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# STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

## REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

June 1997

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Standing Committee on Government Operations

June 2, 1997

THE HONOURABLE SAM GARGAN  
SPEAKER  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NWT

Mr. Speaker,

Your Standing Committee on Government Operations has the honour of presenting the report of its Working Group on Affirmative Action and Human Resource Management, and commends it to the House.

Roy Erasmus  
Chair





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### Summary of Recommendations

Affirmative Action Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Premier and his Cabinet issue a public statement, making a commitment to the Affirmative Action policy.

Affirmative Action Recommendation 2 - We recommend that the GNWT change the name of the Affirmative Action policy to Employment Equity.

Affirmative Action Recommendation 3 - We recommend that the following revisions be made to the Affirmative Action Policy:

1. Representation goals by occupational grouping and region should be set.
2. There should be an annual assessment of the hiring priorities. In occupational groups in a region where representation goals have been reached, hiring priority would not apply.
3. Representation for headquarters should reflect the entire NWT.

Affirmative Action Recommendation 4 - We recommend that the definition of long-term northerner be revised to include anyone who has been a resident of the NWT for at least 10 continuous years, immediately prior to applying under this priority.

Affirmative Action Recommendation 5 - We recommend that the definition of indigenous aboriginal person be revised to more clearly address southern aboriginal people.

Affirmative Action Recommendation 6 - We recommend that the GNWT back up the philosophy of affirmative action/employment equity with dollars to support training and other initiatives.

Hiring Process Recommendation 1- We recommend that, every time a position is to be filled, the position description be reviewed to ensure the education and experience required accurately reflect the demands of the job.

Hiring Process Recommendation 2 - We recommend that at least three qualified candidates be interviewed for every job competition.

Hiring Process Recommendation 3 - We recommend that an appeals process be established for management and excluded positions.

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**Working Group on Affirmative Action and Human Resource Management**

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Hiring Process Recommendation 4 - We recommend the use of directed hiring practices to increase representation in the workforce.

Hiring Process Recommendation 5 - We recommend that a student employment office be established in each region, operated where possible by students.

Human Resource Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the GNWT develop clear accountability measures in the area of human resources management for both Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

HR Recommendation 1.1 - We recommend that the departmental business plans should include specific human resource management information.

HR Recommendation 1.2 - We recommend that human resource management should have a much greater emphasis in Deputy Ministers' evaluations.

Human Resource Recommendation 2 - We recommend that the current guidelines requiring completion of performance reviews annually should be enforced.

Human Resource Recommendation 3 - We recommend that managers work closely with staff to provide career development for all employees.

Human Resource Recommendation 4 - We recommend departments develop on-the-job training positions in areas where there is currently a low rate of affirmative action representation.

Post-Division Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Affirmative Action policy be changed to a Northern Employment policy.

Post-Division Recommendation 2 - We recommend that a monitoring process be established to ensure affirmative action is actively supported throughout the organization.

Follow-up Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Premier provide a report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations by September 22, 1997, outlining the action the government is taking with respect to the recommendations in this report.



## REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### *Introduction*

The people of the NWT come from many different backgrounds. There are many first nations people: the Dene, the Inuit, the Metis, and the Inuvialuit. There are people whose ancestors came from around the world who have made their homes in the north. There are also relative new-comers to the territories.

The GNWT Affirmative Action Policy has a goal of achieving a workforce which is representative of the people it serves. Unfortunately, the policy in its current form has not resulted in significant progress in achieving that goal. As a working group, we believe more can and should be done. It is time to stop saying why things cannot be done and to focus on why they can be done.

This report focuses on achieving a GNWT workforce which is representative of the people it serves at all levels and in all regions. We have made a number of recommendations which will address the issue of representation, both at the hiring stage and throughout an employee's career with the government.

The 1989 Affirmative Action policy for GNWT hiring is still in place. With less than 700 days to division, we do not feel it is appropriate to completely replace the policy. However, we have found many areas where immediate changes could be made to try to achieve the goal of a representative workforce. There are options which could achieve results without reducing job qualifications or negatively impacting on the quality of service available to all residents.

As well, we have looked beyond the hiring process to support and development of GNWT staff. It is not enough to hire northerners. We also have to provide an environment where they can find personal satisfaction and professional development. In tough financial times, putting northerners to work means good value for money.

Most of the recommendations in this report are things we believe can be done in the short term prior to division. Some of the final recommendations will take longer to put in place. Work should begin on these recommendations although the actual implementation may be pushing division and beyond.

Many individuals have a perception that the Affirmative Action policy is really a native employment policy. We want to stress that when we say affirmative action, we mean support for all of the priority groups identified under the Affirmative Action policy.

### *Background*

During the spring and summer of 1995, the GNWT undertook a public review of the Affirmative Action Policy. This review included extensive consultation with GNWT staff and members of the public.

In June 1996, the GNWT provided a draft report on the review to the Standing Committee on Government Operations. Government Operations was very critical of the draft, saying it lacked specific strategies to address the problems with the Affirmative Action Policy. The Committee also suggested that the report should be expanded to include a northern employment strategy.

During the review of 1997/98 business plans, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment indicated he was working on a labour force development plan. This plan was supposed to be part of a larger northern employment strategy. The Standing Committee on Social Programs received a briefing on the plan and concluded that, while it could be a small part of a northern employment strategy, its focus was limited.

Throughout the fall of 1996 and early 1997, Ordinary Members pressed the Minister of Finance for the report on the Affirmative Action review. The Minister assured the House that the report would be forthcoming.

On February 12, 1997, the government provided a paper to the Standing Committee on Government Operations which suggested that work could be done in three areas:

1. northern employment strategy
  - the report suggested that this would be a combination of the Labour Force Development Plan and an Economic Strategy. This was to be ready for consideration by Members sometime in the summer of 1997.
2. government human resource strategies
  - the report said the government could complete a number of planning activities that are underway.
3. Affirmative Action policy review
  - the report suggested that no major changes should be made until after 1999.

On February 18, 1997, the Chair of Government Operations wrote to the Minister of Finance, indicating dissatisfaction with the report provided. A Working Group was established to deal with four areas: affirmative action, student employment, a northern employment strategy and division.

