

# **13<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

---

Standing Committee on Social Programs

Report on the 1998/99 Main Estimates

Tommy Enuaraq, M.L.A.,  
Chair



Standing Committee on Social Programs  
January 23, 1998

THE HONOURABLE SAM GARGAN, M.L.A.  
SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker,

Your Standing Committee on Social Programs has the honour of presenting its Report on the 1998/99 Main Estimates for the Departments of Health and Social Services, Education, Culture and Employment, Justice and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, and commends it to the House.



Tommy Enuaraq, M.L.A.  
Chair





**Members of the Standing Committee on  
Social Programs**

Tommy Enuaraq  
M.L.A. Baffin Central  
Chair

Michael Miltenberger  
M.L.A. Thebacha  
Deputy Chair

Roy Erasmus  
M.L.A. Yellowknife North

John Ningark  
M.L.A. Natilikmiot

Floyd Roland  
M.L.A. Inuvik

**Alternate Members**

Levi Barnabas  
M.L.A. High Arctic

Jane Groenewegen  
M.L.A. Hay River

James Rabesca  
M.L.A. North Slave

**Staff Members**

David Inch  
Committee Clerk

Robert Collinson  
Committee Researcher



# Standing Committee on Social Programs

## Report on the Review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates

### Introduction

Since being elected in mid October of 1995, Members of the Legislative Assembly have developed a more effective way of conducting business. This new process started with revising the Standing Committee system, allowing the Members of the Committees to review department Business Plans and budgets.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs was charged with the following mandate for the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment, the Department of Justice, Health and Social Services and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation:

- to review legislative and policy proposals, multi-year plans and budgets, Bills, boards and agencies, public accounts and Division issues.
- to review departmental performance.
- to consider any other matter referred by the House.

A true consensus government system demands that all partners are involved in the decision making process. As a result, a recurring theme of committee involvement is evident throughout this report. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are encouraged by the level of cooperation shown by the Government and are optimistic that this working relationship will continue to evolve.

The Committee appreciates the assistance of the Ministers and departments within the Social Programs envelope during the review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates, and recognizes that the review process requires considerable effort by departmental staff. Thanks are extended to all those involved.

### Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

The Committee was generally satisfied with the 1998/99 Main Estimates as presented by the Corporation. Except for revisions due to additional programs being taken on from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the numbers matched those already reviewed by the Committee during the consideration of the Business Plan and five-year Capital Plan.

The Committee made note of the following issues during its review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates of the NWT Housing Corporation:

### **Expanded Downpayment Assistance Program**

The Committee believes that this is a worthwhile program and applauds the Corporation for EDAP's development. As with any new program there are always "glitches" that need to be addressed after the first year. The Committee was pleased to be informed by the President of the Housing Corporation that there will be a Housing Corporation senior managers' meeting in December to examine the program and make the necessary adjustments. The banks are a major component in assuring the success or failure of the EDAP Program. The Corporation is encouraged to maintain a close working relationship with the banks and keep them apprised of any changes to the program. The Committee looks forward to being informed as to the results of the senior managers' meeting on the Expanded Downpayment Assistance Program and reviewing the recommendations made as a result of this meeting.

### **Public Works Canada Housing**

The Committee would appreciate being kept informed as to the progress on the agreement being negotiated for the provision of property management services by the Corporation for Public Works Canada. When finalized the Committee would like to review the terms and conditions of the agreement.

### **Social Housing**

The Committee has noted the Corporation's decision to delay the implementation of the third stage of rent increases for social housing, pending a review. The Committee would like to be involved in the final decision making process.

### **Traditional Pursuits and Rent**

The Committee was concerned that the Housing Corporation might not be factoring the cost of production of traditional arts and crafts when determining the rent scale for a craft producer. The Committee understands that it is a difficult task to monitor the amount of money made in traditional pursuits, however it does seem unfair that those who are honest in reporting their income pay higher rent than those that don't report their true income.

### **Mortgage Insurance**

The Committee was pleased to learn that the Corporation is developing a plan to deal with mortgage insurance. Committee Members are aware of instances where the untimely death of the principal wage earner has resulted in hardship to a family accessing one of the Corporation's homeownership programs. The Corporation is to be commended for their compassion in dealing with the families and the solutions they have worked out.



The Committee is pleased that the Corporation realizes that there must be an affordable mortgage insurance plan to ensure the economic survival of a family after the death of a principal wage earner.

