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1 April 1996

To: Members of the Halifax/CEC Black Community Work Group
Halifax, NS

In light of the protest on Gottingen Street, I feel that it is important to communicate to you directly the offer which I made on March 28, 1996, for Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) services in the Gottingen Street area.

First of all, I would like to reiterate that HRDC remains committed to providing service to the North End community. We are also strongly committed to remaining in the Gottingen Street area. Where we have been unable to reach an agreement with the protesters is whether or not that service will be delivered from a stand alone independent HRDC office or from a shared partnership location.

As you are aware, the federal government has approved a policy on a new service delivery approach for HRDC as part of its budget reduction measures. We are centralizing administrative functions and consolidating points of service across Canada in order to reduce costs. We will, however, ensure that HRDC maintains effective service delivery in key communities through partnerships. For Nova Scotia, the Halifax North End is clearly a community where we wish to continue to partner.

I can assure you that no matter what the outcome of the current protest, we are committed to this service partnership. In my opinion, the most important issue is the quality and effectiveness of the services we provide to your community.

Our staff in Halifax have been working with the Black Community Work Group for several months to identify a mutually acceptable alternative partnership site. It is regrettable that together we were unable to reach agreement before the existing office closed.

In my last meeting with the protesters, I made the following offer:

- We agreed to continue to work with the community to find a long term alternative location in a partnership arrangement in the Gottingen Street area. However, in light of our service delivery plan which calls for a co-located site, we could not commit to a stand alone HRDC office.
- We proposed that if the North End Community YMCA was unacceptable to the protesters as an interim site, we could accept an alternative for the short term. We suggested a number of options, including the location on Gottingen St. which had been found by your group, a temporary co-location with the African Canadian Employment Clinic, or any other site which was mutually acceptable.
- We agreed with the protesters' request to launch a needs assessment for the community. We requested an objective third party facilitator for that process. We recommended that the criteria for the assessment be mutually agreed to and that the needs assessment be based on a client survey.

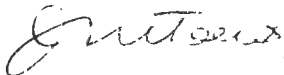
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- We agreed to a two month time frame to search for an alternative location and to conduct a needs assessment, recognizing that more time might be required.
- We agreed to maintain up to four staff in the interim accommodation, depending on the size of the site.
- We also committed to seek provincial participation in this partnership in the context of the current federal-provincial negotiations on labour market programs.
- We will continue to work with the community to develop pilot programs under the new Human Resource Investment Fund to assist in increasing employment opportunities in the community, especially for youth.
- We stated that the one area where we could not compromise was that the long term location must be a co-located site with other community partners. It could not be a stand alone independent HRDC office.

I think this offer clearly demonstrates the commitment of HRDC to support the community in its efforts to address its employment needs.

In closing, I cannot agree to the demand for a separate independent HRDC office. Once the protesters leave the site, we are prepared at any time to meet with the Black Community Work Group to clarify our position and develop a mutually satisfactory solution for the benefit of the community.

Sincerely,



Joanne Toews
Director General
Nova Scotia Region