

Participation in the Economy of Youth, Seniors and
Handicapped/Disabled

YUKON 2000

YOUTH

Draft Discussion Paper
Prepared for the
Yukon Economics Development Strategy
Fall Conference

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YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

This report on youth and the Yukon economy is presented in four parts. Part one contains information about people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Part two talks about what happens when youth are unemployed. The main social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, crime and suicide are discussed.

Part three talks about the problems that youth face in getting and keeping jobs. Although a number of problems are discussed, the emphasis is on the two major ones of a) the general state of the economy, and b) the lack of preparation of young people.

Part four makes some specific recommendation for attacking the youth unemployment problem.

INFORMATION

Most of the information for this section comes from the 1981 census. The First Quarter 1986, Yukon Statistical Review shows that the youth population has not changed much in size since that time.

The 4500 youth make up about 10% of all the people in the Yukon. Of this number some 3000 are working or looking for work. So it can be said that 70% of Yukon youth are participating in the economy. For the rest of Canada the participation rate is slightly lower at 68%. The Yukon rate is higher, however, than Atlantic Canada where the highest participation rate is 60% in Nova Scotia.

Of those 3000 people who are participating in the economy, 88% are actually employed at any given time. In Canada, 86% of youth are employed. Female youth have a better rate of employment in the Yukon

than males. Ninety percent of the females are working, while 87% of the males are. Although most youth are working, a large number are looking for work and cannot find it. The Yukon unemployment rate for 15 to 24 year olds is 11.3%, 13% for males and 9.2% for females. Across Canada the unemployment rate for males is 12.7% and 13.1% for females.

When discussing unemployment rates, however, we do have to be careful. Unemployment rates are based on the numbers of people who are looking for work and cannot find it. The figures do not take into account the youth who have given up looking for work altogether. This group has become totally discouraged about ever finding a job. All too often they become the social problems of tomorrow. The rule of thumb used to figure out just how many of these youth there are is to take the number of known unemployed and half it. Thus, given that the official number of youth unemployed is 360 we can estimate that the actual number is 540. Of these, 180 are what we call the hard core unemployed.

Also, the official unemployment figures do not take into account the fact that many youth who are employed are only employed for a short time. Others are employed in part-time positions. So, although there are 2800 employed youth at any given time, they are not the same 2800 who are employed at another time. Some of them will be employed permanently, of course. However, a large number will be facing unemployment after a short period of work. Generally, 30% of youth face many short periods of being out of work. Another 30% are out of work for periods of over 52 weeks. Using these figures we can say

that of the 3000 Yukon youth who participate in the economy, only 1200, or 40% of them, are working permanently.

Table 1 shows the type of industries in which youth are employed. Youth are divided into young youth (15 to 19 year olds) and older youth (20 to 24 year olds). It can be seen that most of the 15 to 19 year old males are employed in the trades. Males in the 20 to 24 year old group find employment across most available industries. It seems that employment opportunities for young males are not as good as for the older males. For the 15 to 19 year old female the best source of jobs is in the Community-Business, and Personal Service industry. This industry employs over 40% of younger females. It is interesting to note that the 15 to 19 year old female is also successful in finding work in the trades. For the 20 to 24 year old female the Community-Business and Personal Service industry is also a large employer. For these females the Public Administration, or government sector is also a good job market.

The figures in Table 1 reflect the Yukon economy in general. One would not expect to see many youth employed in agriculture, forestry or fishing as these are limited sized industries in the Yukon anyway. Of some concern, however, would be the low numbers of youth who find jobs in the manufacturing and construction industries. Both of these sectors contribute a lot to the economic base of the Yukon. As such one would expect them to provide more jobs to youth than they do. Of even more concern is the very low number of women who find jobs in construction or in the transportation-communications-utilities industry. Although they are not usually seen as female types of jobs, one would expect to see more females than is true at the present time.

Table 1: Participation percentages, by industry for age groups 15 to 19, and 20 to 24, by sex: Yukon, 1981

	15 - 19		20 - 24	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Agriculture	—	.77	1.43	.41
Forestry	.74	—	1.43	—
Fishing/Trapping	.74	—	—	.61
Mines/Oil Wells	11.85	.77	18.44	3.05
Manufacturing	2.59	3.45	1.84	3.05
Construction	10.37	.77	11.07	2.03
Tranportation/ Communcation/ Utilities	10.37	4.98	17.62	7.52
Trades	31.11	32.18	14.75	19.51
Finance/Real Estate	—	4.21	2.46	9.76
Community/Business/ Personal Service	13.33	41.38	12.91	30.08
Public Administration/ Defence	18.88	11.49	18.03	23.98

CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The 1986 Special Senate Committee on youth says that youth unemployment is a leading cause of increases in delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution and suicide. In Canada, the largest number of inmates in adult jails are between the ages of 20 and 24. Statistics Canada shows that the Yukon has the largest number of charge rates among 15 to 24 year olds. Also, in the Yukon the costs

related to legal proceedings are two to three times as high as in any Canadian province.

