

Federal "make work" projects slated for N.B.

By MARIA WAWER

To help alleviate unemployment during the winter months, the federal government has allotted one hundred million dollars for various "make work" projects in New Brunswick and throughout the rest of the country.

Half of the sum is being set aside for municipally initiated projects, while the rest is earmarked as an incentive for the undertakings of individuals, private groups or local organizations. The program is designed specifically to take up some of the joblessness produced by the winter slack period, by hiring the seasonally unemployed. (However, it must be noted all unemployed are eligible for jobs created under the program, not only those who are laid off solely for the winter.)

That section of the Local Initiatives Program which falls under the Organization and Groups category is being administered by Canada Manpower and does not go to them through any intermediary.

Individuals or groups are encouraged to submit proposals for programs which would provide a minimum of 30 man months of work for otherwise unemployed people, without, at the same time being a profit making venture for the initiators. Projects should be designed to implement new services for the local community.

Criteria a project must fulfill in order to qualify for the government grants are outlined in the Manpower and Immigration Information for Applicants brochure. They include:

The projects should be capable of being put into effect quickly so that the main employment impact occurs between November 1971 and May 1972. This program will only support projects until May 31, 1972.

Applicants will be expected to use Canada Manpower Centres in hiring unemployed workers for the project.

Projects should be designed to contribute to community betterment.

They must be of a basically non-profit nature.

They should be capable of creating additional employment without having an inflationary effect or imposing additional costs that are not acceptable to persons, agencies other than the sponsoring organizations.

Applicants must submit periodic reports throughout the period of the project indicating that it is being soundly and efficiently managed and to allow eventual evaluation. Projects must comply with all government regulations and will be subject to audit.

The final date for receiving submissions is January 31, 1972.

Applications are submitted to the Regional Offices of the Department of Manpower and are to be considered progressively as they are received. Although projects which meet the necessary criteria are basically chosen on a "first come, first serve" basis, attention is given to making the benefits as widespread as possible and to avoiding duplication of efforts. The money allotted to municipal projects is also administered by Canada Manpower, but any project submitted by municipalities must be approved by the provincial coordinator through the Provincial Municipal Affairs Department.

Mr. H. Erwin, Administrative Services Director for the New Brunswick Municipal Affairs Department, gave an example of this function: if the municipality incurs any debt as a result of the projects, the Municipal Affairs department must make sure that the town has the authority and the ability to borrow that sum which the federal grant won't cover. For one thing, municipalities are restricted by law to the amount of debt they may incur at any one time, this amount being

based in a ratio to their tax base.

Erwin stated his department makes no judgements nor plays any role in the distribution of funds. It simply states if a municipality's project meets with provincial financial criteria. If so, the project is passed on to Manpower, which checks if it meets its requirements, these being basically the same as outlined for the Organizations and Groups section of the Local Initiative program.

The Municipal Affairs Department also takes care of some of the information dispersal, assuring that municipalities are aware of the plan and its scope, and what may be undertaken. Here again the project need not necessarily result in some permanent structure but might involve better community services.

Twelve municipal services representatives act as regional coordinators for the program. These are permanent employees of the department who have full knowledge of the program and assist all interested municipalities on any aspects in which advice might be useful-including the correct procedure for filling out the forms.

As with local groups, any costs incurred over the allotted federal funds must come from the municipality, either in the form of loans or reserve funds. Federal funds are to be used to cover only employment costs. However, here too, an extra 17 per cent of government wage grants may be added: 7 per cent for payroll overhead, such as unemployment insurance, and another 10 per cent, if justified by vouchers or invoices, for rentals and other costs incurred in starting the project up.

The Municipal Affairs Department does none of the auditing during the projects

themselves. It acts as an intermediary, checking on the preliminary financing abilities of the municipality. This saves time for the Manpower department so that the project may be undertaken sooner.

The criteria for municipal projects (an example of this might be a public arena) are the same as those for organizations. Here too, the unemployed are expected to be hired via Canada Manpower, and should be registered with this department. Erwin stated that in some cases it might be impracticable to hire through Manpower, but this would happen only in limited circumstances.

Salaries and deadlines for applications are also the same as those for group projects.

Erwin added that areas with more sophisticated administrative staff will be more prepared to submit applications for the grants. However, a good analysis of projects being submitted is to be made and funds will not be directed solely to such communities.

He continued that the Municipal Affairs Department has no role in the "group and organization" side of the Local Initiative Program. However, he added, "We are a little concerned some groups may become a little too ambitious and the projects may fall by default to the provincial government." He suggested it might be good for the department to have some knowledge about projects being undertaken by private groups.

The provincial Welfare Department, in its new approaches to information dispersal, has undertaken to make individuals on welfare some aware of the Local Initiative Program.

Disadvantaged areas do not usually have a sophisticated organizational structure to develop such projects. Also, non-organized communities might have problems coping with the "bureaucratic requirements", as for example the detailed filling out of the necessary forms.

As such communities are most likely to have a high density of unemployed welfare recipients, who might derive great benefits from the program, it is important they receive as much information as possible.

Hiring people on welfare can possibly result in savings for provincial coffers, as many of those who do work during part of the year are eligible for Unemployment Insurance to which people on welfare have no recourse.

To help disadvantaged communities make the best possible use of the programs, a small task force has been formed by the Social Development Unit of the Welfare Department. It consists of a few Welfare department personnel and some extra temporary staff, a number of whom had participated in the Opportunities for




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