

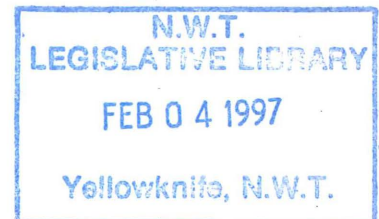
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January 29, 1997



To: The Mayors and Councils of Nunavut Communities

cc: Nunavut MLAs
 Jose Kusugak, President, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI)
 John Amagoalik, Chief Commissioner, Nunavut Implementation
 Commission (NIC)
 Presidents, Regional Inuit Associations
 Chair, Nunavut Social Development Council
 Chair, Board of Governors, Nunavut Arctic College
 Chairs, Nunavut Divisional Boards of Education
 Chairs, Nunavut District Education Authorities
 Chair, NWT Literacy Council
 media



From: Lisa Rigby for The Friends of Nunavut Libraries Campaign
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Dear Sirs/Madams,

Last night several dozen residents of Iqaluit – Inuit and non-Inuit, male and female, young and old – met to discuss the radical changes which have been proposed for library services in Nunavut. The changes are being introduced without any community consultation – and lay-off notices have already been issued.

I was asked to prepare a letter to you on behalf of the group, and it is in that capacity that I am writing you today.

Let me make it clear from the beginning that we do NOT see these proposed changes as an 'Iqaluit issue', and our concern is NOT simply for the proposed elimination of the position of Baffin Regional Librarian (and the equivalent position in Rankin Inlet). Our concern is for the future of library services across Nunavut, for the future of literacy – and especially the future of Inuktitut literacy – in Nunavut, and the implications of these proposed changes for the future of the Nunavut Territory.

Let me begin by describing public library services as they are currently provided.

11 of 26 Nunavut communities currently have public libraries – Arviat, Baker Lake, Cambridge Bay, Clyde River, Igloolik, Iqaluit, Kugluktuk, Nanisivik, Pangnirtung, Pond Inlet and Rankin Inlet. For the NWT as a whole the total is 19 public libraries

in 59 communities, directly serving 70% of the total NWT population. We believe that 3 of the public libraries in Nunavut (Iqaluit, Nanisivik and Rankin Inlet) are operated by the GNWT – the people who work there are employees of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) – while the other 9 are operated by a community authority but funded by the GNWT through a contribution agreement with ECE. For the NWT as a whole there are 6 GNWT-operated public libraries. There is no funding available to establish public libraries in the 40 NWT communities which do not currently have one. The residents of those communities can, however, access the book deposit and borrow-by-mail services supported by the GNWT Public Library Services.

The GNWT plans to radically change the way in which the residents of the NWT can access library services by:

- transferring ownership of the 6 GNWT-operated libraries to the communities;
- providing funding for library services to each community government through a formula which is based purely on population;
- using a digital communications network and computer terminals in each community to provide access to library and information services; and,
- other proposed changes.

That's the plan. But what will it mean for you, and for your communities? It depends on what kind of community you live in:

- If you live in a community which already has a public library, the funding available to operate it will be slashed:

Community	Current Funding	Proposed Funding	Change
Clyde River	\$ 15,439	\$ 5,143	loss of \$ 10,296
Igloodik	17,973	5,192	loss of \$ 12,781
Iqaluit	60,000	29,889	loss of \$ 30,111
Nanisivik	13,000	2,916	loss of \$ 10,084
Pangnirtung	15,986	9,827	loss of \$ 6,159
Pond Inlet	19,382	8,504	loss of \$ 6,878
Arviat	\$ 17,119	\$ 11,372	loss of \$ 5,747
Baker Lake	18,581	10,246	loss of \$ 8,335
Rankin Inlet	31,000	14,519	loss of \$ 16,481
Cambridge Bay	\$ 19,355	\$ 9,671	loss of \$ 9,684
Kugluktuk	15,845	9,202	loss of \$ 6,643

In other words, the community government will be asked to maintain the existing level of services with greatly reduced funding. In English, this is called 'off-loading responsibility'.

- If you live in Yellowknife – the home of the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Charles Dent, and the community with by far the most library resources – the funding available to operate your public library will more than triple!

Community	Current Funding	Proposed Funding	Change
Yellowknife	\$ 38,000	\$ 125,234	gain of \$ 87,234

- If you live in a small community which currently has no public library, your community government will receive a computer terminal, access to on-line services and a few thousand dollars per year.

The following points are among those that were discussed during our meeting:

- The new information technology is wonderful, and we look forward to it being available in all Nunavut communities. BUT! Computer screens do not – and should not be expected to – replace the functions of a real library, with real books and real people to help you.
- The new information technology operates in English – so relying on information technology instead of real libraries will seriously impair efforts to improve Inuktitut literacy across Nunavut.
- There is a big difference between ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’ – and a computer terminal cannot replace the user-friendly access to the wider world that a real library provides.
- Computers should not be expected to replace books – you can’t take a computer into your children’s bed at night when you want to curl up and read together!
- Only a fraction of what is available in a library is currently available on-line. Access to huge amounts of information is not the same thing as access to wisdom!
- Computers can be very intimidating to people who haven’t used them before, and especially to people with low English literacy skills – the very people who need help the most! With the tiny budgets which will be provided to each community, how much help will really be available to people who want to use the new system?
- In the run-up to Nunavut, we need MORE support for community-level literacy efforts, not less!
- The Regional Librarians currently provide an enormous amount of support to Community Librarians, Teachers, etc. – often by traveling into the communities themselves. How will this support be provided in the future?
- When will this new computer system actually be installed and operating? When things break, who will fix them?

- The proposed new funding formula is very unfair, on several levels. Using a formula based solely on population fails to recognize the higher costs in Nunavut, and the 'diseconomies of scale' of providing services in smaller communities. The result is that Yellowknife – the richest community in the NWT – will have its funding increase at the expenses of every other community which currently has a library! In total, funding for communities in the Western NWT will increase by \$ 100,000, while funding for communities in Nunavut will decrease by \$ 60,000! This method of calculating funding levels sets a very dangerous precedent for the division of the Northwest Territories' assets and liabilities! *CAN The minister explain this process.*
- The Nunavut Implementation Commission's second comprehensive report, Footprints 2, recommends that the Nunavut Government have a 4-person 'Public Library Services' unit in addition to the existing Regional Librarian positions. Does the GNWT respect this aspect of the NIC's recommendations or not? How does NTI feel? Does it make any sense to gut the existing library staff in Nunavut just 2 years before Nunavut comes into existence?
- The NIC is very supportive of the use of information technology by the Nunavut Government – but it doesn't recommend using it to replace real libraries, with real books and real people to help you. Isn't the Internet coming to all Nunavut communities in the near future anyway?
- There was an excellent program on CBC radio recently which discussed inappropriate uses of technology – and one of the examples was using cold, lifeless computers to replace the warmth, friendliness and richness of libraries. Let's not make that mistake in Nunavut!

Many other points were discussed, but these should give you the general idea of the concerns brought forward at our meeting.

If you agree with the above concerns, we respectfully request that your council:

- 1) Discuss whether your community should agree to assume responsibility for library services under the terms and conditions being proposed by the GNWT; and,
- 2) Circulate the attached petition and send it to your MLA before this issue is discussed in the Legislative Assembly.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Rigby