Suicide rates for young Canadians have risen very much over the past 25 years. A 1984 report by the Minister of State for Youth shows that from 1961 the suicide rate for 15 to 19 year old males increased by 17%. For females in this age group the number of suicides jumped by 23%. The picture for the 20-24 year olds is even worse. The suicide rate for males in this age group jumped by 27%. For females the jump was an unbelievable 42%. Of even more concern to this report is that the suicide rate among northern males is twelve times greater than that of other young Canadians.

Although statistics about alcohol and drug abuse are harder to find, it is believed that alcohol and drugs are involved in a vast majority of car accidents. Car accidents are the leading killer of young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Among native youth it is estimated that alcohol and drugs are involved in 70% of their deaths. Crime, suicide and alcohol and drug abuse increases among our youth as jobs become harder to find.

Although it is impossible to say what unemployment costs in dollars and cents, the high costs of social programs are well known. If youth out of work are often youth in trouble, we can conclude that they are a huge drain on our social welfare, legal, penal, medical and other public and private support systems.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Although there are many reasons why individual youth may be unable to enter the job market, there are two major blocks to the general youth population. The first of these is the state of the

economy itself. The labour market presents a pretty black picture even in the industrialized regions of Canada. This picture is even darker for less developed regions like the Yukon. Jobs which otherwise might be available to youth are being cut out as employers face deeper recessions. In bad times such as these it is the young people who are the first to be laid off and the last to be hired. For the fewer jobs around, employers want experience, and experience is the one thing the young do not have. Although the situation can be easily seen in the private sector because of the large number of layoffs, it is no better in the public sector. Although governments do not usually lay people off, in these times they are not filling jobs being opened up by retirement, promotion or other vacancies. This can be a large loss of jobs for youth.

The situation, unfortunately, is not expected to get much better over the next 20 years. Even if the economy gets better from time to time, it will be older adults, and not youth, that are rehired. In the meantime youth will become more and more discouraged and the social problems they face will worsen. The Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council (1984) in talking about the situation, say that "the only lasting and effective solution to youth unemployment in this country is sustained and broad economic recovery" (p. 2).

The second largest barrier to the participation of youth in the economy is their lack of preparation. Every major report on youth unemployment in Canada in the past five years points out that youth today lack the background and skills needed to get and keep a job. Most see this as the fault of the schools. It is said that our young

people are neither getting a good basic education nor good attitudes toward work. Also seen as a problem here is the fact that society in general is seen as having a softer work ethic.

One thing which is happening as schools and homes fail to prepare young people properly is a terrible growth in the number of illiterates. Illiteracy is defined as not being able to read or write at a Grade 9 level. Not only can these youth not read and write at an adequate level, but often they have low self-esteem and lack basic living skills. They are often unable to complete an application form, or do well in a job interview. This group forms a large part of the hard core unemployed whose chances of ever finding a job grow slimmer as the economy worsens. Of the 17,000 Yukon citizens over the age of 15, 12.5% of them have less than a Grade 9 education. Others will have more than a Grade 9 education, but will be reading and writing below that level. Although 12.5% is well below Canada's 20%, it is still a large number of people in a territory with such a small human resource base.

Although the state of the economy and lack of preparation are the main reasons that youth have trouble getting jobs, there are other reasons too. One of these is the negative attitude that many adults have toward young people. They see youth as lazy and not really wanting to work. Yet in a 1983 survey, 87% of youth said that having a job was the most important thing to them in their lives. Eighty percent said that unemployment was their greatest concern. We are going to have to find ways of erasing the negative picture of youth if their job prospects are going to get better.

TOWARD SOLUTIONS

First of all we must accept the fact that without a very large and very long upswing in the economy, unemployment rates among youth are going to remain high. Economic forecasts show that the poor economic picture will stay bad to about the year 2000. However, we can and must take steps which will make the situation better for youth - and it can be better, even in poorer economic times.

The single most important thing that must be done is to get youth involved. They need to be involved both in the attack on youth unemployment, and in an attack on other social problems. To this end we make two recommendations. Both of these are also made to the Canadian government by the 1986 Special Senate Committee on Youth (for a complete discussion of the set-up and objectives of Youth Action Committees, the reader is referred to Youth: An Action Plan: Report of the Special Senate Committee on Youth, 1986).

1. The Yukon should take steps to establish Youth Action Centers in, at least, the major centers of Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse. These Committees should be set up and run by a non-government body made up of youth themselves.
2. An effort should be made to appoint youth to all public agencies, boards and commissions which make decisions which will affect them.

Involving youth in these two ways will be a first step in resolving the youth unemployment problem. It will also give them a clear message that we have faith in their ability to help solve social problems which affect them.

The second important thing which must be taken care of is to provide adequate training and education. In this regard a number of recommendations are made.

- 3a. That a cooperative effort by government, training institutions, employers and youth be made to conduct a market analysis of trade skill requirements in the Yukon. This will ensure that training is geared toward trade shortage areas and not being done just for the sake of training.
- 3b. Based on the results of the above market survey, educators and employers become full partners in the design of appropriate training courses.
- 3c. Where possible, employers should be involved as co-educators in the provision of training. This type of cooperative education model would see individuals spending part of the time in the training institution and part of the time in on-the-job experience.

