

DATE: April 25, 1995
TO: Joanne Martell and members of the ACNS Executive
FROM: Morris Green
RE: Draft Report On Provincial Response to AIDS

I had hoped there would have been more opportunity to comment on the draft report by the transition committee during the ACNS board meeting held on Saturday, April 8.

I understand that it is not too late to make changes, however it sounds as though much of the report has been accepted by consensus. If that is true then I'm concerned about the effectiveness and viability of the new organization.

In advance I would only say that we should be clear in our mission. If it is indeed our mission to support people living with HIV/AIDS and to prevent the spread of the disease, and if those are two equal goals of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, then we should consider making some changes to the draft.

The following are comments, suggestions and criticisms of the draft.

4. Goals:

2. To advocate with and on behalf of persons infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

<There is no mention of advocacy related to education concerns>

3. To PROVIDE education/prevention initiatives in Nova Scotia.

<This is a simple suggestion - replacing the word focus with a more active word>

5. Objectives:

Goal 2. a) To ADVOCATE the involvement of persons living with HIV/AIDS on local, provincial, and national boards and committees dealing with HIV/AIDS.

<The word promote has been replaced with advocate. It's stronger and while we can say promote, advocate is what we mean.>

b) To ADVOCATE the establishment of liaisons with governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in HIV/AIDS programs and policies.

<The word establish has been replaced by advocate - ACNS cannot establish a liaison, but we can advocate the establishment of a liaison>

c) To ADVOCATE the development and adoption of progressive, nondiscriminatory HIV/AIDS policies and legislation.

<The word ensure has been replaced by advocate. ACNS will be able to advocate or lobby for policies and legislation, but not ensure the development and adoption of policies and legislation.>

Goal 3.

a) To create, initiate, provide and support education programs for people living with HIV/AIDS.

<This specifically relates to the education needs of PWAs. We could just as easily say "To provide education programs...HIV/AIDS.">

b) To create, initiate, provide and support HIV/AIDS prevention/education programs for Nova Scotians.

<This specifically relates to the education needs of Nova Scotians. We could just as easily say "To provide HIV/AIDS prevention/education programs for Nova Scotians.">

c) To provide guidelines, information and support to outside agencies in their HIV/AIDS education and prevention initiatives.

<This objective relates to AIDS prevention/education work done outside of the organization. We could also say "To Provide support to outside...initiatives.">

6. Governing Principles:

As governing principles all board members, staff, volunteers, and members must agree with and abide by these principles.

<This statement is absolutely silly and unnecessary and could cause trouble for the organization. What do we do when a board member, staff member, a volunteer or anyone else associated with the organization, does not agree or does not want to abide by one of the governing principles listed in the draft. I don't agree with the organization being PHA-CENTERED - how does that affect my board status or relationship with ACNS?>

1. PHA-CENTERED

In my opinion, this governing principle runs contrary to our mission. It implies that those people living with HIV/AIDS are more important to the ACNS than those people who are not living with HIV/AIDS, but are still affected and need to be educated to prevent the spread of the disease. If we assume in Governing Principle No. 8 that HIV/AIDS affects all Nova Scotians, then why is the organization PHA-Centered? This should be removed. I don't think it's right that those infected with HIV/AIDS should guide all decision-making of the organization. I don't think it's right that those infected with HIV/AIDS should guide all activities of the organization. How does this governing principle affect our mission? How does it affect that part of our mission that says we want to reduce the spread of HIV in Nova Scotia?