On February 20, the Minister of Finance indicated that the government had a student program ready for summer 1997. The plan was presented to full caucus on March 4 and announced publicly. Limited details on the program were available as the Department of Education, Culture and Employment had not yet fully developed the program.

On March 3 and 6, the Minister of Finance met with the working group to provide his vision for a northern employment strategy. The plan involved spending an additional \$13 million on existing economic development programs, using the approach employment by RWED in the Keewatin. This is a limited program, operating for two years.

In making recommendations, we drew heavily from the results of the 1995 Affirmative Action Policy public review. We also reviewed the practices of other jurisdictions and various GNWT human resource statistics and practices.

### *The Corporate Culture*

In most successful government departments and private corporations, there is a history of strong human resource practices. These organizations have systems in place to support employees from hiring through to retirement. Why do they bother - because they consider the time and effort they put into supporting their employees to be a worthwhile investment - one that provides returns year after year.

These successful organizations know that a person who is satisfied with their job is more productive. They know that a good relationship between a business and its employees means staff who are loyal and dedicated to making the business work better. They know there is a significant cost to high turnover of staff and staff who don't care about their jobs.

In order to be successful, sound human resource practices must be part of the fabric of the organization, from the bottom to the top. Hiring decisions which look at the long run bring new staff who will contribute to the operation. Regular evaluation and development of staff to promote professional and personal growth allow employees to broaden their skills and interests. The best organizations also remember that people are more than employees and support employees in balancing home and work.

The Affirmative Action policy is only one part of human resource management. We also looked for government-wide use of other components like performance reviews and career planning. We found there are weaknesses in key areas of generally accepted human resource practices. These weaknesses affect all employees and, in particular, have an impact on the retention and promotion of affirmative action employees. Strong human resource practices should be a part of the GNWT corporate culture.

The corporate culture is the accepted practices, values and norms which guide the day to day work environment. Good human resource practices are an important part of the corporate culture. Over time, those practices are revised to reflect the changing patterns of the workplace and the people who make up the labour force.

As we move towards representation at all levels of the organization, there will be shifts in the corporate culture. The values and practices of aboriginal people, long-term northerners, the disabled, and women will be recognized and integrated with current practices, until we create an environment that is truly open to all northerners.

### ***Recommendations***

We have made recommendations in four key areas:

- The Affirmative Action Policy
- The Hiring Process
- Human Resource Management
- Addressing the Future

In developing our recommendations, we looked at the overall picture of hiring and promotion of staff. As a result, many of the recommendations are linked. While they may have a small impact individually, they will work best when implemented together.

Most of these recommendations could be implemented fairly quickly. Unless otherwise noted, we believe the following recommendations could be in place in six months to a year.

## *The Affirmative Action Policy*

### **Affirmative Action Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Premier and his Cabinet issue a public statement, making a commitment to the Affirmative Action policy.**

Since taking office in November 1995, the Members of the 13th Assembly have stressed the need to lead by example. We did this in the deficit management plan by reducing our pensions and eliminating automatic increases to our indemnities.

In the House, Members have repeatedly reminded the Cabinet that we must also lead by example in our senior management hiring. Theoretically, all hiring is subject to the Affirmative Action policy. In reality, there appears to be some discretion in the hiring process for excluded employees and significant discretion for management, particularly at the deputy minister level. The more senior a position is, the more personal suitability plays a role in the hiring decision. The members of the working group believe that this discretion results in a continuation of the hiring practices of the past, hiring practices which have not been successful in moving towards a representative workforce.

During the public consultation in 1995, a common concern and perception was that the politicians and senior managers do not buy into affirmative action. The recent senior management hiring from southern Canada seems to send a silent message throughout the organization and to the public about the government's commitment to affirmative action.

The Premier's public statement should include a commitment to promote and develop northerners, from the top of the organization to the bottom. The statement should also be clear about the emphasis the government will place on employment equity. Without a strong public signal of support for the changes recommended in this report, significant change and progress is doubtful.

**Affirmative Action Recommendation 2 - We recommend that the GNWT change the name of the Affirmative Action policy to Employment Equity.**

The current Affirmative Action Policy is viewed negatively by many people, both within and outside the GNWT. The existing program is one of forcing a hiring priority. It is divisive and has not been successful in moving the GNWT workforce significantly closer to a representative workforce. Through corporate lore, many people believe that the policy forces managers to hire unqualified staff and that people are set up to fail.

The recommendations proposed by the Working Group represent a shift in philosophy. The proposals are based on changing the corporate culture. Ensuring a representative work force should not be something people have to do but that all managers and Ministers see as something they want to do. We believe strongly that investing in northern employees can only benefit the north. This is their home, they understand the environment and the cultures, and they are working to make things better for their own future.

If the government intends to make a fresh start in addressing the lack of northerners in the workforce, there is a need for a new name, such as employment equity, which will reflect a new attitude and more proactive, positive approach.

This recommendation is closely tied to the other recommendations in this report. A name change is not enough. It must be part of a broader package of changes to the Policy.

**Affirmative Action Recommendation 3 - We recommend that the following revisions be made to the Affirmative Action Policy:**

- 1. Representation goals by occupational grouping and region should be set.**
- 2. There should be an annual assessment of the hiring priorities. In occupational groups in a region where representation goals have been reached, hiring priority would not apply.**
- 3. Representation for headquarters should reflect the entire NWT.**

The current Affirmative Action policy provides blanket hiring priority across the government. There are a number of concerns with this approach:

- this is a policy without focus - it does not have specific goals which could be addressed;
- there is no monitoring to determine when representation has been reached;
- the statistics do not show where representation has been achieved or even exceeded;
- it results in on-going priority where it is no longer needed; and
- only reporting overall statistics does not show the true picture - a lack of affirmative action employees outside of entry level positions and trades.

The experience of other jurisdictions shows that while specific priority may be necessary to initially reach representation, affirmative action works best when it is done because managers want to rather than because they have to.