These recommendations are aimed at a better preparation of youth for entrance to the job market. The involvement of the private sector will make the preparation relevant and should make them more prepared to give youths a chance at jobs.

One final factor in high youth unemployment, and high unemployment in general, is illiteracy. Persons with less than a Grade 9 education form a large number of the unemployed and the poor. Although formal adult basic education programs are offered in training institutions, they often cost a lot and are not always successful.

Part of the problem is that this population do not like to admit that they cannot read and write. They do not therefore come to the attention of the adult schools. A related problem is that they are threatened by formal training institutions.

4. It is recommended that youth educators look into starting up illiteracy programs such as the peer and volunteer tutoring models, and "Beat the street" programs. These have been pioneered with a lot of success by Frontier College in Toronto.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although official figures show that youth employment is fairly high in the Yukon, a look beneath the picture is not as bright. Youth face many periods of unemployment, and for some, these end up being long periods. For another group of youth, the hard core unemployed, the chances of ever being employed are slim. The poor economic outlook will most likely see high youth unemployment continue for another 20 years. However, it would be unwise to sit back and do nothing. Lack of action would most likely see a rise in social problems such as crime, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide. The cost of taking care of these problems will far exceed the costs of lowering the unemployment rate. We have made a number of recommendations for changes which have been successfully tried in other regions. It is of greatest importance that whatever else is done, youth be involved in the attack on their problems. They should have a major responsibility in taking the needed steps. They are young, they have energy and they often prove to be creative problem solvers when given the chance.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with those people who are over 65 years of age. In the first part some information is given about this group in the Yukon. Then the paper talks about the main problems which the elderly face. The final part of the paper makes a number of recommendations which would make for a better quality of life for senior citizens.

INFORMATION

In 1981 there were 735 people over the age of 65 in the Yukon. This was just over 3% of the total population. By January 1986 the number of elderly had risen to 891 persons, or almost 4% of the population. This growth in the numbers of elderly is something that is happening all over the world. By the turn of the century it is expected that the number of elderly in any population will more than double. So in the year 2000 the Yukon can expect to have almost 1800 senior citizens.

Fifty eight percent, or 430 of the elderly are male. Forty two percent, or 305 are female. It is unusual for males over 65 to outnumber females. In the elderly population across Canada there are 125 females for every 100 males. For those over 80 years of age, the numbers are even more surprising. In the Yukon males still outnumber females by 65 to 55. For the rest of Canada, females over 80 outnumber males by 185 for every 100.

Of the elderly population 625 of them are between 65 and 79 years of age. Fifteen percent, or 110 of them are aged 80 or more.

Fifty five percent, or 405 of the elderly live in urban centers. In fact most of them live in Whitehorse. The other 330 are in rural

areas. Of these 330 rural elderly, more than half do not live in organized towns at all.

Of the 735 persons over 65, 100 are working. Of this number, 75 actually work full time.

The average income of the elderly Yukon person is \$7,500.00. This is less than half of the income for other people in the Yukon. Persons under 65 in the Yukon have an average income of \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00 higher than that of other Canadians. However, the income of the elderly is only \$200.00 to \$300.00 higher than other elderly Canadians. Although the average income of seniors is \$7,500.00, it must be noted that half of the elderly population make less than \$6,000.00 per year.

While only 17% of the total Yukon population is native, 25% of the elderly Yukon population is native.

To sum up, the elderly make up 4% of the total Yukon population. Few of them are employed. A majority of them are male. One quarter of them are native. Over one half of them live in the larger urban centers. One half of them live on an annual income of less than \$6,000.00.

NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY

The needs of the elderly can be grouped under four headings: 1) Public Education, 2) Chances for Learning, 3) Health and Social Services, and 4) Income. Each of these will be discussed in this section.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

More than anything else, the elderly need to be seen as important human beings with feelings, needs and goals. Most people, if they

think of the elderly at all, think of them as just old people. They are lumped together as a group who are no longer able to do anything useful, who are often sick and in need and who are just passing time until they die. The sad thing about this belief is that it is held by so many people that it is seen as a fact. It is even sadder that the elderly themselves often come to believe it.

What people believe about the elderly will effect how they are treated. It will effect the decisions and policies that we make about their lives. If we see them as a burden, our policies will reflect this. If we see them as an important group of people with good things to offer the community, our policies will reflect this.

Public education is the key to changing attitudes toward the elderly. Attitudes must change if the needs of the elderly are going to be properly met. As the numbers of elderly increase, they will be more and more visible in society. It is very important that we understand their needs, hopes and fears. It will become harder and harder to shut the elderly away from the rest of the population and ignore them. As more of us live longer lives, we all have a greater chance of one day becoming one of the elderly. By changing attitudes today, we will be making sure that in our own future people will understand more about the elderly and will care about their rightful place in society.

The Yukon has a Senior Citizens Advisory Council. This group should be the moving force behind a public education program. It should also ask as many senior citizens as possible to help in making their image a better one. The elderly are really the best people to help stop negative or false beliefs that other people have about them.

