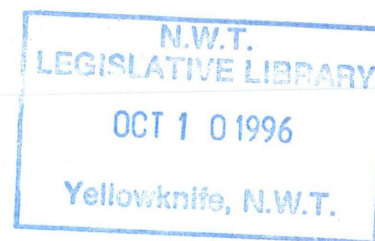


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Mr. Mark Evaluardjuk
 MLA Amittuq
 PO Box 39
 Igloodik, NT
 X0A 0L0



via Fax (403) 873 0276

Re: Government Employee Housing

Dear Mr. Evaluardjuk,

I am writing on behalf of the Baffin School Administrators Council to register our concerns regarding recent housing policy developments at the Territorial level, and its present and potential impact on the teachers and other school staff members in the Baffin region.

The membership of the Baffin School Administrators Council is comprised of the principals and assistant principals of all Baffin schools. While the main purpose of BSAC is to reflect on matters of a professional nature related to education, we have also the responsibilities of managing our schools and staffs. Given that staff morale has a strong impact on our own effectiveness, we then also have a profound interest in both internal and external conditions affecting teachers in the region.

At this time concerns related to housing, and in particular the Government's Housing Sales program is causing great stress and worry among teachers in all Baffin communities. Further to our concerns of an immediate nature, as a group we perceive that present policies encouraging the sale of Government owned housing units may have serious implications for the future.

I would like to bring to your attention the concerns discussed during the recent meetings of the Baffin School Administrators Council. These concerns relate to: Teacher Morale, the Development of Community Based School Programs, and the Impact on the Recruitment and Development of Inuit Staff.

Teacher Morale

Over the past several years, teachers from the region have understood and learned to accept the need for reform in the policies through which Government housing has been managed. Teachers have absorbed significant rent increases over this period of time, and continually adjusted their expectations concerning the shared responsibilities of tenant and landlord. However, the civility of the relationship between tenant and government landlord seems to have ended completely over the past summer, as a new set of conditions greeted returning and newly recruited staff following the summer recess.

As you are aware, all government employees in Government owned and leased accommodations received letters over the summer which announced the potential sale of units and the consequences which might affect employees. This announcement has created tremendously high levels of anxiety among many teachers in our school system.

In the first place, the rules governing the eligibility for those interested in purchasing government owned housing units have been in a continual state of flux for at least the past year, effectively denying opportunities for long term employees to purchase housing units

which later were sold to others as the guidelines were changed. Secondly, there has been no assurance given that alternate arrangements will be made for employees dislodged from their present accommodations. Finally, the government has indicated that there will be no guarantee that current rent will not be increased if a housing unit changes ownership during an employee's term of appointment.

These uncertainties, coupled with the uncertain outcome of current contract negotiations with the government, have left teachers wondering if they will be able to afford to continue living and working in their communities.

The following examples of situations facing educators from around the region point directly to the need for re-examination of Housing policies, including the Housing Sales Program.

There is a case where a teacher in full time employment is qualified to receive social assistance payments due to the high rent required to house her family.

Another teacher, new to the region, even after having duly informed the government of his desire to purchase the unit he occupied, was informed that the house had been sold to another purchaser.

We understand that at least one teaching position in this jurisdiction has been left unfilled, due to the fact that housing, publicly or privately owned, cannot be found for a qualified candidate from outside the community.

The members of BSAC believe that, if it is not already the case, the accumulated levels of stress facing a large number of the teachers in the region will emerge in low staff morale, to the detriment of school programs across the region.

The Development of Community Based School Programs

We, as principals, view any process which might lead to a thinning of available housing as a posing a direct threat to our school programs, both those we are presently offering, as well as those required in the future.

In many Baffin communities housing for government employees is already in desperately short supply. Yet many communities have been involved in, or are planning the expansion of school programs at the high school level. The introduction of new programs at this level almost invariably requires the recruitment of new staff from outside the community. In the absence of any government housing for new employees, and with existing shortages of available housing for current employee numbers, we are fearful that instead of expanding educational choices in Baffin schools, we may instead be forced to withdraw essential programs that are currently being offered at the community level.

The government itself has invested heavily in the expansion of Community High School Programs, yet now appears ready to gamble that they won't disappear in the absence of an adequate supply of housing for teachers.

The Recruitment and Development of Inuit Staff

BSAC members are increasingly fearful that Inuit teachers from many communities may soon come to recognize continued employment in Baffin schools to be an unattractive proposition.

Many individuals from our respective communities have worked extremely hard to qualify themselves for employment in Baffin schools. They bring valuable skills, talents and community perspectives to their work. As it is frequently the case that they struggle themselves to be able provide significant levels of support for members of their extended families in the community, whether they live in GNWT housing, or in Housing Association units, many find it difficult to make ends meet. Increasingly, when they look to their contemporaries, in particular those paying minimal rent for comparable housing, we hear of their bewilderment as they consider the merit of continued employment as educators.

Here again, the government itself has invested heavily in the training and in the professional development of Inuit educators, yet now appears ready to gamble that they won't disappear in the absence of an adequate supply of housing for teachers. Since it is true that many of these individuals have elected not to reside in staff housing units, if they do start to disappear from our schools, there will be even greater pressure to find housing for teachers from outside the community.

The membership of BSAC is aware that all MLA's from the region have already registered their opposition to the Housing Policies now being brought into effect by the Government of the Northwest Territories. We urge you to continue to speak out strongly on these issues. If it serves the purpose, we also invite you to cite our concerns in illustrating the negative impacts of Government's current housing policies will have in the Baffin region.

Yours truly,


Doug McLean
Interim President
Baffin School Administrators Council

cc. MLA's Baffin Region

Pat Thomas
NWTTA President

Erin Blair
NWTTA Vice President - East

Peter Gieke
NWTTA Regional President, Baffin Region

Cathy McGregor
Director Baffin Divisional Board of Education

Joe Attaguttaaluk
Chairman, Baffin Divisional Board of Education