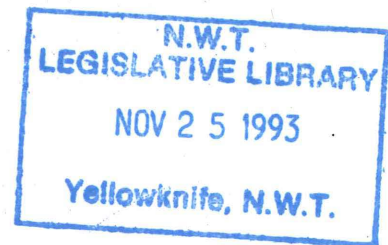




09 June 1993.

THE HONOURABLE REBECCA MIKE, M.L.A.,
MINISTER OF SOCIAL SERVICES.



Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services

I am dismayed with actions which have been taken with respect to the management of the alcohol and drug program within the Department of Social Services. I refer specifically to decisions which have been made to revise the directive for grants and contributions to community-based alcohol and drug projects, and to the continuing disregard shown to the Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services by departmental officials and yourself.

You will recall that, on February 17, 1993, I asked you a question in the Legislative Assembly regarding the activities of the Board of Management. In response, you indicated that you would make every effort to ensure that the board would meet to review 1993-94 applications for contribution funding. At the same time, you also committed to make appointments to bring the board to its full membership strength before the end of the fiscal year. You also made a personal commitment to keep me informed of further decisions regarding the board and its role.

Subsequently, I was astonished to learn that the pertinent contribution directive has been revised and that new requirements for the approval of funding for alcohol and drug projects have been put into effect. I understand that the revised directive was to come into effect by April 1st, 1993. The changes to the directive effectively removed the board from the process of approving alcohol and drug contributions, contrary to the commitment you made in the Legislative Assembly.

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Indeed, the working document which proposed revision of the contribution directive to the Financial Management Board even included the following paragraph for clarification:

This wording makes it clear that the Director of Alcohol, Drugs and Community Mental Health Services is responsible for the review and recommendation process of alcohol and drug funding applications and that the designate of the Deputy Minister is responsible for approvals in the Deputy Minister's absence.

I find it absolutely incredible that you would, on one hand, be giving the Legislative Assembly your assurance that the Board of Management will review alcohol and drug contribution applications while, on the other hand, your officials were working to transfer the authority for this contribution fund to the exclusive control of the department's Yellowknife-based managers.

I am also disappointed and concerned to realize that these changes were proposed and approved without consultation with Members of the Legislative Assembly. I similarly wonder whether you or your officials even bothered to ask for input or opinions of current board members or community governments, or of local alcohol and drug committees, with respect to changing the board's role in reviewing funding applications.

You must understand that the Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services was established at the time of the health transfer for a specific purpose. It was recognized then, as it should be now, that community input into funding decisions was essential. A commitment was made to aboriginal organizations and to community leadership that control over funds for our critically important addictions prevention and treatment initiatives would *not* rest exclusively with the headquarters bureaucracy in Yellowknife. Transfer of alcohol and drug funding decisions to Territorial authority was supposed to involve extensive local and regional control.

An active *Alcohol and Drug Coordinating Council* had already existed for many years and, in 1988, this body was strengthened with a new format, additional powers and a membership which truly represented regional interests. The name was changed to the *Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services* and a membership was selected. Throughout its active history, the members of this board demonstrated consistent and responsible leadership, and provided advice based on the perspectives they acquired from living and working with the people of their regions. Members such as Nancy Peel, Dr. Ross Wheeler, the Honourable Helen Maksagak, Rosie Oolayuk and former Chiefs Norman Yakelaya and Felix Lockhart added credibility, insight and wisdom to the administration of the alcohol and drug program which, quite frankly, government managers and the directorate have been unable to equal.

Since Fall 1991, the board has been treated in a shameful fashion by the department. Its input on funding allocations and strategic planning has been overlooked and members have not been informed as to the current status of the alcohol and drug program.

Managers have attempted to "blame" this irresponsible lack of support on fiscal restraint requirements, when the fact is that this board has consistently operated in an efficient and economically responsible fashion. Person-years transferred to the GNWT with the understanding that they were to complement board organization and activity have been assigned to other functions. There has been no serious attempt to make appointments to revitalize board membership or to maintain ongoing communication. Candidly, I find this to be shocking and I intend to pursue the matter fully.