They need to be invited to join in and stand up for their own rights. As long as governments step in and do everything for the elderly, they will continue to be seen as useless and helpless. Governments may have to put up some of the money, but the elderly themselves should be asked to help plan and carry out public education and image programs.

The keys here are participation and action. Fairs, workshops, co-operatives, seniors in school programs and media programs are just a few of the many ways that the elderly can be a part of a productive and active group in the Yukon. As has been true in other places in Canada, the results will be a) a senior citizens group that feels better about themselves, b) a public that knows more about what the elderly are really like, and c) more chances for the elderly to be a part of what is happening in their society.

One special part of public education is the education of the "soon to be" elderly. We usually call these pre-retirement programs, but there is a problem here. Often pre-retirement programs are only run in large agencies, such as governments, for their own employees. Others, offered through private groups or schools are attended mostly by middle class or educated people. Large numbers of pre-retirement people just do not get any information about life as a retired person. Adding to the group of people who do not get information are many housewives and those who should be about to retire but are out of work. Many of these people would not attend the formal, organized programs which are put on in the community. Yet we know that people who are prepared for their "golden years" are happier and more active than those who are not ready. If we want a happier, more active and healthy senior group, we need to find ways of getting the information

to them. If they will not come to us, then we will have to go to them. Informal workshops, one-on-one volunteer programs and store front projects are some of the ways of reaching this population. Again it is the seniors themselves who need to be responsible for finding solutions to this problem.

CHANCES FOR LEARNING

Most of us retire at 65. Unfortunately, this often means more than just retiring from the labour force. For many it means retiring from an active life. Yet some may live up to another 20 years or more. Although people often see the elderly as sick, the fact is that most of them are healthy. It is also a fact that most elderly want to be productive in their retirement. They want to do new things. They want to do things they never had the time to do before. However, there are few chances for them to learn. Schools do not encourage senior citizens to enrol. Senior citizens can enrol, of course, if they want, but most do not want to be in classes with younger students. Aging does mean slowing down. The older person often fears not being able to keep up with younger classmates. Another thing is that the elderly are not comfortable in the formal classroom setting. Many of them will not have been in school for over 45 years. Yet they want to learn new ideas and new skills. These needs can be met by setting up courses just for the elderly so that they can learn together. Once they get comfortable, then we may be able to put them together with younger people. There would be many benefits to both sides. The younger learner can benefit from the rich experience of the older person. The older person gains confidence from being able

to teach the young. Both benefit from a better understanding of the other age group. Many schools have paired a young person and an older person in a "buddy system". The pair has to work on projects together. Such programs are very successful, and they do very good things for the image of the elderly.

The Senior Citizens Advisory Council should first identify the learning wants of the elderly. These may be academic, technical or hobby skills. Then along with the elderly and educators, courses should be designed. In the past 20 years a lot has been written about life long education. Unfortunately, this often means learning until retirement. The elderly are able to learn. Many of them want to learn. We must give them chances to do so. This does not mean just putting on senior citizens courses. They must be in on planning what is in the course, and in deciding how and where the courses will be run. Doing it for them will almost always fail.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The main things here are shelter, transportation, health care and social support. The well being of the elderly depends on these things being there for them. With shelter, the first goal must be to have the older person live in the community as long as possible. They must have the right to live independently in safe housing for as long as they can. Old age homes should only be used when they can no longer care for themselves. They should not be used as "dumping" grounds for the old person who has been abandoned.

Many elderly who own their own homes keep living in them for years without any problem. This is the best situation when it is possible. Some, as they age, will be less and less able to totally

care for themselves. However, they need not be put into old age homes at this point. In the bigger towns help should be made available to them. Homemaker and home help services, maintenance and chore services, meals-on-wheels, etc., should help the elderly take care of themselves. Where possible, these things should be done by other seniors on a volunteer basis. These seniors are in turn kept active in a useful way. In many places senior citizen groups make up a list of skills that seniors have and match them with a list of needs that other seniors have. For example, one elderly person, who has no transportation, may make do laundry and mending for another in return for rides to shops, doctors, etc. Independence is very important to the elderly. Communities who take care of this need will have a healthier, more active group of elderly. In addition, the high cost of old age home care is kept as low as possible.

Not all senior citizens can afford to, or want to, live in their homes. In these cases other kinds of shelter must be looked into. Senior citizen housing projects, cottage clusters, granny flats and communal living are some of the ways that have been successful. The most important thing is that the cost be kept low.

Some elderly people will live with their families. This can be a good thing for some families, but it can be bad for others. Having an elderly person in the home can cause stress for some. Where this is the case, the elderly person feels unwanted and useless. Counselling needs to be provided for such families. If the problems cannot be handled, then some other shelter situation needs to be found for the elderly person.

The problems for the elderly in the rural areas are harder ones to take care of. They have a lot less support to call on. This will be very true for the 110 elderly Yukoners who live away from even the small towns. Many of them will not need any help. Those who do, however, will often have to be brought in to the larger centers. Where this is so, care must be taken. People who live away from towns often made that choice years before. They do not like living around other people. They will not look kindly on moving. Where they can be talked into moving we must take care to help them fit in. Other seniors with similar backgrounds can help.