There has been some success with the policy. In entry level positions and trades, it appears we have not only reached representation but actually gone beyond. There has also been greater success in some regions than in others. A policy which had goals based on regions and occupational groups would allow the Assembly and the public to see the areas of success as well as those where more work is required.

Maintaining hiring priority where it is not required creates resentment among others interested in applying for work. There should be a way to measure specific occupational groups and determine when representation has been reached. At that point, the policy should no longer apply.

Occupational groupings currently in place could be used:

- management
- professional
- technical
- administrative services
- labour & trades
- program delivery.

Due to the need to have reasonably large populations, the following regional groups should be used:

- Keewatin
- Baffin
- Kitikmeot
- Inuvik
- Fort Smith
- Headquarters.

We have recommended that Headquarters staff should reflect the entire NWT because that is the population they serve. However, staff in Yellowknife who are in positions classified as regional or local should reflect the region they serve, similar to staff in other regions.

We believe that there must be a more focused approach to ensuring a representative workforce. Critical to the success of this recommendation is regular and accurate information. Based on our past experience, we know this will test the adequacy of the GNWT information systems.

We have a concern about departments falling back to old habits. If departments are not forced to hire northerners, will they? The policy should require regular reassessment. This would be the safeguard, ensuring that priority would be applied again as soon as employment levels of affirmative action candidates fell below the level of representation.

We discussed the concept of representation and whether it should be based on the general population or the labour force. There were good arguments for either approach. The majority of members believe that the GNWT staff should be representative of the people they serve. They argue that representation goals should be based on the general population which is the people the government serves.

The government will need to set representation goals. Those representation goals should take into account the need for a strong pool of candidates at each level for promotion to the next level within the organization. In a Human Rights case from the NWT, it was ruled that GNWT representation goals beyond representation based on population was acceptable because there was a need for a larger pool of potential affirmative action candidates. For example, representation may be 35% but the representation goal could be 40, 45 or even 50%. **For many of the occupational groups, representation goals should be set higher than actual representation rates to ensure sufficient candidates for promotion.**



One of the key factors which affects representation is education levels among affirmative action candidates.

NWT Highest levels of schooling (1994)

	Metis	Dene	Inuit/ Inuvialuit	Non- Aboriginal
Grade 9 or less	25%	40.4%	46.4%	4%
Grade 10 or 11	23%	17.0%	16.2%	13%
High school	15%	10.7%	6.7%	27%
Post-secondary	36%	26.2%	25.2%	56%
Unknown	1%	5.7%	5.5%	0%

Programs like grade extensions are starting to have a positive impact in many communities. Over time, this impact will be reflected in the GNWT workforce as well.

**Affirmative Action Recommendation 4 - We recommend that the definition of long-term northerner be revised to include anyone who has been a resident of the NWT for at least 10 continuous years, immediately prior to applying under this priority.**

The current policy provides hiring priority for long term northerners. It identifies a long term northerner as someone who was born in the NWT or who has lived more than half their life here. When the definition of long term northerner was added to the policy in 1989, this definition was, in part, an attempt to address young people who had grown up side by side with each other, aboriginal and non-aboriginal. By including long term northerners in the policy, it recognizes the inherent value to the government in hiring people who have made a commitment to living in the NWT, regardless of cultural background.

One of the difficulties with the current definition is that it amounts to a form of discrimination against people who moved to the north as an adult. Although they make a commitment to the north and their communities, they are often at the end of their career before they qualify as a long term northerner.

We looked carefully at how to revise the definition to address this concern. We wanted to stick with the intent of giving priority to people who had made the north their home. There is no way to determine when someone moves

to the north how long they will stay. However, looking at GNWT employment statistics, the greatest drop-off is between 5 and 10 years of service. With this in mind, we decided that someone who has stayed for at least ten years is probably going to stick around.

While many jurisdictions give local hiring preference, this priority category has always been open to possible challenge under the charter of rights and freedoms. While the government can clearly demonstrate the need for specific hiring priorities for aboriginal people to address past disadvantage, demonstrating this disadvantage for long term northerners is more difficult. By greatly expanding this priority group, this may become more of an issue.

The title of this priority group should be changed from "indigenous non-aboriginal" to "long-term northerner".

**Affirmative Action Recommendation 5 - We recommend that the definition of indigenous aboriginal person be revised to more clearly address southern aboriginal people.**

The current definition of indigenous aboriginal person includes southern aboriginal people who have lived more than half their life in the NWT or who have ancestors from the NWT.

Priority One should become "northern aboriginal person". We recommend that the definition of northern aboriginal person should be changed to be an aboriginal person who was born in the NWT or who has spent at least ten years in the NWT immediately prior to applying for priority.

We believe this is more consistent with the policy's objective.

In applying this definition, there should be a degree of flexibility. The definition could include some aboriginal northerners who were born outside the NWT because their parents were attending school or had short term employment elsewhere in Canada.

**Affirmative Action Recommendation 6 - We recommend that the GNWT back up the philosophy of affirmative action/employment equity with dollars to support training and other initiatives.**

We have not recommended any new initiatives which would involve one-time new money. However, we have suggested areas where there is a need for funds to provide an on-going base. When departments had to reduce their budgets in the past two years, one of the areas affected was staff training and development. If we are committed to a representative workforce, we have to recognize that sound human resources practices are necessary and there is a cost associated with developing our staff.

For every manager dedicated to developing and supporting staff, there are times when they will need money to provide opportunities. If affirmative action is really going to work, there must be a reasonable allocation of funds for human resource management.

## *The Hiring Process*

**Hiring Process Recommendation 1-** We recommend that, every time a position is to be filled, the position description be reviewed to ensure the education and experience required accurately reflect the demands of the job.

Across the NWT, people said employees should be hired on merit. We believe that is happening now. Merit means deserving consideration or to be worthy. Anyone who has the required qualifications and is successful in the interview process has merit and is worthy of being considered for the job.

To be eligible for a position, a person needs to be qualified and suitable. Qualifications are determined during the screening process. A frequent comment about affirmative action applicants is that they are minimally qualified. There is no such thing as minimally qualified. All applicants who meet the education and experience requirements are considered qualified.