### **Relationship with Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs**

The Committee was pleased to learn that the Minister has had several positive meetings with the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and that he feels the Minister is starting to realize that many of health and social problems that exist in the Northwest Territories are due to the shortage of adequate and affordable homes for our people. The Committee strongly encourages the Minister to pursue further his efforts to obtain the necessary funding to deal with the critical housing needs in the north.

### **Energy Conservation - Refrigerator Replacement**

The Committee sought clarification on the criteria for determining which communities have or will receive new refrigerators over the two years of the program. A preliminary review by the Members of the Committee indicates discrepancies in the numbers. The Minister indicated the refrigerators in social housing units in the NWT were all purchased in the mid 1980's and that fridge replacement in the east (Nunavut) would be complete at the end of the 1998/99 fiscal year. With only six communities in the western NWT scheduled to receive refrigerator replacement before Division, it is apparent to the Committee Members that this will become a Division issue.

### **Seniors' Housing**

The Committee realizes that in the past there were serious inequities in the allocation of seniors' housing between the eastern and western NWT. The Committee also appreciates the conscious effort on the part of the last two Legislative Assemblies to address the lack of seniors' housing in the east by spending all of the available program dollars to build new facilities in the eastern Arctic. However, it is the Committee's belief that the disparity in the availability of seniors' housing has been addressed, and that the Government should distribute the available program funding equitably between the two future territories.

### **Homeownership Programs**

The Committee is pleased with the approach the Corporation has implemented to phase out the Rural Remote Housing Program. The Committee believes that if the Corporation can rationalize all of the programs that it administers and make these programs fair and equitable, it would go a long way to restoring harmony in some communities.

## Department of Health and Social Services

The Committee was generally satisfied with the presentation of the Main Estimates by the Department. The figures corresponded to those contained in the Business Plan and the Capital Plan as previously reviewed by the Committee. The Committee also noted that so far the 1997/98 Revised Main Estimates match the original Estimates and hopes that this will continue to year-end. The Committee recognizes that the Main Estimates are a fluid document and that changes in the information contained within them will occur over the course of the year due to division related activities.

In conducting its review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates of the Department of Health and Social Services the Committee made note of the following issues:

### Hospitals and Health Care Centres

The construction of the Inuvik and Iqaluit Hospitals should remain a priority for the Department. The Committee is pleased that a funding agreement for the two hospitals is anticipated to be concluded with the Federal Government in the near future and that planning continues for the replacement of these facilities. The Committee wishes to be provided with the terms of the funding agreements for the two hospitals as negotiated by the Department and the Federal Government, and to be kept apprised of any developments regarding the construction of the hospitals. The Committee also understands that the Arviat Health Centre was a victim of restraint in previous years and had to be rescheduled in the 5-Year Capital Plan. However the need has become critical and the Committee encourages the Department to ensure that this project remains on track.

*The Committee recommends that the Department ensure that these projects proceed as scheduled, and review all hospitals and health care centres as possible candidates for private/public partnership funding in the upcoming years, should that initiative receive approval from this Assembly.*

### Strategic Initiatives Fund

The Committee was concerned that there is no real methodology as yet developed by the Department for accessing the funds available under this initiative. The Committee agrees in principle with the Department's position that \$2.0 million of the \$4.0 million fund be allocated to address funding deficiencies for the Dogrib Community Services Board, the Baffin Regional Board and the Keewatin Board. However, there is a concern that by focusing initially on these three Boards, they may have an advantage in accessing the other \$2.0 million not specifically targeted at them.

The Committee is very anxious to review the Department's plan for the access of funding available under this Strategic Initiative Fund. The Committee wishes to review the guidelines as soon as possible to verify that all Boards have equitable access to the program.

### **National Health Care Standards**

The Committee is concerned that under current fiscal restraint measures the NWT may not be meeting the minimum National Health Care Standards. With \$4.0 million available in the Strategic Initiatives Fund, it is important that reference be made to the basic recommended standards when considering the funding allocation.

### **The Use of Remote Technology in Health Care**

The Committee generally supports the Department's efforts in this area. If properly set up and administered, these technological advancements can benefit the residents of the Northwest Territories. A majority of the Members of the Standing Committee were concerned, however, that this technology should not be used by the Boards or the Department as a method to reduce current levels of qualified medical personnel. Members are aware that this technology allows real time contact between health practitioners, but emphasize that it should not be viewed as an acceptable step toward replacing a doctor with a nurse, or a nurse with a nurse's aid. The Committee looks forward to being supplied with more information on the successes and application of this technology in the Northwest Territories.