Transportation is often a problem for the elderly. Many cannot afford it. Others have health problems which make them unable to drive. Yet in order to be independent, they must be able to shop, to get to doctors and so on. The best solution, as said earlier, is a volunteer network. It is even better if that network is made up of seniors who give rides in return for goods and services that they need.

Health care is important for the elderly. Although most are healthy, it is a fact that aging often means health problems. There are two big problems which the elderly face with health care. The first is that they may not know a lot about good health care. They especially may not know how important good eating habits are. Many will not know how to eat well on a small amount of money. The elderly need to be given information about these things. Where this is done through senior citizens groups, it has been found to be helpful.

The second problem that they face is that doctors and other health care workers do not know much about the elderly, and many of

them do not really care. They assume that all of their health problems are due to old age. Some are not interested in giving good health care to someone who is old. It is attitudes like these that make a public education program so important. Senior citizen groups must be active in demanding their rights. Medical people should be asked to sit down and talk with groups of seniors. Again, the elderly need to be strong in voicing their own case. They should keep a list of medical people who understand them and their needs. The elderly who need help should be sent only to those people on the list.

Another major problem facing the elderly is isolation and loneliness. Retirement does not just mean the loss of a job. It often also means loss of contact with people. In addition, as people age, their friends begin to die. Support from family and friends is very important to all of us. It is even more important to the elderly. We must remember this when programs for the elderly are being planned. Their well-being depends on strong support networks. The best way to make this happen is to encourage them to form strong senior citizens groups. Indeed, as is said in the section on youth, participation is the key. Senior citizens councils and groups must band together to form a loud and strong voice for the elderly. This is the most important thing in attacking all of the problems of the older person. Through active participation they will get more enjoyment out of their retirement years. They will also be better able to pass on their wisdom and rich experience to younger people.

INCOME

The elderly are poor. It is as simple as that. A majority of Yukoners say it is hard to get by where the cost of living is so high.

Yet their average income is \$15,000.00. How much harder must it be for the elderly who exist on half of that? The elderly simply do not have a very good standard of living. Income is tied to all of the other problems that were talked about earlier. Because they are poor they live in poor housing conditions. They cannot afford to eat properly. They cannot afford anything extra in their lives. So they get sick. When they get sick they become a burden. When they become a burden we hide them away in old age homes. The cycle repeats itself. It should not have to. Illness in the elderly often has little to do with age. It has a lot to do with poverty.

Most of what needs to be done about income and the elderly is the responsibility of the federal government. Benefits must be raised to at least the poverty line. Public and private pension plans need to be improved. We will all be old one day. If things stay as they are, most of us will also be poor. We need to support the voice of the elderly in calling for greater benefits.

At the local level we need to look at the practice of retirement at 65. Many people are able to do good work well beyond this age. Of course we must keep in mind that every person who works beyond 65 takes a job away from a younger person. Most countries of the world struggle with this problem. We need to think about such things as job sharing where a senior shares a job with a younger person. We must try to open up more part-time jobs to seniors who want them. There are no easy answers, but the elderly need more money of some sort. We need to continue to work on this problem.

Other ways that we can assist the elderly is by setting up senior citizen food banks and cooperatives. In years past the family took

care of the elderly. This does not happen much anymore. It is time for the community to see itself as the family. We all need to care about the well-being of one another. If even one senior citizen is a slave to poverty, then we are all slaves.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In the above section a number of recommendations were made. These are reviewed below. It should be made clear that although the government may take a role in getting senior citizen groups together, it is these groups that should have the main responsibility for carrying out the work. And, of course, they should involve as many senior citizens as possible.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

- 1a. A public education program be started with the goal of creating a positive image of the elderly. Such a program should involve all levels of the media, educators, the medical community and so on.
- 1b. Activities such as senior citizen fairs, cooperatives, seniors in schools and seniors workshops be carried out in an effort to keep the elderly in the public spotlight.
2. Workshops, one-to-one volunteer and storefront drop-in programs be carried on to tell people what issues they will face in retirement. The goal would be to reach persons soon to be 65 who do not go to formal retirement programs.

CHANCES FOR LEARNING

- 3a. Conduct a survey to find out what kinds of learning activities the elderly would like. The survey should also

find out how and where they would like such activities to take place.

- 3b. Committees of seniors and educators be set up to develop and carry out the most wanted learning activities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- 4a. Every effort should be made to make sure that the elderly can live independently in the community for as long as possible. This will mean providing a variety of support services.
- 4b. Set up a clearinghouse system in which the elderly can exchange needed goods and services.
5. Make sure that seniors have access to transportation. This can be provided through service clubs and/or volunteers.
6. Through workshops, one-to-one volunteers, home visits, etc. provide the elderly with information about basic health care, including proper nutrition.
7. Through public education, educational activities, fairs, social clubs, etc. make sure that the elderly have a strong social support network in the Yukon.

INCOME

8. Set up senior citizen food banks and cooperatives and encourage the general public to give needed goods such as food, clothing, furniture, etc.

