

- Department of the Solicitor General
- Ministry of State for Social Development
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



Wasted Effort: The initiatives of one organization may frequently duplicate, complicate or undermine the efforts of another, without the officials of either being aware of the fact until it is too late. A phone survey established that senior officials in several departments did not know how their own budget or programs related to Native persons, even after they spent several days trying to find out this information. If this is true of other departments as well, then it is little wonder that officials do not consult across departmental lines. The net effect of this non-consultation is wasted money and effort on the Government side, and confusion and mistrust on the part of those Native persons whom the efforts are intended to help.

In the OBSTACLES report, for example, Recommendation 116 called for a study to determine the feasibility of a transfer of Indian health services from the Department of National Health and Welfare to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This Recommendation was made because the Members of the Special Committee perceived that there was a lack of consultation and coordination between officials of the two

departments in a matter of central concern to thousands of Indian people. This lack of consultation artificially separates the problems of health care from other problems such as poor housing, heating, sanitation and transportation which are direct contributors to a high incidence of disability in Indian communities. The Members are concerned not so much with how the Government delivers its health services as with the fact they be delivered in a way that addresses the realities, the often harsh realities, of life in these communities. If effective service means a transfer of a major responsibility from one department to another, then so be it. But, if the best results can be achieved simply by guaranteeing greater consultation and coordination within the present arrangement, then that will also be satisfactory.

Co-ordination: Some organization in the Government must now take responsibility to ensure that internal consultation and coordination take place not only in Ottawa but also in the field offices where direct contact between Native persons and the Federal Departments occurs. The Special Committee recommends that the Ministry of State for Social Development (MSSD) takes the initiative to put into place an organization which will ensure that no policy or program affecting Native people will be implemented without first going through a process of interdepartmental consultation, as well as a process of consultation with Native representatives. This organization may take the shape of a systematic committee structure which provides information between agencies and prevents duplication of services. As part of its responsibility, MSSD should also undertake an interdepartmental study of programs and services provided by the Federal Government to disabled Native

people. In addition to reducing duplication and redundancy, this study will also be a first step toward identifying deficiencies of service.

Departmental Strategy on Consultation: As part of their responsibility, the departments should prepare in writing their policy and strategy on consultation, so that both Government officials and Native representatives will understand, if not agree, on how consultation is to be achieved on all issues. Any additional costs to the Government for carrying out these responsibilities will be more than offset by the subsequent savings which will result from the increased efficiency and effectiveness of coordinated activities.

Necessary Interpretation: The Committee feels that it is essential that as many Native persons as possible understand the recommendations in the OBSTACLES report and in this document. It recommends, therefore, that the Federal Government provide funds to ensure that translations and interpretations in Native languages can occur. The National Indian Brotherhood, the Native Council of Canada, and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, have already indicated their willingness to coordinate and promote this exercise. Financial arrangements should be made through the Department of Secretary of State to ensure that the necessary interpretation occurs.

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