Suitability is determined through the interview process. A person is suitable if they appear able to deliver the skills necessary in the workplace.

Through the Affirmative Action policy, the GNWT also applies priority to the hiring process. However, merit is always the key factor in determining which of the priority candidates should get the job.

There are some occupations where a specific degree or professional designation is necessary. For example, certain projects require an engineer to sign off or a journeyman to verify the quality of work. Some documents must be signed by a lawyer.

However, there is also a strong element of credentialism in the education requirements of some positions. Requiring extensive educational background has been defended by some as necessary to preserve professional standards. Others see this as a way of using inflated educational requirements to prevent northerners from accessing positions in particular fields.

We need a balance. We need to ensure people are qualified for the positions they occupy. At the same time, we need to ensure that job descriptions are fair and accurate summaries of the job requirements. A good time to review job descriptions is just prior to staffing a position. Having accurate, up-to-date job descriptions should continue to be part of the staffing process.

**Hiring Process Recommendation 2 - We recommend that at least three qualified candidates be interviewed for every job competition.**

Members of the Working Group are aware of competitions where only one person was interviewed for a position. We were concerned with this for a couple of reasons.

When only one interview is done, there is often a perception that the successful candidate was pre-determined and the staffing competition was only a facade. Not only does this bring the staffing process into question, it can also lead to questions about the successful applicant's qualifications.

We are also concerned about time management. Staffing is a lengthy process. If only one person is interviewed, it is possible that they will not accept the job, they will do poorly on the interview, or there will be a problem with references. If this happens, the interview process begins again.

Limiting the interview process to only one person places too much weight on the applicants' resumes. A resume only gives a snapshot of a person's background. It does not tell you how they will deal with other people or how they react on the job.

Applicants called to an interview usually make an effort to prepare. Knowing this, we looked at the argument that, if there is only one affirmative action candidate, it is a waste of time to interview the other candidates. On the other hand, people applying on government jobs are aware of the affirmative action policy and can expect that final decisions may be made based on the policy.

We recognize that, on rare occasion, there may be competitions where there are only one or two qualified applicants. However, we also recognize that determining qualified candidates with equivalencies is not an exact science. In these cases, the staffing panel should use their discretion in determining who to interview. As a general rule, we believe a full slate of interviews is appropriate in all cases.

### **Hiring Process Recommendation 3 - We recommend that an appeals process be established for management and excluded positions.**

Staffing is very difficult. For every vacant position, there are many people competing for the position but only one winner. It is, therefore, important that applicants can be assured that the staffing was handled according to the GNWT guidelines and in a fair manner.

For GNWT positions included in the UNW bargaining unit, people who apply and have a concern with the results of the competition can appeal the staffing decision. This process is a joint effort between the government and the Union of Northern Workers. It is one of the tools necessary to ensure that competitions are carried out fairly.

For excluded and management positions, there is no appeal mechanism. This leaves managers with far more flexibility in how they follow the staffing guidelines. It also leaves applicants with uncertainty about whether their application received equitable consideration. We felt that there should be consistency from the top to the bottom of the organization.

We spent a fair amount of time discussing the staffing process. We are aware that there is opportunity at every stage for a manager reluctant to support affirmative action to subvert the policy. While we hope all managers in the organization will be supportive of the policy after the suggested changes are made, having an appeal process provides reassurance to all applicants that they are treated fairly and given due consideration within the policy direction of the GNWT. We are particularly concerned because management is not representative of the people the government serves.

Appeals add time when staffing a position. However, having a staffing process which is as objective as possible is important and worth the slight inconvenience of a delay in filling the position.

An appeals process for management and excluded positions does not have to be identical to the process for bargaining unit positions. However, we believe there should be some remedy for applicants, to ensure that the staffing guidelines are followed at all levels of the organization.

Within the GNWT, there is a Personnel Secretariat which is responsible for establishing staffing policy and monitoring staffing practices. This Secretariat is lead by an Assistant Deputy Minister. We would like to suggest that appeals of excluded and management positions should be handled by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Personnel Secretariat or one of his senior staff.

This individual would interview the applicant and the staffing panel and review the competition file. They could provide similar remedies as available under the union appeal process.

#### **Hiring Process Recommendation 4 - We recommend the use of directed hiring practices to increase representation in the workforce.**

At the present time, staffing competitions are supposed to be open to any applicants and advertised publicly. One of the benefits of this approach is that the general public should be aware of all job openings. It is also intended to reduce the potential for favoritism and nepotism in the hiring process.

There are a few drawbacks to having positions filled through open competition. It limits the opportunity to promote promising affirmative action candidates. It is also a drawback in career planning. Sometimes, a manager will have an excellent employee who they would like to promote, knowing the employee would do the job well. However, the employee's education or experience may not be at the level required when the job is advertised.

In order to use the hiring process to increase representation, **we recommend that two approaches be used for specific positions:**

- 1. advertising some positions as only open to all affirmative action candidates; and**
- 2. using the direct appointment mechanism to promote or give priority to affirmative action candidates for positions in occupational groups where representation has not been attained.**

Other jurisdictions use restricted (closed) competitions to promote individuals from a designated group. The use of these competitions is successful, particularly where the department recognizes a need to encourage affirmative action candidates in a specific occupation. Restricted competitions are often used for positions which are designed as training opportunities for affirmative action candidates.

There are positions which are filled without being advertised, through direct appointments and contracts. For example, some of the recent senior management appointments were done this way. While there is some concern about the use of direct appointments, this can be a valuable tool for promoting affirmative action employees who are ready for advancement. The GNWT hiring guidelines already suggest direct appointments can be used to support affirmative action. Managers should consider this as one option in career planning for their staff.

This recommendation is closely linked to Affirmative Action Recommendation 3. It provides one possible mechanism for achieving the representation goals.

**Hiring Process Recommendation 5 - We recommend that a student employment office be established in each region, operated where possible by students.**

In previous years, there was a student employment office run by students in Yellowknife and some of the other regional centres. This provided a central source of information for departments. It also made it easier for students, who only had to provide their application to one government location.

