

C.L.B.

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Fax Cover Sheet

To: Norman Yakeleya

From: Lorraine Kuer, Local Returning Officer, Chief Albert Wright School,
Tulita

Tel: 588-4361

Fax: 588-3912

Email: [Lorraine Kuer@bear.learnnet.nt.ca](mailto:Lorraine.Kuer@bear.learnnet.nt.ca)

Date: Oct. 25, 2004

Dear Mr. Yakeleya:

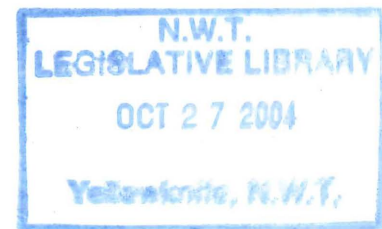
On behalf of the teachers at Chief Albert Wright School, and in support of the teachers at Fort Resolution, I would like to submit the attached document for your immediate attention.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Kuer".

Lorraine Kuer

Teacher and LRO, Chief Albert Wright School, Tulita



October 22, 2004

To: The Government of the Northwest Territories
RE: Lack of Affordable Housing for Teachers in Tulita

Dear Madams/Sirs:

This letter is not only a vote of solidarity for our colleagues in Fort Resolution and other communities in the Northwest Territories, but a declaration of our own struggle here in Tulita and across the Sahtu region.

Housing is not just an issue in Tulita, it is a crisis that must be dealt with immediately. That is if providing sustainable, quality education to our communities is a priority for this government. Each and every year, in every community, teachers are resigning from their positions. We're not just talking about a few teachers here or there either. In some communities, schools are losing 50% of their teachers or more. This is not something that happens in most other provinces and territories; and where it does, housing is usually the issue there as well.

Our communities are dealing with teacher turnover to such an extreme that to be a "veteran" teacher in the NWT is to stay here 2 or 3 years! The biggest problem is not in finding new teachers to replace them (although I'm sure relocation budgets are soaring), it is the lack of consistency we are offering students and parents. With each new school year comes new uncertainty as to who will be running your community school and teaching your children. Programs are started, but never finished. Rapport is built with students, but never blossoms. A school team is bonded and torn apart. **This is the present system in the NWT.**

Currently, we have three teachers who are living in a hotel. They have been there since school began in mid-August – almost **THREE MONTHS** and still no place to live. Mind you, they managed to find trailers through the local Housing Authority, but after three months they still aren't ready. When they finally are ready, they will have to pay \$1250 a month – no utilities, no furniture. This may be on par with housing in Yellowknife (which is also far too expensive), but "Tulita ain't Yellowknife." We don't have access to a hospital, department stores, restaurants, and movie theaters. We can't drive "down south" if the mood strikes us (or anywhere else for that matter). The fact that teachers have to share housing should give an indication that we aren't making enough to afford these prices on our own.

Some people will say "Teachers in the NWT are among the highest paid in Canada, they can afford it." We would say, compare the cost of living, the isolation and the taxes, and we don't come out much ahead. If you look at a comparable community in Nunavut, teachers there have basically the same pay scale, but the Northern Allowance is double what it is here. Add to this the fact that the government of Nunavut subsidizes government employee housing, and the Nunavut advantage is clear. Even in "Northern" Alberta, there are allowances and subsidized housing for teachers.

Why is the NWT taking a backseat in this? Shouldn't we be the leaders? Aren't we the "wily veteran" when it comes to Northern policy? Why is Nunavut making us look bad? Why do we have teachers living in hotels, sharing houses as if they were still in university, and going home at Christmas - never to return?

The answer is simple. We may eventually find a house, but it's never a home. We need stability and we need to feel wanted. We need houses waiting for us when we arrive, furnished with all the comforts of home and affordable enough that we can make financial progress, not merely stay afloat. We need the government to step up and say "Educating our young people is a top priority. We need to attract and keep the best teachers available."

It's obvious that a mistake was made when the government sold its properties and "got out of housing." Can the "fastest growing economy in Canada" afford to subsidize housing again? Of course it can. The real question is, the way professionals are leaving our territory, can it afford not to?

We, the teachers of Tulita, sincerely hope you will address this issue immediately and set the standard for all provinces and territories to follow, by subsidizing government employee housing once again.

Signed, The Teachers of Tulita

Jmclpherson (Judy McPherson)

Vivian Pellissay (Vivian Pellissay)
Richard Andrew (Richard Andrew)

Mary Ann Clement (Mary Ann Clement)

Karen Christenson (Karen Christenson)

Vicky Mae Cauley (Vicky Mae Cauley)

Rosemary Andrew (Rosemary Andrew)

Allison De Jong (Allison De Jong)

Shauna Sundberg (Shauna Sundberg)

Wayne Dams (Wayne Dams)

Mr. Neil Barry (Neil Barry)

Mr. Mark Harewood (Mark Harewood)

Lorraine B. Kuer (LORRAINE B. KUER)

Lois M. Robillard (Lois M. Robillard)

Carla A. DesRoches (Carla A. DesRoches)

Wayne Dams (Wayne Dams)

Jessica Arthur (Jessica Arthur)

Lisa Iliopoulos (Lisa Iliopoulos)

Annie Harding (Annie Harding)

