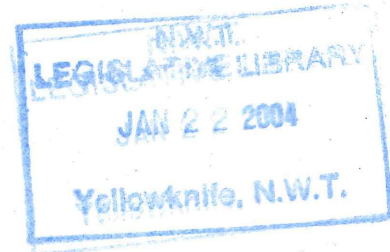


May 21, 2003

TABLED DOCUMENT NO. 5 1 5(2) TABLED ON JAN 21 2004

Bruce Evelyn
Director, Income Support Programs
Education, Culture and Employment
Lahm Ridge Tower
Government of the NWT
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife NWT
X1A 2L9



Dear Mr. Evelyn

RE: **INCOME SUPPORT ISSUES**
INUVIK SOCIAL ASSISTANCE APPEAL COMMITTEE:

The Inuvik Social Assistance Appeal Committee was re-established in September of 2002 with representation from residents of Inuvik.

The process is, when Income Support client is denied Income Support, they have a right to appeal to the Committee. Many of the appeals we hear are local but increasingly we are finding ourselves dealing with more "Inuvik Region" appellants.

Throughout the past year, a number of issues have arisen:

1. Senior Fossil Fuel Subsidy Program

Elders over the age of 65 years apply to this program to financially assist them in either buying wood, heating fuel or natural gas to heat their housing unit. We have heard a number of appeals over this past year because Elders are being denied based on their "excessive" income.

One of the eligibility processes is to gather their most recent Income Tax assessment and calculate their "Net Income". If it falls within the limit, they will be eligible.

A suggestion is to change this regulation/policy to "Taxable Income" instead of "Net Income". Basing it on "Taxable Income" allows more Elders to be eligible for the Program due to their CCRA Northern Residents Deduction Claim (usually \$ 5475.00 on an annual basis).

We also suggest that the maximum income threshold be increased; many of the clients are often a few thousand dollars over the current maximum.

Some elders who have worked hard all their life feel embarrassed and do not want to go to Income Support workers in small communities. We have a Minister Responsible for Youth; maybe there should be a Minister Responsible for Elders so that all Elder programs are coordinated.

The Senior's Fuel Subsidy Program seems to be misinterpreted by Elders who feel they qualify because they are over 65. If they do not qualify, other solutions could be found e.g. Income Support Clients, Fine Option Program participants etc., who have productive choice agreements, could cut wood, (this requires interagency coordination).

Many Elders continue to maintain their own households which allows the GNWT and Housing Corporation more "housing units" available for other public housing clients. Having to maintain their own households may become unaffordable to the Elders and more of a burden will be placed on the public housing system.

A slight change in the Subsidy Program may mean an extra tank of fuel for Elders over the winter.

2. Food Allowance Table

The Territorial wide Food Scale needs to be increased. We should examine the Food Allowance tables in Alaska, Yukon, Nunavut and Greenland for a “circumpolar” comparison.

3. Child Tax Benefit

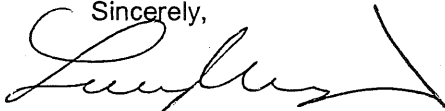
We suggest that the Territorial Government examine and repeal the “claw back” of the Child Tax Benefit from Income Support Recipients. Too often we listen to stories of families having to sacrifice in order to survive.

We realize that the Income Support is supposed to be a “temporary” program to get people back on their feet but many times it is not just financial circumstance that burdens the clients in attaining their goals. Many of our appellants don’t have the necessary basic educational skills to enter a vocational college program to further their education or are burdened with drug/alcohol addictions.

We should stop trying to model our “Income Support program” from other agencies and governments and deliver a program that is RELEVANT to the Northern circumstance albeit a slowly positive – changing one.

We are not sure if this in an appropriate time to raise these issues due to GNWT forecasted deficit and with a NWT General Election looming but when it comes to Income Support issues, we (as a Committee) realize that we are not the ones worrying about when our next meal is. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lucy Kuptana

Member of the/on behalf of the
Inuvik Social Assistance Appeal Committee:

Joyce Lillegran, Marja Van Nieuwenhuyzen, Bernice Furlong, Frank Edwards and Tammy Rogers

Cc: Sheila White
Regional Superintendent
Education, Culture and Employment
Inuvik NWT

Lois Walbourne
Regional Manager
Income Support Programs
Education, Culture and Employment
Inuvik NWT

Helen Sullivan
Director – Regional Operations
Department of Executive
Government of the NWT
Beaufort Delta Region
Inuvik NWT

Floyd Roland
MLA Inuvik Bootlake

Roger Allen
MLA Inuvik Twin Lakes

Vince Steen
MLA Nunakput

David Krutko
MLA Mackenzie Delta

Jake Ootes
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
Government of the NWT

