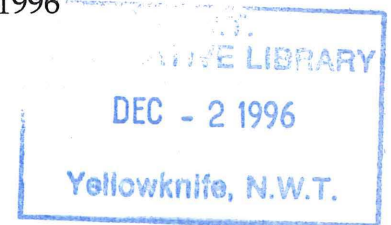




November 28, 1996

MEMBERS
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Importance of Education



For a number of years, the Legislative Assembly has stressed the need for education for all northern residents. Education has received a high profile and legislators have made repeated efforts to improve our system, both for youths and adults. For example, we have adopted the small school secondary program, implemented a new Education Act, and dramatically expanded the roles of Aurora and Nunavut Arctic College.

As we enter the second year of our deficit management plan, I am becoming concerned about what we are doing in terms of education funding. So much of what we want to do is dependent on improving the education levels of northerners. Are we being penny wise but pound foolish? We have talked about the need to invest in people. Is it just a slogan or can we find a way to ensure this happens so there are long term gains for all territorial residents?

The priorities we set in our Agenda for Change also depend on improving the education levels of northerners. We talk about

- a healthier, better educated and more self-reliant citizenry who have more access to more of the jobs they want and need
- improving social conditions by improving social programs so they are directed to the root causes of individual and group needs (in areas like education)
- improving economic conditions by enhancing the creation of jobs and maximizing the number of residents that fill them
- empowering communities to make their own decisions
- working towards healthy communities and community-based problem solving by supporting a Community Wellness Initiative.

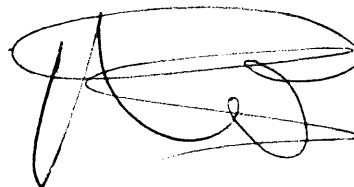
All of these priorities are based on people having the education to take advantage of new and existing opportunities.

We also stress the need to improve the employment of northerners in the public service. We have all said education is important to making that a reality. How can we worry about creating a representative government staff while we cut away at the educational supports necessary to allow northerners to take those jobs?

We don't have to look any further than the many reports produced by departments over the years to see the link between education levels and the ability of northerners to take care of themselves and their children, financially and emotionally. Education is directly related to income levels. Income levels are directly related to the level of social problems. Since we have a much lower education level than the provinces, it is no surprise that we also have a correspondingly much higher rate of social problems.

I have highlighted some pieces of reports I found below. Some reports detail what happens when people don't have education. Others deal with the success when people become educated. These highlights are attached.

In his statement yesterday, the Premier mentioned three core priorities. Two of these - to improve economic conditions and to address social conditions - are directly tied to the education levels of northerners. I hope this letter will be the starting point to some frank discussion about where we want to go with education and whether our present actions (through the 1997/98 business plans) will get us there. At this point, I don't have an answer but I definitely have a concern. I would like to know if others of you share my concern.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Erasmus', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Roy Erasmus
MLA, Yellowknife North

Some Sample Reports Showing the Need for Education

1. TIME ON ASSISTANCE - A STUDY OF THE PATTERNS OF WELFARE USE IN THE NWT (1991)

This report shows the direct link between low levels of education and dependence on social assistance.

Between November 1984 and November 1988, the caseload for social assistance increased by 52% to 3092 cases.

- People with less than grade 10 education accounted for 90% of the increase.

In November 1988, grades levels for social assistance recipients were

less than grade 7	62.0%
grade 8 - 10	32.4%
more than grade 10	5.6%

2. NUNAVUT - UNIFIED HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY(1996)

This report clearly states that "Levels of education and employment are closely related and as highest level of schooling increased, the chance of find a job also increases."

In Nunavut

- People with a university degree or a post-secondary diploma or certificate have almost 100% employment.
- Less than one-third of people with grade 8 or less have jobs.

Nunavut Inuit Labour Force

Grade 9 or less	61%
Grade 10 or 11	12%
Grade 12	4%
Post secondary (gr. 9 or less)	14%
Post secondary (grade 10 & up)	9%

3. NWT LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (1989)

This survey shows the link between levels of education and a person's ability to participate in the labour force.

Employment by education level

grade 8 or less	44% employed (general population) 43% employed (aboriginal population)
university degree	95% employed (general population) 100% employed (aboriginal population)

4. AURORA COLLEGE CORPORATE PLAN 1995/2000

The College plan shows the clear link between education, employment opportunities and pay levels.

Labour Force Characteristics

	Developed Communities	Developing Communities
% of residents with less than grade 9	8	47
unemployment rate	13	30

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Chance of a Job</u>	<u>Average Pay</u>
Grade 8 or less	33%	\$13,519
Grade 9 - 11	53%	\$21,206
High School Diploma	78%	\$28,702
Certificate, Diploma, Trades, College Education	84%	\$31,810
University Degree	93%	\$48,434

5. SNAPSHOT OF THE WESTERN NWT LABOUR MARKET (1996)

This report shows how having more education increases a chance for work. It also shows the dismally low education levels of aboriginal people in the west.

- 29% of those with less than grade 9 have a job
- 91% of those with university degrees have jobs
- 43% of Aboriginal population has not completed grade 10

6. CANADIAN FACT BOOK ON POVERTY (1989)

The previous reports show how education levels affect a person's ability to get a job. This report shows the impact of a lack of income on people's health and social well-being.

- High school drop-out rate for children from poor families was 2.2 times the rate for children from non-poor families.
- Between 54 and 75% of the 49,000 children in care came from low income families. Native children account for about 20% of children in care although they are only 2% of the child population.
- Child mortality is twice as high at the lowest end of the income scale as opposed to the highest end.
- Drowning is 3.4 times more common for boys from low-income families than for other boys.
- Children from low-income families are:
 - 1.7 times more likely to have a psychiatric disorder
 - 1.8 times more likely to do poorly in school
 - 2.1 time more likely to develop a conduct disorder (to behave destructively)

than children from other families

7. ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The report highlights a loss of dollars from the current state of affairs including:

- \$5 billion a year in lost spending on financial assistance, programs with limited success and lost revenue due to aboriginal people not contributing to the economy
- \$3 billion a year in lost income for aboriginal people mostly because they are not adequately educated.