With the decentralization of personnel functions to departments, students must apply at a number of locations. They don't have a single person who can help them assess the availability of possible jobs. It also makes it more difficult for departments to know who is still available and who is employed.

Students have a very short time to find employment. They can't afford to miss even one possible job because they didn't get their resume to every location. A central registry of student applications would make things easier for both students and departments.

It is important to note that while this recommendation addresses student employment, these concerns apply to all casual hiring.



## *Human Resource Management Recommendations*

### **Human Resource Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the GNWT develop clear accountability measures in the area of human resources management for both Ministers and Deputy Ministers**

As we mentioned earlier, most successful government departments and private corporations support employees from hiring to retirement. Career planning and professional development for staff are important parts of a manager's responsibilities.

The changes resulting from the GNWT's deficit management plan have had a severe impact on the morale of government employees. In order to achieve some sense of stability, to promote northern employees, and to maintain levels of service with fewer staff, it is critical that the GNWT place more emphasis on strong human resource management.

We see the need for greater accountability at two levels. Standing Committees should hold Ministers accountable for the human resource practices within their departments. As well, Ministers should place a greater emphasis on human resource management in evaluating Deputy Minister performance.

#### **HR Recommendation 1.1 - We recommend that the departmental business plans should include specific human resource management information.**

Responsibility for evaluation of the Deputy Ministers rests with the Ministers and there is no role for Ordinary Members in those evaluations. However, there is a clear role for the Standing Committees in evaluating the human resource management within each department.

We recommend that the business plans provided by the departments should include a new section addressing human resource management. This section should include elements such as:

- positions by community, pre- and post-budget
- affirmative action statistics
- departmental turnover
- retention rates
- performance evaluation completion rates
- exit interview completion rates

- summary of orientation available for new staff
- staff development opportunities
- number of internships/developmental assignments available to assist entry into professional fields

Departments should also provide interim reports with the same information to standing committees in early March each year.

**HR Recommendation 1.2 - We recommend that human resource management should have a much greater emphasis in Deputy Ministers' evaluations.**

There would appear to be three areas that should form the basis of a Deputy's evaluation

- how a department's programs operate;
- how the Deputy Minister manages the budget; and
- how the people in the department are managed.

The Premier has repeatedly stated that deputies will be evaluated, in part, on their success with affirmative action. We agree that human resource management, including affirmative action, should be part of a Deputy Minister's performance evaluation.

Currently, human resource management would seem to be a small part of the evaluation. We reached this conclusion because, while human resource statistics for departments are either unavailable or reflect a lack of success in developing and promoting our employees, we are lead to believe that the Deputy Ministers are generally very effective in their work.

Therefore, we recommend that the human resource issues should have a much greater emphasis in a Deputy Minister's evaluation.

**Human Resource Recommendation 2 - We recommend that the current guidelines requiring completion of performance reviews annually should be enforced.**

Annual performance evaluations should be a valuable part of the staff development process. A performance evaluation is a concrete tool for staff development and training needs identification. It ensures regular feedback to employees and managers about each person's work. It also provides an

opportunity for managers to meet with staff to identify areas where training or other development options would increase the employee's ability to contribute to the organization and achieve professional growth.

Regular evaluations should also provide an opportunity to identify concerns of employees before they reach the point where the employee quits. Given the high rate of turnover, particularly among first year aboriginal employees, these evaluations can be used to catch a problem before it gets out of hand.

A recent review of the performance appraisal completion rates for 1996 demonstrates a lack of emphasis on using performance reviews as part of good human resource practices within the GNWT.

Performance Appraisal Completion Rates 1996	
Executive	5.4%
FMBS	6.0%
Finance	61.0%
MACA	26.7%
Transportation	9.8%
Public Works & Services	8.0%
Health & Social Services	9.2%
Renewable Resources	4.3%
Justice	68.6%
Economic Development & Tourism	7.0%
Education, Culture & Employment	1.0%
Safety & Public Services	14.3%
Energy, Mines & Petroleum Products	0%
Legislative Assembly	0%

The completion rates may be slightly lower because departments finish the appraisals but don't bother to enter them on the Government's Human Resource System. However, our information would tend to suggest that many employees just don't get reviews.

In reality, many employees view the appraisal process as threatening. It is often used to document performance problems and is seen as part of the disciplinary process rather than as a positive review and plan for growth.

This perception is in part because appraisals are the exception rather than the rule for many staff.

The performance development system guidelines in the GNWT Human Resource manual provide for yearly reviews of all employees. There are also requirements for a review when an employee or supervisor leaves a position. These guidelines should be followed by all managers.

Giving all employees regular feedback is important. The completion rates for these reviews should be provided to the Standing Committees as outlined in Human Resource Recommendation 1. They should also form part of the evaluation of Deputy Minister performance.

The current performance evaluation process requires the use of a generic form. Some managers ignore the forms and use letters or a checklist, some have trouble with the compatibility of the electronic version of the form, and most don't complete the appraisals at all. We discussed this at length and believe there should be some consistency in evaluation format. However, there should be flexibility to allow departments to work with the FMBS to develop alternate evaluation forms where there is a specific need.

**Human Resource Recommendation 3 - We recommend that managers work closely with staff to provide career development for all employees.**

Staff development and training is the key to creating a highly skilled and effective workforce. It provides employees with personal and professional growth so they have a chance to progress through the organization. It also provides the organization with employees better able to cope with changing demands and increased workload.

Career development is not a one-way street. Both the employee and employer have a responsibility to identify development opportunities. We need to ensure the government's corporate culture allows everyone to fulfill that responsibility.

In implementing the Affirmative Action policy, the GNWT has concentrated on hiring. At the present time, once the government has hired someone, opportunities for staff development seem to be hit and miss. If affirmative action is to be successful, it is also necessary to support the professional development of staff. This needs to be done in a planned way, with the employee and manager jointly setting a course of action.

As the most recent statistics show, the government has not been successful in moving affirmative action employees up in the organization beyond entry level positions. There is a perception that these employees have less access to staff training and development. This may be because they are less likely to be direct in asking for it. The corporate culture may support the "squeaky wheel" over those who are less forward.

