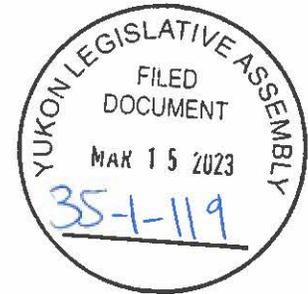


Michele Genest
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Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education
Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works
Yukon Legislative Assembly
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 2C6



November 2, 2022

Dear Ministers McLean and Clarke,

I live downtown. I walk by Whitehorse Elementary School several times a week. Often, recess is in session, and I'm able to see and hear, from the sidewalk, kids from K to 7 living their lives in the middle of the city. That energy is the fire in the hearth of my city.

Children and schools don't just add life to a city, they keep downtowns safe. Schools slow traffic, they stop cars from idling, they put police, businesses, and members of the community on alert: something precious here needs our care. Whitehorse is remarkable in its ability to accommodate an elementary school and a shelter within two blocks of each other. This is a fine example of a working, integrated city, and I know it is not achieved without a lot of hard work.

A downtown school is an essential part of the ecosystem of a healthy, vibrant city. Study after study on the decline of downtowns in small North American cities demonstrate how cities die: essential services are moved to the outskirts. Schools are closed. Young families move to subdivisions. Children are driven from A to B. Downtowns become deserted after 6 pm.

In my neighbourhood there are people struggling with addiction, living rough in the woods nearby; there are drug deals happening outside my house. And there are young families with children who ride or walk by on their way to school, who play hockey in the pocket-sized rink in the Cook Street Park, who learn to ride their bikes on the path near the cliffs. Teenagers from the Wood Street School run in joyous packs for outdoor ed. the park. This life, this presence, keeps my neighbourhood in balance, as it keeps the city in balance.

If Minister Clark can consider assessing WES for "potential future uses," then, with respect, he can consider assessing the building for the continued purpose of educating children downtown and keeping the heart of our city alive.

Sincerely,

Michele Genest
Cc Emily Tredger, Third Party House Leader