

jw/A128448.a

c.c. J. Gérin

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