While it is important to provide staff development to support affirmative action, these opportunities must also be available to all staff. A good employee is one who is growing and learning on the job. Sharing these opportunities with all employees makes good business sense.

Managers and employees should be aware of and support the importance of career development. They should be reminded that it is much broader than training courses. It can include elements such as acting appointments, special assignments, lateral transfers, mentor arrangements, and on-the-job training.

**Human Resource Recommendation 4 - We recommend departments develop on-the-job training positions in areas where there is currently a low rate of affirmative action representation.**

The government has a history of on-the-job training programs. The most recent is the Public Service Career Training Program. However, the success rate has not been good for a number of reasons:

- candidates were selected through an elaborate central process ;
- people were expected to train themselves out of a job;
- they were run as open competitions rather than being used for a specific individual in a department where the manager wanted to develop potential;
- some people just weren't good trainers, no matter how many train-the-trainer courses they took;
- the need for a balance between practical experience and formal education was not always adequately outlined; and
- employees were occasionally required to complete parts of the program outside workhours.

On-the-job training is one of the only ways mature individuals will be able to enter the more senior levels of government without a strong post-secondary background. Until there is a generation who have post-secondary education supplemented by work experience, practical on-the-job training may provide

the best opportunity to promote affirmative action candidates into professional and managerial positions.

On-the-job training needs to be one of the tools used by departments in developing staff potential. Each department should have a small number of positions available for on-the-job training. Sometimes departments should develop training positions in areas where there is currently a low rate of affirmative action representation. Other times, they should be created to provide a developmental assignment for a high potential staff member.

The GNWT has offered different forms of training positions in the past and can build on the lessons learned. The most important lesson is that these positions should be developed and driven by departments, rather than through a central authority.

We recognize that this recommendation may take slightly longer to develop and implement

### *Addressing the Future (Post Division)*

We mentioned early in this report that employment equity works best when people want to support it rather than because they have to. Over time, we hope that the government can develop a Northern Employment policy which will recognize the benefits of a home grown workforce.

#### **Post-Division Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Affirmative Action policy be changed to a Northern Employment policy.**

The current Affirmative Action policy is narrow in focus. It is only used as a tool to provide hiring priority for specific priority individuals. We suggest there is a need for a broader Northern Employment policy. This policy would provide support for the hiring and promotion of northerners in a way which was more consistent with the mobility sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are a number of components which should be part of the Northern Employment policy.

1. The policy should provide specific hiring priority (employment equity) for groups considered disadvantaged under the Charter (aboriginal people, disabled, women in specific occupations).
2. The policy should provide general hiring preference for all northerners, recognizing the advantages of putting local residents to work.
3. The policy should support the need for strong human resource management and outline the key elements and practices which should be in place in all departments, boards and agencies.
4. The policy should address possible links between government, private business, and non-government organizations for purposes of staff development.

The earlier recommendations in this report set the stage for a shift in the government's approach to human resource management. This recommendation will complete the shift.

Some work should begin on this recommendation over the next two years. Following division, each new government will then be able to finalize their own Northern Hire policies which reflect their goals with regard to representation and employment of northerners.

**Post-Division Recommendation 2 - We recommend that a monitoring process be established to ensure affirmative action is actively supported throughout the organization.**

We have made a number of recommendations to improve the GNWT representation. While we hope that the Ministers and GNWT managers will be active in supporting affirmative action and providing strong human resource development, past experience would show that there is also a need for monitoring.

As we plan for the two new territories, we suggest that consideration be given to creating an independent monitoring body. We are not suggesting a Public Service Commission which has a broader role in most jurisdictions including elements such as staff training. Instead, a body should be in place which will allow for an independent, on-going evaluation of the hiring and human resource management practices of departments, boards and agencies.

Its role could include providing a panel of independent individuals to sit on all staffing competitions to ensure a fair process.

Prior to division, the Personnel Secretariat should play a much strong role in monitoring the implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy and other human resource management practices. The Secretariat should develop a clear plan and process for carrying out the necessary monitoring. This process should be in place and included in the report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations in September.



### *Follow-Up to Recommendations*

We believe there are significant opportunities for positive change in the short term. The GNWT can and must improve its performance, both in increasing affirmative action representation and in providing sound human resource practices for all employees.

**Follow-up Recommendation 1 - We recommend that the Premier provide a report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations by September 22, 1997, outlining the action the government is taking with respect to the recommendations in this report.**

This report should also be tabled in the October sitting of the Legislative Assembly. The report should include an indication of the progress made by the government in implementing the recommendations of this report as well as future plans.

## APPENDIX A

### *Other Suggestions*

During our review, we looked at a whole range of human resource management areas. We tried to identify those which we felt were most critical in achieving a representative workforce.

However, in the course of our review, we identified a number of other options for improving representation and overall human resource management. While we did not spend a significant amount of time on these options, we feel they may be worth a second look and further consideration. The government or individual departments may wish to consider the following suggestions as part of the toolbox available to managers.

Some of the suggestions would be easy to implement while others would take longer to establish.

**Suggestion 1 - Progression within a specific occupational group should be based on merit and experience rather than on waiting for a vacancy at the next level.**

Most jobs are fairly unique, requiring a specific set of skills. You learn the job and become proficient at it. In time, you may wish to broaden your experience or move to something new so you apply for a promotion or a transfer.

However, there are some positions within the GNWT which have a number of levels. The difference between the levels are the degree of authority and responsibility. Examples of this type of position would include:

CSSW  
Renewable Resource Officer  
Economic Development Officer.

Currently, the only way for someone who is a RR officer I to become a RR II is to apply on a RR II position. This means waiting for a vacancy or possibly transferring to another community. This causes a number of problems. Often an officer has gained the skills necessary to carry out the additional duties. However, the department is not able to recognize that increase in expertise and knowledge in a formal way. There can also be restrictions on the amount of authority and responsibility that a department can assign the

individual. This has resulted in communities losing good workers just because they had to move in order to progress to the next level within their field.

