



Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

28 March 1985

Mrs. Lucie Richardson
Organization of Spouses of
Military Members
P.O. Box 294
Mynarski Park, Alberta
T0M 1N0

Dear Mrs. Richardson:

I refer to your letter of 24 October 1984 concerning your request for the Organization of Spouses of Military Members to associate and organize as a group on military bases and stations. As was indicated in the interim reply from this office dated 28 December 1984, your letter raises several significant issues and it has taken some time to give these the consideration they deserve.

While I am sympathetic to many of your aims and objectives, I am concerned about the potential for involvement by your organization in what might be termed "political activity" on Department of National Defence establishments which, I expect you are aware is prohibited by Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces Article 19.44. This prohibition is maintained to preserve the political neutrality of the Canadian Forces which is an essential facet of Canadian society. I should also point out that there is no conflict with this regulation and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the Charter does not, of itself, guarantee any right to assembly or association in a particular place, such as a Department of National Defence establishment.

An issue which needs to be addressed is what constitutes political activity. There is no doubt that an independent group, lobbying through the media, Ministers of the Crown, and other individuals and agencies

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for changes in living conditions and benefits would clearly be engaged in political activities of the sort intended to be prohibited by our regulations. An example of this type of activity would be the organization and conduct of a write-in campaign for a dental plan. A Base Commander would have no choice but to deny the use of a Defence establishment for this purpose.

As a result of these considerations, I am unable to grant you the authority you request. Accreditation of organizations at the base and station level is the prerogative of the local commander who must ensure that any organization so accredited operates within the prescribed policy. None of this precludes, of course, the conduct of off-base activities or contacting Permanent Married Quarters (PMQ) residents by mail.

Although you may consider this to be very restrictive, I can assure you that the Department is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the members of military families. Many improvements in living and social conditions have been made in recent years, and others are receiving active consideration. Of course, on many bases and stations the involvement of family members in the local community councils has been an important ingredient in the development of new programs and initiatives.

As you are no doubt aware, the recent establishment of the Mynarski Park Community Resource Centre, on a trial basis, is an effort by the Base Commander and staff of Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Penhold to provide a structured support system for those family members who wish to make a more active contribution to, or benefit from, community services and resources. I believe it is quite possible that through individual participation in the Resource Centre many of your objectives could be achieved. In any event, I believe the Resource Centre should be given a chance to prove itself.

Although I am unable to give you the written authority you request, I do appreciate the interest you and your group have shown in the welfare of the military community. Moreover, you may be assured that my staff will continue to examine ways in which we

can facilitate the contribution and participation of military family members in the development of improved support systems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Erik Nielsen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Erik Nielsen