



Date: October 18th, 2023

To: Superintendent of Education, Trevor Ratcliffe; Assistant Deputy Minister, Shanna Epp; Assistant Deputy Minister Cassandra Kelly; Deputy Minister of Education, Mary Cameron; Minister of Education, Jeanie McLean; Yukon Party Education Critic, Scott Kent; Yukon Party Leader, Currie Dixon; New Democratic Party Education Critic, Lane (Emily) Tredger; New Democratic Party Leader, Kate White; President of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Ted Hupe.

Re: Teacher on Call shortage

To Whom It May Concern,

The Ecole Selkirk Elementary School Council is asking you all to think outside the box to help our hardworking educators deal with the historically chronic, and now dire, Teacher on Call (TOC) shortage. The purpose of this letter is to urge, one more time, the Department of Education to act on what we and our educators are saying. We need two actions: an immediate, short-term solution, including secondments of Department of Education staff, and changes to the recruitment and application processes, including remuneration.

The significant impacts of stress have never been so apparent in our school. This appears to be impacting staff and students at all levels. Staff are out for longer and longer durations with less resistance to overcoming illness. This puts strain on other essential components of the school and pushes staff members into states of physical and mental stress, leaving us with fewer and fewer educators to attend to the needs of our children – especially the most vulnerable.

Selkirk Elementary School has been a leader in implementing the Departments Ready to Learn initiative and so are aware of how stress impacts the entire system and how to support the well-being of the school and its community.

A lack of team members leads to a lack of stability, predictability, routine, and rhythm – all of which we know provides optimal learning environments and opportunities for our children. Because of the instability, students' outward reactions heighten which in turn demands more adult support. Thanks to a lack of TOC's, we do not have that support. Because of teacher stress, students cannot access their optimal performance either. The snowball of stress is gaining speed and strength at unprecedented levels.

We need increased support and out of the box thinking. For example, we have asked for two teachers for a Grade 6/7 class whose teacher had to leave suddenly. This class, due to extenuating circumstances, NEEDS stability and reliability. Two teachers have a better chance at succeeding rather than burning out one new one. With all the TOC positions left unfilled this year, we believe some of that money could go to this kind of initiative. We have been coming up with creative solutions because we have been instructed to do so by the department. But now, we're at a breaking point. There's not much left for us to do without support from the government.

Where is the support for our children in crisis? Last week, Selkirk was short of so many educators that our administrators were in classrooms teaching, and they could not do their own jobs. When asked if the department could send over people to help the answer was a resounding no. Why is this? Is it not

the job of the Department of Education to support educators? Are the needs of the children not the priority? This flies in the face of what the Minister has repeatedly said in public.

If an emergency arises such as a fire alarm or security concern, Council is concerned that this places a level of risk where incident management may be impacted negatively, and either students or staff may be physically hurt. Examples could be redeployment of Department personnel to the classroom vacancy or consideration to cancel individual classes for the day due to teacher absence when an alternative cannot be found that ensures administrator coverage.

There is an idea that will help you help us. We ask the department to please streamline the application process for TOCs so that we can reach out to our school community for help. Applying for a job with the Department is cumbersome and daunting.

The School Council would like to host a community information session in mid-November to invite community members who may be interested in substitute teaching. This information session would explain to those interested in becoming a TOC to learn how to do so in an effective and expedited manner so we can get more TOCs in our classrooms.

We need the following from the department by Wednesday, October 25th:

1. A clear temporary solution for immediate relief.
2. A clear direction to increase the number of available TOCs, implementable immediately.
3. A contact person within HR to help us answer questions and join our information session, which as noted above, will be in mid-November.
4. An understanding that classes or the school will need to close when required to adhere to safety standards if the situation declines any further.
5. The guarantee that the department will support this initiative.

For the sake of our school community, we hope the department and the minister give high priority to this urgent matter.

Selkirk Elementary School Council