There are some positions where the job is discrete and the various levels only reflect increasing levels of responsibility and authority. In these cases, departments should be given the latitude to move an employee from one level to the next. This should happen as part of the annual performance review process when the employee has attained the skills and experience required for the next level. For example, when a CSSWII is ready and able to assume the responsibilities of a CSSWIII, the employer should be able to make this change simply by reclassifying the position.

We acknowledge that there is a potential cost to allowing this type of progression. However, that cost must be weighed against the cost now for replacing and retraining individuals because their opportunities for advancement are limited.

**Suggestion 2 - Departments should actively explore temporary transfer arrangements for strong candidates for management or senior management.**

In the House recently, a Minister praised the broad background and experience of a newly hired Assistant Deputy Minister. Northerners often have to make a choice between working in the north or obtaining a broad work background with extensive post-secondary education. We want to encourage northerners to apply their skills and talents at home. In order to let these individuals become truly competitive for the most senior positions, we need to create opportunities to allow potential directors/Assistant Deputy Ministers/Deputy Ministers to broaden their experience.

Departments should actively explore temporary transfer arrangements for strong candidates for management or senior management. These transfers would create a developmental opportunity at a level of the organization where there are often limited avenues for growth. As well the GNWT could look at options like creating a pool of positions which could be used as a training ground, including Assistants to Deputy Ministers.

It is also the responsibility of individuals to explore options for their own professional development. Where a manager and an employee agree that the employee shows the potential to rise within the managerial ranks, the employee should also feel free to identify areas where they would like to gain additional experience. In these cases, the manager needs to be supportive.

This needs to be done very carefully. The selection of individuals for these opportunities must also be seen as fair and open.

**Suggestion 3 - Aurora and Nunavut Arctic Colleges should be encouraged to offer a one-stop information service identifying bursaries and scholarships.**

The need for more education has been emphasized repeatedly in the Assembly. As we noted earlier in this report, the average education levels in the north, particularly among aboriginal people, are quite low. The government offers student financial assistance to encourage northerners to attend post-secondary education. Despite this assistance, many students find it difficult to survive financial at school. Many mature students attending post-secondary institutions are doing so in order to find work - they don't have savings to draw on for living expenses. With limited summer employment opportunities, younger students are in the same situation.

There are a number of bursaries and scholarships available through government departments or private organizations and businesses. If we are serious about supporting northern students, we should ensure information about scholarships and bursaries is easily accessible in a single location. We understand that Aurora College has developed a partial list of this extra financial assistance. The two colleges are the logical organizations to have this information.

Aurora and Nunavut Arctic Colleges should be encouraged to offer a one-stop information service identifying bursaries and scholarships. It should be available through an internet site and a written summary available to all schools and career centres. There needs to be adequate publicity about the information so that organizations remember to include their scholarships and so students, parents and teachers are aware of it.

We understand that the North Slave Career Centre does prepare a written booklet outlining scholarships and bursaries. This is a good start but the information needs to be tied into the colleges and available in an electronic format.

**Suggestion 4 - All GNWT scholarships/bursaries should have at least a three year residency requirement and should apply the GNWT Affirmative Action priorities to ensure these funds benefit northerners.**

As a working group, we believe strongly that the GNWT should be encouraging the education and employment of northerners. GNWT scholarships and bursaries should be one of the supports available to northerners as they try to improve their education.

A quick review of GNWT scholarships and bursaries reveals a range of eligibility criteria. Some require one year's residency while others require more. Some use affirmative action but not all. We would like to see some consistency. With limited dollars available, we would like to see those dollars helping northern students.

**Suggestion 5 - We recommend that each new hire be assigned a mentor/buddy within the department.**

It is not enough to hire the right people. You also have to keep them. Often, a new employee can feel very isolated in a new job. They don't know the routine or how they might fit. In addition to the job, they have to learn the social matrix which exists among the staff. Success in a job sometimes depends on how well a person becomes part of the social structure rather than on their actual job performance.

To ease the way for new employees, each new hire should be assigned a mentor/buddy within the department. This person would show them the ropes and be available to answer questions or help out in any number of ways. This would have a double benefit. It would make the transition to the new workplace easier for the employee. It would also allow other employees to take ownership in the work done in the department and to share their knowledge with someone else.

### **Suggestion 6 - The GNWT should encourage employee groups for designated individuals**

Affirmative Action candidates entering the GNWT workforce often run the risk of being isolated. In addition to learning the actual job, there is also a complex social structure in every office. There can be a sense of isolation from the less formal, working relationships that people in the same office form with each other. Other jurisdictions have created groups or committees of designated individuals which give employees a sense of belonging. These groups can help employees address questions about corporate practices which they may not understand. They can also identify practices which make employment for specific individuals more difficult or uncomfortable. Much of how the government operates has evolved over the years. It needs to continue to evolve to reflect the people it serves.

For example, the Yukon government has a group of 17 women representing all parts and levels of the organization. They provide advice and identify areas where there are concerns for women in the Yukon government. They also suggest focus areas for each year such as harassment and try to provide opportunities to address these areas.

Within the GNWT, the Department of Government Services had a successful support group of aboriginal employees. This group's success came in part because it was employee initiated and actively supported by the employer.

These types of groups work best if they are initiated by employees. However, the responsibility to provide an environment which will allow these types of groups must be established by the employer.

### **Suggestion 7 - Bridging programs should be implemented for two areas:**

- college/university graduates into first jobs
- women and aboriginal people into management positions

In the workplace, there are certain types of barriers which people have difficulty with. There are a number of reasons why they exist. In order to reduce the barriers, it is sometimes necessary to provide a helping hand for specific groups of people through a bridging program.

A bridging program acts as an intermediate step. It places people in a new job situation while giving them access to a support system. Bridging programs recognize that not only is the employee in an area which is largely foreign to them, the employer may also need to provide some accommodation.

Looking across the country, there are two areas of transition which have been identified as particularly difficult. Looking at GNWT employment statistics, it appears that they are also difficult for northern employees. A bridging program for these two areas seems appropriate.