GENERAL

9. Encourage the elderly of the Yukon to be active as their own voices in the community and to work together for a higher quality of life.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over the next 20 to 30 years a greater number of people than ever will be over 65. They will have a rich background of experience to share. We will not benefit from this experience if we do not take care to involve them as vital parts of the community. By taking care of them today we will be creating programs and policies that will ensure a better tomorrow for us all.

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DISABLED CITIZENS

INTRODUCTION

The biggest problem that disabled people have to face is not their disability, but the fact that they are poor. If you are rich and disabled you can buy the services you need to adapt your house, get to work, and have your work adapted so that you can do it. Money has not always been the answer to finding a job in the community.

If we look back to the very beginnings of time, we can see that disabled people had a very different place in society - when people were scarce, all members were valued and disabled people were well cared for. Travelling tribes could not support disabled people unless they could help the tribe. Physically disabled and people who could not see or hear were often left to die because they could not carry their load. One place where the disabled could find jobs was in farming, where people are stable and there are many jobs to do. It may not have been a large job, but it was one that had to be done. In Europe during the time of the trades disabled people earned their living by begging, and had licenses to allow them to beg in the streets. When big factories and industries came in, disabled, elderly and poor people and, in many cases, children, worked in poor houses for low wages when they could not get work elsewhere.

Today, we still tend to reward those who can provide for themselves and control or put down people who cannot. These, "the welfare poor" are left behind - they cannot find work, or work at jobs which do not pay enough to live on. Almost 50% of people on public assistance are disabled in some way.

Poverty for a disabled person is no different than poverty for anyone on fixed incomes, but disabled persons get caught in a poverty circle. When unemployed they rely on subsidies that barely meet survival needs for food, shelter and transportation. Those who do work face extra costs that reduce their earning power (adaptations, extra assistance, periods when they cannot work). Disabled people in workshops or institutions give up the ability to earn money and a place in society for security of shelter and basic care.

In areas like the Yukon and Northwest Territories, many of the disabled are forced to leave because the population is so small and scattered that it is not economical to provide a full range of services. A family with a disabled child on a marginal farm or in hunting and trapping will be forced to leave the north or turn their child over to family in the city, to a group home or hospital, or, in some cases, send the child out of the Territories to a residential school. Those who become disabled later in life are faced with having to move to the south to get the services they require, and many never return because of the lack of services, adapted housing and transportation. People have a tough go, especially in rural areas, and the harsh winters makes getting around in wheelchairs almost impossible.

WHO ARE THE DISABLED IN THE YUKON?

It is hard to get an accurate picture of disabled people in the Yukon because so many people do not have phones or permanent addresses. Among the people of the north there is a serious problem related to fetal alcohol syndrome - babies born to heavy drinking mothers (some say 2 to 4, out of 5 babies, are born with it). Many of

these children have a difficult time staying in school and often turn to alcohol early in life. Over the years this causes a vicious circle that creates a serious drain on the economy. This topic is not covered here, but does require serious study if the year 2000 is not to bring a collapse of the economy because of overwhelming care costs.

Most disabled people who can be identified live in Whitehorse (61%), but there are a fairly large number of people in rural areas (24%) and the remaining split between Dawson City and Watson Lake. The largest group of disabled people are over the age of 50, with about 10% in all other age groups. Just about half are married, but very few have more than one child (8%). One out of four have been disabled since birth, the rest either do not know why they became disabled or became disabled later from accidents or illnesses.

While it goes without saying that a disability restricts people's ability to function, the greatest number of people were concerned that their disability limits their leisure time (6 out of 10). It also affects people's ability to get a job (5 out of 10), and get out and do things with your friends (5 out of 10). Disability does not appear on the surface to restrict housing and transportation options (2 out of 10). This is likely because many people who require these services have migrated to the south.

Doctors and hospitals seem to be the primary source of assistance for the disabled in the Yukon territories, with very few people using other health related services and support services. Although physiotherapy seems to be a popular service, speech therapists, psychologists, home maker services are very scarce. The services which exist are located in Whitehorse, with the local doctor, nurses

and travelling clinic the only kind of service available in the smaller towns and the rural areas. There were concerns, however, about the expense of travelling to Whitehorse for specialists and the fact that some specialists have been cancelled and people now need to travel all the way to Vancouver.

JOBS AND DISABLED PERSONS

Everybody needs to have enough money to provide for themselves and their families. The alternative - welfare benefits - mean life at below the poverty level. There is also a high price for both the individual and the state when people become dependent on welfare and feel themselves useless.

Apart from the need for money, people like to be involved in completing tasks, especially tasks which are creative or contribute something to others. In most situations work fulfills these needs. For disabled people, work is also a ticket to being accepted and understood by others. Many disabled people feel that they are shunned and put down, but if they are able to hold a job they have respect. A job shows that the person has recovered from, or is coping with a disability - if you are a worker, you are not treated like a patient or someone who is sick. In fact, mental health patients see themselves as 'well' if they can hold down a job. Thus work is not just a way to make money, it brings self respect, a way to make friends in the community, and a way to be connected to what is happening.

On the other hand, many long-term unemployed people are finding other ways to keep busy and to grow within themselves. Some disabilities also get worse with work stress, e.g. people with heart

problems, psychiatric problems and problems related to fatigue. Therefore, while people who want and need to work should have the opportunity to work, there should be other ways that people can contribute, even if that contribution is not through paid jobs.