7. The AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia recognizes the integral role of education and support.

<Why does this statement need to be a governing principle? Education and support sum up our mission...of course we recognize the integral role of education and support...it's our mandate!>

B. Organization Structure

B.2 Composition of the Board of Directors

I strongly disagree with several aspects of this part of the draft. First, there are too many people on the board and that will almost surely prove troublesome, and ineffective. (I believe there is too much emphasis placed on representation from various interest groups. We have to ask what we expect from people who join the board. Do we expect them to sit on the board and be conscious of the mission of the ACNS? Or are they bringing a personal or group agenda. I believe in strong representation by persons living with HIV/AIDS (50% plus one...whatever formula is chosen) and I believe in a board that represents both genders equally. And I also believe in appropriate geographical representation. I think that's all we need. I would argue that it is more important to seek skillful board members...people who bring important skills or contacts to our organization, rather than seeking gay board members, or black board members or other board members who represent an particular group other than a geographic location or PWAs. There is little discussion of a nominating committee, which, if the draft is considerably revamped, becomes very important. It is the job of the nominating committee to canvas the board, and indeed, look at the organization, and evaluate what possible skills or representation are lacking from the board. With a strong nominating committee we could scrap the complexity now outlined in section B.4

9. Committees:

9.1 Each committee shall have a minimum of three members, one of whom shall be the committee chair and a Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Representation from staff is also required.

<It appears as though the vice-chairs and chairs of committees are going to be extremely busy...perhaps unrealistically busy. Vice-Chairs will have to attend full board meetings, executive meetings and multiple committee meetings. The chairs of committees are in a similar situation. Is that a realistic expectation of volunteers?>

9.5 Standing committee functions

a) ADVOCACY

Absent is any mention of advocacy on behalf of education concerns. There has been and will continue to be, a need for lobbying external agencies on behalf of prevention/education concerns. Why is it absent? This sounds like a PHA-Centered Organization...an advocacy committee where advocacy for HIV/AIDS education is not listed as a function.

BY PROGRAMS

The language in this paragraph needs to be changed slightly. Remove strives from the third line. It should read:

The committee also has a mandate to ensure coordinated and quality prevention/education programs to Nova Scotians, as well as advising and supporting external partners in their prevention/education programs.

The way it's written now, it makes it sound like the Programs committee has a priority toward support...followed by prevention/education. This is why I have a fear of a PHA-Centered organization.

The absence of an education committee, especially considering the language used in the draft, causes me concern. Remember the mission...it is essentially about support for people living with HIV/AIDS and about preventing the spread of the disease. We now have a programs committee that clearly deals with support issues, but less clearly with prevention/education issues. And yet there are separate committees recommended for advocacy, public relations and fund raising.

d) FINANCE/FUND DEVELOPMENT

The Finance Committee is a permanent committee whose mandate is to ensure that the organization has the necessary funds to operate and carry out the mission of The organization. This includes the planning and preparation of fund raising initiatives and budget recommendations.

<I have suggested changes to the description because of concerns regarding the power of the committee. If it's going to be a PHA-Centered organization then I'm uncomfortable with a committee that recommends plans for controlling revenues and expenditures - because that has implications on how equitable expenditures will be made considering the dual goals of the mission - support for people living with HIV/AIDS vs. prevention/education.>

10. Member Group Delegates

10.7 Regional representatives, representatives from cultural communities, and representatives from the PHA network will be nominated and elected by their respective member groups, and may be removed and replaced by these groups, at any time, and without the approval of the Board.

<This seems silly to me, and possibly troublesome. It is connected with this whole idea of personal agenda and the interests of a particular group. If you're a member of the board...you're serving the mission...not a particular interest group. Or are they? Does this mean that a

particular board member who is serving our mission, but in the eyes of a particular group not serving the interests of that group can be removed without the approval of the Board? That is inappropriate. I think the role of board members has to be defined with regard to the mission of the organization and the agenda of a group that may have elected or appointed a particular board member.>

11. Directors:

11.5 The co-chairpersons shall together be responsible for the calling of meetings and the making of an agenda and for chairing all regularly scheduled meetings of the Board.

<Just a minor point. Remove the word making and replace it with submitting. The vice-chairs don't make an agenda, they prepare and submit an agenda for board approval.>

11.9 The executive officers, notwithstanding any other legitimate removal, shall retain their offices for one year, until new officers are designated.

<You find a volunteer to chair a committee, who then sits on the executive, and then that person has to resign as committee chair at the end of one year? We have new vice-chairs every year? This is silly and inefficient. We're creating a board and an executive with little continuity.>