One area where bridging has been useful is for introducing new college or university graduates into their first jobs. These individuals bring a wealth of academic background but are often missing practical work experience. As well, the workplace is significantly different from a post-secondary institution. Graduates are used to a fair amount of autonomy, self-directed work, and generally a fair amount of flexibility in work hours. This contrasts with most offices where those in entry-level positions have limited autonomy, seldom make major decisions, and hours of work, appearance and behavior are quite important.

Bridging is also very effective for assisting women and aboriginal people successful enter management positions. When women and aboriginal people become managers, they are seldom surrounded by peers. There is often an adjustment period as the existing management group adjusted to having a new and different presence in their midst. There is also an adjustment for the new manager as they establish their place in the organization. Studies show that women and aboriginal people generally have management styles which have strong elements of consensus-building and teamwork. This contrasts with more traditional management which is based on power. In order to allow different styles to exist comfortably side by side, a bridging program can be helpful.

**Suggestion 8 - The government should work with the colleges to develop co-op programs in a number of fields of study.**

A common complaint is that graduates can't get jobs because they have no experience and they have no experience so they can get a job. This problem could be addressed in part by a partnership between the government and the colleges. This partnership should provide co-operative programs of study.

A co-op program at a university or college consists of a combination of academic study and practical on-the-job application of the concepts being learned. It is similar to the work/study rotation in many apprenticeship

programs. Typically, students are not paid or receive only a token reimbursement during the work placements.

In addition to helping students develop practical experience, a co-op program could also address some of the negative public perception about the quality of the colleges' graduates. By working together, the employer (government in this case) would be able to provide direct feedback to the educational institution about the quality of instruction.

The government work with the colleges to develop co-op programs in a number of fields of study. For example, co-op programs in renewable resources, social work and management studies might be a good place to start.

The potential of co-op programs is not limited to the public sector. We should also encourage the colleges to develop these programs in conjunction with the private sector, such as mines.

**Suggestion 9 - The hiring process should be revised to actively support flexible work situations.**

Many governments and private corporations are discovering the value of a commitment to flexible work. Work is, and should be, only one part of a person's life. Often, an accommodation in the workplace which helps an employee's personal situation will also benefit the employer. For example, studies show that the productivity of two employees sharing a job is greater than that of a single employee doing the same work. They also show that a parent who can shift their hours by 30 minutes to get their children to school are more content and productive on the job.

In the north, there are many individuals who wish to maintain part of their traditional lifestyle and there are also many young parents in the workforce. Flexibility in working hours and arrangements can help them become happier employees.

The corporate culture and the union are only marginally supportive of flexible arrangements. For example, there are still managers who believe people won't work unless they are being supervised. As well, the staffing process makes it difficult to support flexible work arrangements. As a result, although options like job sharing and flexible hours are available on paper, in reality they are seldom used.

Creating a flexible workplace which still ensures the job gets done and the public is served requires openness and creativity on behalf of employees and



managers. As a starting point, the hiring process needs to be reviewed and revised to more actively support flexible work situations.

**Suggestion 10 - A pool of funds should be available in each department to support managers in working with new hires.**

As a result of the Legislative Assembly's commitment to maintaining a balanced budget, departments are being asked to do more with less. With downsizing, managers and their staff are usually carrying a heavier load than they did in the past. When there is a vacant position, employees already putting in a full day try to pick up the duties of the position. This puts pressure on managers to hire employees who have the shortest learning curve possible. They need every position filled with someone who can do the job quickly.

There are Affirmative Action applicants who would do an excellent job but they are missing one particular piece of the necessary background. Although they have many equivalencies, they may be missing some specialized training or specific work experience. The manager would like to hire the person and give them the extra attention needed to get them up to speed on the job. Unfortunately, managers often do not have the luxury of time to provide this attention. As a result, managers have two choices:

- consider other candidates who may have more of the required skills up front; or
- hire the person and hope they can make it (a sink or swim approach).

The affirmative action applicant either doesn't get a chance at the job or is set up to potentially fail.

In order to encourage managers to work with promising affirmative action candidates, they need some support. They need things like

- overlap time between the previous person in the job and the new;
- training funds to support the new employee; and
- casual backup support for a short period of time.

The idea is not to double fill positions but to give a new employee and their manager the opportunity to make it through the learning curve. There should be a small dedicated pool of funds available in each department to support managers in working with new hires. This would allow departments to hire someone with potential but slightly short on specific skills and provide training and support early on.

**Suggestion 11 - Departments should develop programs for secondary students which will give them practical experience with potential jobs, particularly at the professional and technical level.**

True success in representation will come with the next generation. If students are encouraged to stay in school and pursue jobs at the professional level, we will have our own northern engineers, lawyers, nurses and managers.

We need to expose students to the range of possibilities. An occasional career day helps but it isn't enough. If young people are not aware of what a job is and what it involves, they are unlikely to choose it as a career. The government needs to expand the range of hands-on opportunities for students to experience various public service jobs.

Programs like the Introduction to Engineering, Architecture and Computer Technology are showing results. These programs provide students with practical exposure to possible careers. Unfortunately, similar programs in other departments were cut as part of the deficit management plan.

Students need the opportunity to see a range of careers first-hand. Even with very modest budgets, departments are only limited by the creativity and imagination of their staff in finding ways to highlight specific jobs. If we are to achieve representation, we need to help students see the range of possibilities ahead of them.

## *APPENDIX B*

### *Minority Opinion*

Most of the recommendations and suggestions in the report were supported by all members of the working group. Given the divergent opinions of the four members, we are pleased that we were able to reach consensus on most items.

There were a few areas where Mr. Henry felt a different approach should be taken. They are outlined as follows:

#### Affirmative Action Recommendation 3

Mr. Henry agreed with the overall recommendation providing that Cabinet places an emphasis on secondary and post-secondary education for NWT youth. He felt representation should be based on the labour force rather than on general population.

#### Affirmative Action Recommendation 4

The member felt the length of time to qualify as a long-term northerner should be five years.

#### Hiring Process Recommendation 4

The member does not support directed hiring practices to increase representation. He feels hiring priority, along with an increased emphasis on education, is sufficient.

#### Human Resource Recommendation 1

Mr. Henry suggested there is a need for a clear process for accountability. He is concerned about tying the hands of managers.

