

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
9TH ASSEMBLY, 8TH SESSION**

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YELLOWKNIFE EDUCATION DISTRICT No. 1
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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File No: 220-11-1

May 10, 1982

Mr. Bob MacQuarrie
Member of the Legislative Assembly
Government of the N.W.T.
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Dear Bob,

Attached is the reponse of Yellowknife Education District No.1 to the Report "Learning: Tradition and Change " as prepared by the Special Committee on Education of the Legislative Assembly.

We request that you present our response to tht mEmbers of the Legislative Assembly for their consideration.

We urge you, as our representative, to ensure our resources are secure so that we may offer at least the level of service we presently do.

Yours truly,



Louise M. Nielsen
Chairman of the Board

LMN/dms

Attachment

Preliminary Response
to
LEARNING: TRADITION AND CHANGE
in the Northwest Territories

The Final Report
of the
Special Committee on Education

SUBMITTED BY:

Yellowknife Education District No.1

May 11, 1982

The Board of Education of Yellowknife Education District No.1 supports the concepts expressed in the Special Committee on Education Report. We find that the approach taken is both imaginative and bold. While we recognize that the Report is not a detailed plan for educational development in the N.W.T. but rather an outline of major policy direction, we do have some concerns that need to be examined before implementation strategies are determined.

The Special Report advocates locally developed curriculum; in fact curriculum development initiated at the classroom level. This curriculum development proposal may lead to fragmented curriculum with resulting difficulties for students transferring from one area to another within the N.W.T. as well as transferring from the Territories to other schools. Many students attending schools in Yellowknife Education District No.1 continue their education at schools and post-secondary institutions in areas of Canada outside Yellowknife. It is imperative that we protect the interest of these and any other students to whom transferability to other jurisdictions is a necessity.

Curriculum development is a very complicated and time consuming activity requiring considerable expertise that is not always locally available. The present curriculum development in the Territories seems to provide the best opportunities in that essential centrally-developed curriculum is available, with the opportunity for a local district to supplement the core with local modifications in response to local requirements.

Yellowknife Education District No.1 has voiced its desire to expand into a Kindergarten to Grade Twelve system. We note that in the Special Committee on Education Report, we will assume responsibility for Grade Ten. We feel a break in jurisdiction between Grades Ten and Eleven will cause program disruption and we urge the Legislature to place Grades Eleven and Twelve in Yellowknife in our District as well. While the Kindergarten to Grade Ten concept may apply in those areas which presently only go to Grades Eight or Nine, to break up the schools where programs are already established is a backward and detrimental step in our minds. The needs of students in Yellowknife can best be

served in a Kindergarten to Grade Twelve jurisdiction under an elected Board of Education.

The Arctic College is defined (Recommendation #12) as "independent of the Department of Education...operate all post-school...programs" (page 46). A major thrust, it seems, in the Special Committee Report is the development of programs which "provide residents with opportunities for training to secure employment in the N.W.T." (page 5). If this is to be interpreted as increased emphasis on vocational and occupational training, we fear there may be a danger of diverting resources to these programs, at the expense of academic programs for those students who wish to complete the traditional Grade Twelve High School graduation. We feel it is important to retain broad objectives to provide the educational requirements for those fields of training, careers and professions for which a sound nationally recognized Grade Twelve education is a prerequisite.

The goals, objectives and functions of the Arctic College have as many different interpretations as we have readers of the Report. We urge a much clearer and more precise definition of the Arctic College to clarify our perceptions.

The Board of Education of Yellowknife Education District No.1 supports the philosophy of expansion of local autonomy. We agree that local Boards are in the best position to respond to local requests and interests (as our French Immersion and Enrichment programs) and to provide meaningful contacts with parents. We fear, however, that the Boards may be in danger of not achieving desired self-determination because they must become absorbed in a network of policy making agencies. Yellowknife Education District No.1, for example, would have representation on - Ministers' Advisory Council, Arctic College Board of Governors and the Board of Directors - Centres for Learning and Teaching. Significant decisions will be made by these groups which will affect local students even though the decision may not be in their best interests. A major thrust of the Special Committee on Education Report is that students in diversified locations must be recognized and adequately served.

The Report raises many questions about funding. We wish to see a master plan of funding proposals both as they affect the Territories and our District in particular.

Funding is mentioned in reference to E.S.L. programs, special education, and in block funding for employment of staff including both in-school and adult education (page 33). The term block-grants is used, but not defined. We note the Report states "We must develop a formula for the determination of equalization grants to ensure that communities and divisions that do not have an adequate tax base are not penalized." (page 33). Yellowknife Education District No.1 respectfully submits that present levels of funding must be retained so that the quality of programs are maintained in Yellowknife. It is also unclear if funding for E.S.L. would be available for districts such as Yellowknife Education District No.1 that are teaching English as a Second Language to students who do not have as a first language those related to Dene or Inuit origins.

Philosophically, we agree with the recommendations as they relate to Special Education. To actualize this philosophy will, however, require the development/recruitment and retention of persons with both expertise and commitment. The competition for these scarce resources may result in unequal development of services. We question that all students with handicaps that are low incidence/high cost can always be served best in their home community and we wonder if we can realistically hope to fully provide "equal opportunity" for all.

The recommended funding for Special Education is the plan used in the Province of Manitoba. Is it the intent of the Special Committee that the monitoring of program delivery to further support funding would also be done as it is in Manitoba? Is the term Special Education intended to include a broad list -- e.g. severely emotionally disturbed, autistic, severely hearing impaired, visually impaired, multiple handicapped, psychotic and gifted? Is the Committee aware that in one Manitoba division, for example, the grant entitlement for Special Education is \$527,000 but the personnel cost alone is \$687,000? The

effect of the Manitoba funding program has been to raise expectations and heighten demand for Special Service. An elaborate network of support services, decision-makers and program monitors are inherent in these recommendations as they relate to Special Education. Will the monitoring function interfere with local decision-making?

On page 81 the Special Committee quietly suggests that collective bargaining be done on a basis of one agreement for all ten Divisional Boards. We wish to receive the Committee's thoughts on how this suggestion might be implemented.

Traditionally, local control has been devolved in exchange for some type of financial commitment. In our experience, the Government of the Northwest Territories through the Department of Education has been rigid in its requirement that the people of Yellowknife contribute 25% of our Districts' revenue. The Special Committee Report is unclear on its position in this matter. We have always questioned why the people of Yellowknife must contribute towards education through property tax when others don't. We continue to question. We urge the Special Committee to develop a funding formula for all Divisions which has the same criteria for all. Will the principle of local control and financial commitment apply to all or none?

We would find it useful to have developed an Organizational Chart which shows the relationships, accountabilities and responsibilities of the various agencies identified in the Report. We are confused in this area as well and would benefit from further clarification.

In view of the broad and dramatic changes which implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report would cause, we urge the Legislature to proceed cautiously. The problems have been with us for many years. A careful and thorough consideration of the solutions is mandatory and will work to the enrichment of the people of the Northwest Territories. There has not been sufficient time nor information to properly assess the implications of the recommendations. We urge the Committee to develop the Implementation Plan for review by all before

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any commitments are made. A thorough and open examination will work to the benefit of all.

We understand that the interest of the Committee is to protect and build upon that which presently serves the needs of the people. We offer our expertise as the most advanced and successful Board in the Territories to assist those involved in implementation as we feel we have capabilities which can be used to advantage in the development and implementation of the Recommendations.