### **Program Evaluation and Monitoring - Board Standards**

The Committee was pleased that the Department is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure adequate access to health care and will be providing the Boards with a measure of assistance. The Committee was very concerned that all residents of the Northwest Territories receive equal access to all programs funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Members understand that the present funding arrangements allow the Boards flexibility to deal with the concerns in their own jurisdictions; however, it must be made clear to the Boards that they are responsible for the delivery of all programs funded by the Government and can not select programs to deliver. Over the course of the last year, it has become apparent that the devolution of responsibilities to the Boards may have occurred at a rate faster than the Board's ability to absorb the changes. Members feel that a uniform set of guidelines on the standards to which Boards are expected to adhere would assist the Boards to take on new programs and services. The Committee looks forward to receiving the terms of reference for the Program Evaluation and Monitoring Division and would like to review copies of the guidelines and standards developed for the Boards at the earliest opportunity.

### **Administration Costs**

In discussions with the Minister, the Committee learned that administration costs average between 8% and 12% at the Board of Management level. It is hoped that this percentage can be reduced and that any savings realized can be used to deliver client-driven programs. The Committee is optimistic that the Program Evaluation and Monitoring unit of the Department will be able to identify cost savings for the Boards of Management, while maintaining the independence of the present Boards. The Committee looks forward to being advised of progress on the reduction of administration costs.

### **Physician Recruiting**

The Committee was pleased to hear that the Department was working with the NWT Medical Association to develop a plan and report on physician recruiting for the NWT by the end of 1997. The Committee looks forward to reviewing the report and discussing the recommendations made. There was a concern that competition among the Boards for physicians may be contributing to the shortage of physicians. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the NWT Medical Association and the Health Boards to develop innovative solutions to address the doctor shortage in the NWT, and requests a brief overview on the current level of shortage.

### **Health Care Dollars spent outside the NWT**

As the Minister stated, \$22.0 million is spent on health care for residents receiving treatment outside the Territories. While the Committee recognizes that it is not realistic to provide all services to the residents of the Northwest Territories at a local or regional level and that there will probably always be a need for outside services, Members feel that the Government can improve on this figure. With the great strides made by the Colleges in providing nursing programs over the last couple of years, there is an opportunity to repatriate more people to their home communities from southern institutions. The Department must take a lead role in identifying these patients who can be repatriated and provide the local Boards with the necessary level of support to reintegrate the patient back into their home community. The Committee looks forward to progress on this issue and a reduction in the money spent on health care in the south, and would appreciate receiving a breakdown of the \$22.0 million spent on health care outside the Northwest Territories.

## Compassionate Travel

This is an important issue to many residents in the NWT, particularly in the east where travel costs are prohibitive. The Committee understands that the previous travel program was lax and that there were significant abuses of the program. This being said, Members feel that the Government needs to refine its definition of compassionate travel and communicate this definition to the Boards.

*The Committee recommends that as part of the Department's development of minimum standards and guidelines for the Hospital and Health Boards, the issue of compassionate travel be addressed to ensure that criteria and guidelines provide for fair and equitable access.*

## Department of Justice

The Committee was generally satisfied with the presentation of the 1998/99 Main Estimates. The numbers corresponded to the Business Plan and Capital Plan already reviewed by the Committee.

The Committee made note of the following issues during its review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates for the Department of Justice:

### Administration Costs

The Committee expressed its concern that there was no way to determine the total amount spent by the Department on administration. There was also a concern that the costs of human resource administration have been passed on to the Department resulting in no net savings to the Government as a whole. If anything, the money required to support human resource personnel would reduce funds available for client driven program delivery. The Department has agreed to supply the Committee with figures related to spending on administration within the Department

*The Standing Committee on Social Programs recommends that the Standing Committee on Government Operations request that the Government conduct an in-depth study as to whether any savings were realized by the dissolution of the Department of Personnel.*

## Justice of the Peace Program

The Committee was pleased to hear that the Department is allocating more resources to maintain this program. As is the case with Coroners, the people who take on the responsibility of being Justices of the Peace in their home communities are often placed in an untenable position between family and friends. The Committee believes that, as a Government, we have a responsibility to support these people to the best of our ability. Of particular interest to the Committee is the hiring of a Justice of the Peace Coordinator. We need someone who can relate to the Justices of the Peace at the local and regional level, and who can respond to the needs of the JPs and act on them. The Committee looks forward to seeing a copy of the job description for this position. The Committee also encourages the Department to explore the possibility of expanding the use of JPs at the community level and to ensure that there are JPs in each community. Committee Members believe that if the JPs were willing, and supplied with the right training they could handle some family law and young offender cases, freeing up the court system.