We must look to the south for information on employment of disabled and non-disabled people. In the most recent Canadian disability survey (1986), the Northwest Territories or the Yukon were not sampled, but there was a good urban/rural breakdown. In the general population, about 67% of people of working age are actually employed, compared to 41% of people with disabilities who felt they were employable. The employment differences between disabled and non-disabled people become more noticeable as people get older. Disabled workers feel that they have good job security and have made a contribution to their employers, however, most feel the chances for advancement are not as good as they would be if they had not been disabled.

The figure of 41% is certainly much higher than earlier estimates that only 20-25% of disabled persons had jobs because it only includes persons who are considered employable. The biggest tragedy lies with the large number of disabled persons who are not working because they do not feel they are employable and therefore do not even try.

The costs of high unemployment among disabled people are staggering - it costs between \$80-\$200.00 per day to keep someone in a nursing home or group home: \$30-\$50.00 per day for welfare: \$40-\$100.00 per day in a sheltered workshop. Estimates between \$20,000-\$75,000.00 per year are not unrealistic for persons in care.

If we are going to reverse the costs we must look at why more persons with disabilities do not work - the barriers to employment.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

VISIBLE BARRIERS

While there have been many advances in transportation and getting into buildings, the big problem lies in getting from building to building, and getting around in buildings. While it is relatively easy to change building standards, it is almost impossible to change winter. Cities like Calgary now provide miles of connected indoor walkways downtown to beat the cold weather and make it easier for people to get around.

The problem for a trapper, a fisherman or a farmer is not getting into buildings, but getting around outside. While you can sometimes adapt farm routines because they stay the same, it would be hard to be a disabled hunter, fisherman, miner or forestry worker. This means that other employment must normally be found for persons injured or who become ill while in these occupations.

LACK OF EDUCATION

If you were disabled as a child you would face a serious problem because special education does not really help students get jobs. Even if you were in a regular class, you likely would not be able to work after school and in holidays because you need all your energy and effort to keep up with the school program. Many mildly disabled kids get a decent education, but lack the work experience needed to get a job. School guidance counsellors have problems thinking about jobs for disabled students so many of the brighter disabled students go south for education and do not return after school is over. The rest

of the students either go into sheltered workshops or onto a disability pension.

HIRING POLICIES

Inflated education and experience requirements keep many disabled people from being considered for jobs. Jobs that can be adapted or shared so that people with disabilities can do them are often written in a way that prevents disabled people from even applying for the jobs. Employers may not want to purchase special equipment or take a chance on higher insurance rates and therefore are not willing to hire disabled individuals, even though their track record as employees is very good and subsidies are available for changes.

THE HIDDEN BARRIERS

ATTITUDES

The above barriers can be removed if people want to, but it is harder to change disabled peoples' beliefs that they are not employable, and our belief that disabled people do not need a job, should not have to work, or do not have a right to a job. Often we see disabled people as sick, and sick people do not have to work - their "job" is to get better, to cooperate with the doctors so that they can get back to their real job. This is fine for people who can get better, but for people who have ongoing problems and for whom there is no cure they are left in a box on a shelf, never sick enough to get full medical treatment, and never well enough to be citizens. They are given consolation prizes - sheltered workshops and welfare benefits. People with hidden disabilities like mental health problems may be able to get a job, but may end up being fired when their psychiatric history comes to light. Rejection of these people

by co-workers may lead to job failures and the individual's expectation of rejection on the job may lead to poor performance and firing as a general pattern.

Removing these attitude barriers is a complex problem. While the public has to change these attitudes, disabled people must want to take their chances with the rest of society as well. For many this may mean risking loss of a secure pension for the chance of an unstable job - not much incentive. In many provinces disability benefits are seen as welfare benefits and people are discouraged from making money because they might lose their benefits. We need to encourage people to try, to risk, to become employed.

REHABILITATION

Sheltered or make work projects, rehabilitation workshops, etc. that we have been set up to assist people to get jobs often become a justification for keeping people out of the job market. Very few people ever get out of rehabilitation workshops (in Western Canada it is under 2%). The longer people are in these settings, the less chance they have of getting a job. This is partly because we have created goals that few, let alone the disabled, can live up to, e.g. always on time, consistent performance, etc. Most never have a chance to get a job in the community because they never are "quite ready".

LACK OF WAGE SUBSIDIES AND INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYMENT

While there is a lot of talk about incentives on paper, very few are implemented. While make-work projects can lead to meaningful work, they are usually taken by people who need to work their 10-12 weeks to qualify for Unemployment Insurance. Incentives take time and effort to get and few employers are willing to put out the effort.

Many employers exploit workers on wage subsidies and let them go when they have to pay full wages - especially in tough times.

Given the high unemployment rate among non-disabled persons and the lack of ability to prepare and support disabled people in the workplace, we have to ask ourselves is work the only act in town?

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

In this section I am not recommending increasing workshop spaces or developing of rehabilitation satellites in small towns. This is not to say that this might not be beneficial, but in light of the small incidence of disabled persons, the lack of an industrial base, the potential for economic redirection, and the strong community spirit of the north, other alternatives are proposed.

