



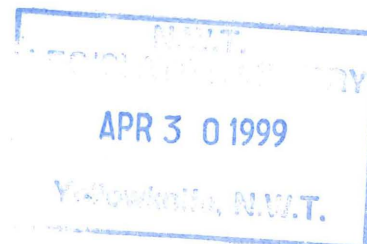
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Parent Focus Group
C/o Mary King
124 Miron Dr.
Hay River, NT
X0E 0R2

April 29, 1999

The Honourable Michael Miltenburger
Minister, Department of Education Culture and Employment
Government of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2L9



Dear Mr. Minister:

A group of Hay River residents, Parent Focus Group, have been working hard to compile statistics and survey results that will assist us to provide valuable input into the educational programming for the youth of Hay River. Our group came together as a result of a shared concern for our children and the impact of the government's continued cutbacks in educational funding. Our concern was so great that we committed to survey other parents in the area to assess how wide-spread the concern was. Unfortunately, the preliminary results of our survey indicate that a large percentage of Hay River parents are dissatisfied with the education that their children are receiving.

When we have compiled all of the results from our survey we intend to share a copy with you and our MLA. From the results that we have to date, it is obvious that the concerns are not isolated to a few parents. Our question to you is "How long does the government plan to ignore what the taxpayers are telling them?" We are not happy with the slash and burn approach to reduced educational spending. Large class size increases the stress for students, teachers and parents, which directly affects student's learning. The implementation of inclusive schooling (integration of special needs students into a regular classroom) without sufficient support and resources cannot continue. Program cuts in French, computer studies, physical education and music are undermining the ability of our students to compete on a national level.

The consequences of the careless and short-sighted education cuts affect our whole community. We have high levels of drop-outs and too many young people with insufficient skills to help them survive in the workplace. When will the government realize that money spent wisely on education will give our youth the skills that they need to be productive contributors to society and as a result, will reduce the government's expenditures on social programs?

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When we add up all of the problems, it is not easy to be optimistic about the legacy that we are passing on to our youth. How can we have enthusiastic life-long learners graduating from our schools when we continually put obstacles in their way?

Our group intends to pursue these issues for as long as it takes. We want to see an improvement and we are prepared to lend support so that together we can find solutions that will benefit our children. We are feeling frustrated and angry at the way our most precious resource is being ignored. **OUR CHILDREN ARE WORTH IT, ARE YOURS?**

As the government completes the budget process for the upcoming year, we encourage you to listen to the taxpayers and make education a priority. Don't let this opportunity pass by without making a concerted effort to find the resources to secure a future for our young people.

By way of this letter, we invite you to travel to Hay River to meet with the Parent Focus Group to discuss our survey and future direction of our education system. You can contact us through our spokesperson, Mrs. Mary King, at (867) 874-6718 or (867) 874-3626 (fax).

Yours Truly,


Mary King

cc. Jane Groenewagen, MLA Hay River