I have spoken on this issue in the House on several occasions. Each time, I have indicated that I believe it is essential to have a well developed and effective process for community and regional input into the administration of our Territorial alcohol and drug programs. I have made it clear that I lack confidence in the level of understanding and commitment demonstrated by middle managers who have such a weak grasp of the issues confronting communities outside Yellowknife. Their decisions with respect to the Board of Management simply underscore my concerns.

I am aware that there are excellent resource people filling the role of Regional/Area Alcohol and Drug Specialists. However, the fact is that their views are rarely solicited or heeded by headquarters and, as government employees, they are unable to perform the same role as a ministerially appointed board with membership from aboriginal and regional organizations. To be able to expect them, as public servants, to advocate politically for regional positions on policy development and program decisions would be neither appropriate nor fair. As it is, the budget allocated for the work of these skilled specialists is barely sufficient to allow them to carry out program support activities and community consultation.

Clearly, there is a continuing need for a board capable of providing input into the administration of Territorial alcohol and drug programs. I would encourage you to become personally involved and to take the following immediate actions:

1. seek approval from the Financial Management Board to return the contribution directive to its original content, which stipulated that the Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services must review all applications for O&M contribution funding; and,
2. fill vacant board appointments with appropriate regional and aboriginal representation -- and ensure that a meeting of this membership is convened no later than July 15th, 1993.

I wish to assure you that monitoring the administration of alcohol and drug programs within the Department of Social Services will remain one of my priorities when the Legislative Assembly sits in November.

To assist me in that regard, I would appreciate it if you might supply the following information:

- a. the date on which the proposed revisions to Directive 41.01, Schedule A-4 (*titled: Grants and Contributions -- Alcohol and Drug Services Community Projects*) was submitted for review by the Financial Management Board;

- b. the date on which the proposed revisions were approved in a Record of Decision;
- c. the dates of appointment and the length of time for which the position of Director of Alcohol, Drugs and Community Mental Health Services has been filled as an Acting Appointment;
- d. job descriptions for the following positions: (1) *Coordinator, Prevention/Rehabilitation Programs*; (2) *Program Consultant, Alcohol and Drugs*; and (3) *Program Officer* within the Alcohol, Drugs and Community Health Services division, including dates of the most recent classification review completed for each one;
- e. the current status of a PY previously designated as *Administrative Officer* within the Alcohol, Drugs and Community Health Services division;
- f. the status of the appointment of the current Acting Youth Coordinator;
- g. a listing of current membership of the Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services, indicating dates of appointment and expiry;
- h. a listing indicating the (i) dates, (ii) location, (iii) duration and (iv) direct costs of meetings of the Board of Management for Alcohol and Drug Services during 1991-92, 1992-93, and to date in 1993-94. Please indicate on the list which staff positions were in attendance throughout the meetings;

- i. a listing of the dates of all meetings or discussions between yourself and the chairperson or members of the Board of Management of Alcohol and Drug Services;
- j. a listing of the dates of all meetings which your Acting Deputy Minister, your Acting Assistant Deputy Minister (Policy Development & Design) and/or the Acting Director of Alcohol, Drugs and Community Mental Health Services have held with the chairperson or members of the Board of Management of Alcohol and Drug Services during 1992-93, and to date in 1993-94;
- k. copies of correspondence provided by the department to members of the Board of Management regarding the aforementioned revisions to the contribution directive;
- l. a consolidation of all resolutions or motions passed by the Board of Management of Alcohol and Drug Services during 1991-92, 1992-93, and to date in 1993-94;
- m. a summary of the dates that applications for 1993-94 contribution funding for alcohol and drug projects were received and the process used by department for reviewing them;
- n. a summary of all approved contributions, showing dollar amounts allocated to projects in communities; and,
- o. a listing of all municipalities or charter communities which did not submit applications for 1993-94 contribution funding.

I would appreciate receipt of this information no later than June 30th, 1993.

I intend to actively pursue a resolution of my concerns regarding this matter and regarding the general administration of alcohol and drug programming in the Northwest Territories. I appreciate in advance your assistance in providing the above information to assist me in reviewing these issues.

I look forward to your response.

Jeannie Marie-Jewell,
M.L.A., Thebacha.