That is not to assume that the existing services can remain the same, for community services need to be more flexible - getting out into homes, neighborhoods and the workplace rather than in workshops and group homes.

Commitment to community training means that staff must be skilled in ways that allow for experimentation and creativity rather than relying on packaged training methods. New approaches should be created or adapted to the Yukon and existing programs for staff made available in the Yukon through teleconference and correspondence courses.

The following ideas stem from the belief that disabled persons can be full citizens of the north - not drains on the economy or damaged goods to be shipped back to the south for repair. Each idea will not work by itself, but taken together they can effect the very

root of the problems faced by disabled adults who want to be contributors to Northern development.

REVERSE DEPENDENCE

The biggest hope for increasing the economic participation of disabled persons is to aggressively change the practices which make disabled people more dependent and cautious.

WORK EXPERIENCE: By making work experience a priority for disabled students and creating the expectation of work after school, schools, families and disabled youth learn to expect an adult life of work.

1. expand curriculum of high school to include work experience for all disabled students - not just the vocational students
2. provide work experience grants for disabled youth during summers (targeted youth employment programs)

government role
- provide funds for
summer programs

private sector role
open spaces for work experience,
e.g. fishing for hearing impaired
students

SELF HELP: By encouraging disabled persons to help each other they learn to rely not just on professionals, but on others like themselves. In the process they see themselves as helpers and therefore capable.

3. encourage disabled adults to become partners in education - invite them into class, visit them in community
4. use "peer teaching" methods
5. use job club for older students disabled youth - i.e. self help job seeking clubs

government
- CEIC already operates
job clubs across Canada -
encourage CEIC to bring
these to the North

private (disabled groups)
- work with schools to change
image of disabled persons as
helpless

8. promote flex time alternatives and create incentives for employers to experiment

government

- publicize successful experiences
- reduce red tape for flex time

private

- open options to all, not just disabled

CREATE VOLUNTEER OPTIONS

Given basic welfare subsidies, the question for many becomes not what to do to make money, but what to do to be considered a part of and a contributing member of the community. For many (usually the wealthy or the young) this feeling comes through volunteering; providing assistance to others, being involved in community projects and community development. These experiences are often more meaningful than working nine-to-five in a sheltered workshop or in a job that has very little payoff. Persons with disabilities may need support initially to see that they have a role to play.

9. provide support to disabled people who want to volunteer through United Way agencies.

government

- publicize volunteering as positive

private

- open options within business and community organizations for volunteers

SMALL BUSINESS OR COTTAGE INDUSTRY

Individuals with disabilities have often used excess time to produce creative articles for sale. This should continue to be fostered as a viable alternative not only for the disabled, but for talented others. Small business and other cottage industry can make a difference, e.g., a small business grant for capital and inventory to disabled persons in Nova Scotia is helping many to become self-supporting.

10. encourage small business and cooperatives through incentives

government

- as with native co-ops
- government incentives
for small business

private

- sponsor related small business
options

Encourage Persons with Disabilities to Offer Services to Other

Disabled Persons

The Independent living movement is gaining momentum in Canada as persons with disabilities realize that they have "product knowledge" - they know what it is like to be disabled and know what kinds of supports work best. Groups of disabled persons are operating attendant care, housing, transportation options for others and in the process are gaining the business skills to branch into other service businesses.

11. support independent living initiatives including information and referral services, practical services run by disabled people for disabled people

government

- funding of core functions
for developing independent
living centres

private

- donations and personal assistance
in business operation to emerging
services

Individual Funding

The Yukon could be a leader in Canada by and funding individuals directly to provide and coordinate their own services. This alternative is becoming increasingly popular across Canada as persons with lifelong disabilities are being given funds to hire their own staff and design their own adaptations. This dramatically alters the charity model of people who are serviced and cared for. People who have been identified as dependent, purchase the care they need for themselves and in the process become creative employers. Given that the Yukon has few professionals, this model would be very successful

for it relies on community support and small business. When disabled people are allowed the right and responsibility to provide for their own services, they can, through hiring and creating jobs, become useful members within society.

The savings are great - keeping people within their own communities, hiring local support people from neighbors and friends is very cost effective. In addition it provides employment to others who may not be able to find employment through traditional routes. This also decreases the drain on hospital services and extended care facilities as these are then used only for people who cannot or will not take on the responsibility of managing their own services.

12. direct funds from agencies to individuals and encourage private service providers so that services can be purchased and managed (need support of independent living centre)

government
 - work with federal/
 provincial agreements
 to allow transfer of
 funds to individuals
 - income tax alterations to
 allow this to happen - i.e.
 money cannot be considered
 income for disabled persons
 or it is taxed twice.

private
 - develop small service providers

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has looked at disabled persons' part in the economic development of the Yukon and some alternatives that use the rugged community strength of Northern communities.

Disabled persons are an often overlooked resource, but they can contribute to the life and development of their communities. Communities become richer places to live in when the potential of all citizens is realized and communities who care for their own - creatively and with dignity, promise security and hope for all.