*The Committee highly recommends that the person who is hired for the Justice of the Peace Coordinator be someone who has an in-depth knowledge of the North and its people.*

## Corrections

The Committee was very interested in the Departmental review of the Corrections Division and looks forward to seeing the results at the earliest opportunity. There are serious issues facing Corrections; matters such as overcrowding and the reduction of rehabilitative programs because program space is needed for dormitory space need to be addressed. It is hoped that the review can offer the Department realistic solutions to the problems facing them. The Committee was also interested to hear that Corrections Canada is reviewing its responsibilities for providing services to the NWT and that it may be possible to access some additional funding for correctional facilities. The Committee would appreciate being kept apprised of any developments or negotiations with Corrections Canada.

The Committee recognizes that there may not be many concrete measures that the Government can take to address the problems facing Corrections before Division, but feels that any information that can be passed on to future Governments will be useful.

*The Committee recommends that the Corrections Review by the Department include at a minimum, the preparation of working papers on the state of Corrections in each of the two new territories, addressing the issue of compliance with federal corrections regulations, to provide the new governments with direction on resolving the serious issues facing Corrections.*

## **Policing**

Committee Members were concerned with the impression given that the RCMP is focusing the policing planning process to a greater extent than the GNWT. It was felt that the Department needs to take a proactive approach to working with the RCMP in identifying problems and working out solutions. The RCMP contracts to the GNWT to provide a service and the GNWT should fulfill its role in directing the provision of that service.

*The Committee recommends that the Department formulate, in concert with the RCMP and the Interim Commissioner's Office, a Strategic Plan for policing in the western territory and Nunavut.*

## **Young Offenders Act**

A concern was raised that the *Young Offenders Act* is not being administered properly in some of the smaller communities. Young offenders are being removed from their home community to a larger centre without their parents being given opportunity to intervene. When the child appears in court there is little opportunity, given the often-prohibitive cost of travel, for their parents to attend. The Committee noted that the community for which this is a particular concern also does not have a Justice of the Peace. Committee Members feel that this issue could be more appropriately handled by a JP who has the authority to deal with young offenders in the offender's home community. It is hoped that the new Justice of the Peace Coordinator would address this issue.

The Minister has committed to looking into the concern and responding to the Member that raised the issue. The Committee would appreciate being copied on all correspondence on this issue.

## **Legal Aid**

The Committee appreciated the opportunity to review the interim Legal Aid Report. The Committee looks forward to reviewing the final report and recommendations and providing its input to the process. Although the Department explained that the Legal Services Board is an arms-length agency, the Committee is of the opinion that the Department, as the funding provider, bears some responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations. The Committee is concerned that the lack of Legal Aid for family law impacts negatively on families and children. As recommended in one of the models put forth in the interim report, the Committee adds its unqualified support for the hiring of a separate Legal Aid Lawyer to deal with family law only.

### **Coroners Office**

The Committee appreciated the opportunity to discuss the outcomes arising out of the Review of the Coroners Office. The Committee was generally pleased with the direction the Government was taking and commends the Department on its decision to implement all of the recommendations. However, there were some concerns that making the Chief Coroner a contract position could result in higher costs to the Department. The Committee would appreciate being informed as to the successful candidate for the position of Chief Coroner and requests evidence that would alleviate the Committee's concern regarding increased costs with a contract position.

### **Violent Offenders**

There was a concern by the Committee that there are no mechanisms for dealing with violent repeat offenders other than having them declared dangerous offenders and imprisoned indefinitely. The Committee realizes that the Government must act within the parameters of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, the Committee urges the Minister to work with his federal and provincial counterparts to come up with a solution.

## **Education, Culture and Employment**

The Committee was generally satisfied with the 1998/99 Main Estimates as presented by the Department. The numbers complied with the figures contained in the Business plan and 5-Year Capital Plan already reviewed by the Committee.

The Committee made note of the following issues during its review of the 1998/99 Main Estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment:

### **High School Extensions**

The Committee wishes to commend the Department on the apparent success of this program. The Committee encourages the Department to improve the quality of distance learning opportunities for high school students in our smaller communities. The Committee would appreciate the opportunity to examine the student enrollment figures as well as figures on the number of successful high school graduates since the implementation of high school extensions, to get a understanding of the true value of the program. The Minister has committed to supplying the number of high school graduates for the year in January.



