



Northwest Territories

RESPONSE TO PETITION

No.

09-13(3)

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

NWT LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY



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Petition tabled by Mr. John Ningark on May 1, 1996

Response by The Honourable Kelvin Ng
Minister of Health and Social Services

Status of Gjoa Haven Health Centre

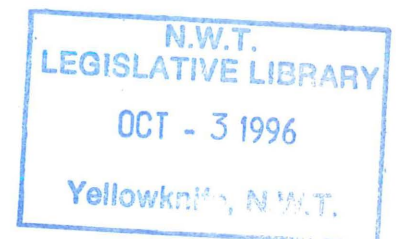
The Department of Health and Social Services acknowledges receipt of the petition from the community of Gjoa Haven, presented by Mr. John Ningark, MLA, Natilikmiot in the Legislative Assembly on May 1, 1996, asking the Government of the Northwest Territories to fulfil a commitment made to the community of Gjoa Haven to build a new health centre.

Although construction of a health centre in Gjoa Haven was planned, reductions in our capital budget required changes to the plan and consequent reduction in the scope of the project.

The department is currently examining alternatives to the current capital plan. These include the possibility of replacing one health centre rather than carrying out major renovations to four health centres. This would mean changes in four communities, all of which will need to be consulted. Staff from the department will be re-examining priorities and holding discussions in the affected communities to determine the best course of action.

Staff in the department will be contacting the community leaders of Gjoa Haven in the near future to arrange a meeting to discuss options and find a satisfactory solution. In the meantime, the Department of Public Works and Services has scheduled some minor maintenance work for the facility. This work has to be undertaken, regardless of the final outcome of community discussions.

As I stated in the Legislative Assembly, I will commit to working with Mr. Ningark and the community leaders to find a mutually satisfactory resolution.



Petition tabled by Mr. Ootes on May 1, 1996.

Response by the Honourable John Todd
Minister Responsible for the Workers' Compensation Board.

The Transfer of Occupational Health and Safety to the Workers' Compensation Board

Responsibility for the Occupational Health and Safety Division was transferred to the Workers' Compensation Board on April 16, 1996. Prior to the transfer, the NWT WCB was the only Board in Canada which had no responsibility at all for either funding or delivering OH&S. With this transfer of responsibility, the WCB joins the Boards of British Columbia, Yukon, Quebec and New Brunswick in managing the delivery of OH&S programs.

Amalgamation was seen as providing certain advantages:

- eliminating past duplication of administrative tasks and overlap of safety responsibilities
- developing a unified approach to accident prevention
- using the SIRR Program more effectively, not only to target safety education programs but also to identify areas for future inspection and audit, and
- developing a common reporting and statistical system to assist employers to establish more effective accident prevention programs.

The amalgamation of programs and services in one corporate body, the WCB, although desirable, would not have occurred without the strong management and sound financial position demonstrated by the WCB. I am confident that this amalgamation will not result in increases in employer assessments in 1997. And I am very hopeful that by taking a more hands-on approach to identifying and establishing accident prevention programs, we can reduce the severity and frequency of workplace accidents.

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Petition presented by Mr. Barnabas on May 02, 1996.

Response by the Honourable Jim Antoine
Minister of Safety and Public Services

PLEBISCITE ON LIQUOR CONTROL

The petition is signed by more than twenty persons, as subsection 48(1) of the *Act* requires, but those persons have not identified themselves as "qualified voters", as is also required by subsection 48(1). Consequently, they may not be eligible under the *Act* to petition the Minister.

Another significant problem with the petition is that it does not pose a clear question than can be asked in a liquor plebiscite.

The Department of Safety and Public Services, Liquor Licensing Board will provide assistance to the community by explaining the various liquor control systems that may be voted on under the *Act* and by helping them draft a suitable petition.

Petition tabled by Mr. Erasmus on May 2, 1996.

Response by the Honourable John Todd
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Petition tabled by Mr. Tommy Enuaraq on May 14, 1996

Response by the Honourable John Todd
Chairman of the Financial Management Board

OPPOSITION TO WAGE AND BENEFIT REDUCTIONS

If the Government of the Northwest Territories' current expenditures are not reduced, the result will be a projected \$150 million dollar deficit in the 1996/97 fiscal year. Such a deficit would have disastrous consequences for the economy of the Northwest Territories and bring hardship to the entire northern community. Initiatives to reduce expenditure and to develop private enterprise are essential components of the Government strategies to manage the deficit and improve the economy of the Northwest Territories.