## **Board and Community Aspirations**

There is a concern that some Board operations do not take into consideration the aspirations of some of the communities. We understand the Minister's position that in order to maintain the economies of scale at the Board level the Department cannot split every community into separate Boards. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the people in their home communities to develop programs that are relevant to their wishes and to work with the Boards to foster an understanding of the groups and communities in the jurisdiction.

## **Administration Costs**

The Committee was pleased with the Department's response to our request to examine the administration costs at the Board and Department level. From all appearances the Department has done an exemplary job of keeping administration costs down. The Committee would still like to examine these administration costs on a Board by Board basis.

## **Income Support Food Basket**

The Minister indicated that the Department is in the process of completing a new survey on the cost of the Income Support Food Basket in each community in the NWT. As this is an important benchmark in the allocation of Income Support, the Committee would appreciate the opportunity to review the new numbers.

## **Seniors' Fuel Subsidy**

The Committee was pleased that the Department reinstated this program. The Committee believes that this is one program that the Government receives fair value for its dollar. It is important that this subsidy continue.

## **National Child Benefit**

The Committee appreciated the Department's briefing on this important new federal/territorial program. The Committee strongly encourages the Department and the Territorial Government to lobby the Federal Government to ensure that the National Child Benefit is permanent.

## **Student Financial Assistance**

The Committee appreciated being supplied with the Report of the Ministerial Forum on Student Financial Assistance. We look forward to the Government's response and proposed course of action, as well as the opportunity to contribute.

### **Heavy Equipment Operators Course – Fort Smith**

The Committee felt that with all of the activity in the diamond mining in the north, this course would be valuable in providing employment opportunities for northerners. The Committee understands that the heavy equipment presently being used for training is old and outdated, and encourages the Department to work with the College and industry to address the problem.

### **Aurora College – Yellowknife Campus**

The Committee was not satisfied with the Minister's reasoning for the placement of the College in the Northern United Place. There is no place for student or staff parking and the Committee believes that the whole building does not provide a positive learning environment. The Committee believes that the Department missed an opportunity to create a permanent, positive learning environment with all of the amenities in a separate dedicated facility. The lack of public consultation on the renovation of the Northern United Place also disappointed the Committee.

### **Healthy Children Initiative**

There was some concern by the Committee that the criteria for this program needs to be defined to ensure that those children who really need the program do not fall through the cracks in the system. The Committee was pleased to hear that the Department, in concert with Health and Social Services, is conducting a review of the program. The Committee looks forward to being briefed on the results of the review and the Department's plan to implement positive changes to the Healthy Children Initiative.

### **Legal Studies Program**

The Federal Government is currently funding a program in Nunavut to train aboriginal lawyers. The Committee encourages the Department to work with other departments and stakeholders to develop this program in the western Northwest Territories.

### **Federal Training Programs**

The Department is encouraged to lobby the Federal Government to get the same benefits for aboriginal people in the western Northwest Territories as are currently received in the east. Even though there is an established government in the future western territory, the level of aboriginal employment, particularly at the senior management level, remains out of proportion with the population this government purports to represent. A training program similar to the one in Nunavut might be useful in increasing aboriginal employment in government in the future western territory.

**University College Entrance Program**

The Department is encouraged to lobby the Federal Government for more funding under this program and to include eligibility for the Metis.

## **Witnesses**

### **Health & Social Services**

**The Honourable Kelvin Ng – Minister**  
**Mr. Dave Ramsden – Deputy Minister**  
**Mr. Warren St. Germain – Director, Finance & Administration**  
**Ms. Jeanie Hickey – Financial Analyst**  
**Ms. Joan Irwin – Executive Assistant**

### **Department of Justice**

**The Honourable Kelvin Ng – Minister**  
**Mr. Don Cooper, Q.C. – Deputy Minister**  
**Ms. Kim Schoefield – Director, Finance & Administration**  
**Ms. Anne Mould – Policy Analyst**

### **Education, Culture & Employment**

**The Honourable Charles Dent – Minister**  
**Mr. Mark Cleveland – Deputy Minister**  
**Mr. Paul Devitt – Director – Finance & Administration**  
**Ms. Karen Bergmen Illnik – Executive Assistant**

### **Northwest Territories Housing Corporation**

**The Honourable Goo Arlooktoo – Minister**  
**Mr. Dave Murray – President**  
**Mr. Jeff Anderson – Controller**  
**Mr. Tom Beaulieu – Vice-president, Operations**  
**Mr. Gary McLellan – Director, Policy**  
**Ms. Mary – Sue Maloughney – Executive Assistant**