Wages and benefits account for approximately one third of the Government's total expenditure and therefore it is essential to reduce them along with the other two thirds of the expenditures in order to avoid the potential deficit.

The Government must also reduce its high overhead costs. This includes such initiatives as consolidating departments and employing managers and employees. These initiatives will result in a reduction in positions. However, it is the intention of this Government to achieve as many of these reductions as possible through attrition and thus minimize lay-off.

The Government's privatization initiatives is intended to take advantage of services currently provided by the public sector or to transfer responsibility for these services that are better provided by the public sector. This initiative will reduce cost where there are areas of duplication and create new job opportunities by stimulating private enterprise.

Petition tabled by Mr. Tommy Enuaraq on May 14, 1996

Response by the Honourable John Todd
Chairman of the Financial Management Board

**OPPOSITION TO REDUCTION OF BENEFITS AS OUTLINED IN THE
COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

If the Government of the Northwest Territories' current expenditures are not reduced, the result will be a \$150 million dollar projected deficit in the 1996/97 fiscal year. The Legislative Assembly must address this situation. The Members of the Legislative Assembly agreed to reduce wages and benefits as part of the overall expenditure reductions. Wages and benefits account for approximately one third of the Government's total expenditure and therefore it is essential to reduce them along with the other two thirds of the expenditures in order to avoid the potential deficit.

Petition tabled by Mr. Goo Arlooktoo on May 16, 1996

Response by the Honourable John Todd
Chairman of the Financial Management Board

AN ACT TO AMEND THE *PUBLIC SERVICE ACT*

The *Public Service Act* was recently amended to replace 3rd party binding arbitration with the right of the Employer to change terms and conditions of employment and employees to withdraw their services if the parties are unable to negotiate their Collective Agreements. This process places the full responsibility on the parties to solve their own problems. This new process is the more normal process.

The process in place ensures that the exclusion provision under the *Public Service Act* is implemented in a reasonable manner. There is no need to consider a labour/staff relations board which would add to the overhead of administering the public services. The objective is to reduce overhead and administrative costs.

Petition tabled by the People of Baker Lake on May 21, 1996.

Response by the Honourable Charles Dent
Minister of Education, Culture and Employments

Replacement of Existing and Unsafe Nunavut Arctic College Building

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is currently working with the Keewatin Divisional Education Council, and Public Works and Services, to address school facility needs in Baker Lake. Additional teaching space will be needed to meet growing enrolments, and increased demand for school programs.

The department will begin formal consultation with its education partners in the Keewatin as part of the planning scheduled to take place during the fall of 1996/97. Designs for the new space will be developed the following year, and construction is scheduled the year after. However, this schedule may change depending on the availability of funding, and the relative need for new teaching space across the North.

Given the community's interest in college programs, the Department will include discussions about a college facility for Baker Lake as part of the school planning process. The department will inform Nunavut Arctic College that it plans to review facility requirements in Baker Lake, and ask that the college begin to consider its needs in this community.

Petition tabled by Mr. Jake Ootes on May 28, 1996

Response by The Honourable Kelvin Ng
Minister of Health and Social Services

Community Wellness Youth Programs

The Department of Health and Social Services acknowledges receipt of the petition presented by Mr. Jake Ootes, MLA, Yellowknife Centre in the Legislative Assembly on May 28, 1996 requesting the Minister of Health and Social Services place a condition that 50% of Community Wellness funding allocated to the City of Yellowknife be designated for Youth Programs.

The City of Yellowknife will receive an allocation of \$250,000 from the Community Action Fund for 1996/97. The Community Action Fund is designed to be used for communities to develop their wellness plans or for the implementation of these plans. Communities set their own priorities to determine the programs and initiatives that will best suit their needs. Communities direct the funding to meet their respective priorities and needs within the overall goals of the Community Action Fund. The Department of Health and Social Services does not give specific direction to communities on how these funds should be spent.

Programs for children and youth are certainly a priority for the Department of Health and Social Services and we would encourage the City of Yellowknife to support initiatives in this area.

Petition tabled by Mr. Roy Erasmus on May 28, 1996

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Petition tabled by Mr. Seamus Henry on May 29, 1996

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