

Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

April 8, 2024

Chief Amanda Leas
Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
117 Industrial Road
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 2T8

Dear Chief Leas,

Re: Bill 307 An Act to Amend the Yukon Education Act

I am reaching out to you to discuss a private member's bill that the Yukon NDP introduced during this sitting. Bill 307 is an amendment to the *Yukon Education Act*. It is a very straightforward change that affects high school students only- it removes a single sentence from the Act. That sentence, Section 43 (2), says that locally developed courses cannot account for more than 20% of a student's course load in a semester or school year.

The idea for this change comes from a former Yukon teacher, who pointed out that while the Yukon follows BC curriculum and BC graduation requirements, BC has made some changes in recent years that the Yukon has not. Changing the Yukon Education Act will allow the Yukon to come back into line with BC.

With many Yukon schools now using a four course per semester system, it means that not all schools cannot offer locally developed courses. In BC, students are allowed to use Board Authority or First Nation Authority courses to fulfill elective graduation requirements. It means that BC students have more flexibility and choice in their learning, and can explore topics such as traditional technologies, leadership, climate change and so on. Unfortunately, Yukon students are being deprived of this opportunity and the chance to benefit from learning more about culture, environment, and community with locally developed courses.

What I want to emphasize is that this amendment in no way affects the ability of any Yukon First Nations to draw down Article 17.7 of self-government agreements. I strongly support Article 17.7 and its key principles for the design, delivery, and administration of educational programs within Traditional Territories.

I have seen what Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation has achieved with Article 17.7 in creating an educational system that reflects education for self-determination and a system that is responsive to the needs of students. I support Ta'an Kwäch'än Council in its work to incorporate the language of 17.7 into your self-government agreement. I believe that this amendment can make it easier to develop courses for the type of educational system that works for Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and for all Yukon students.

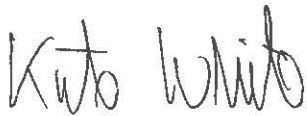
I recognize that the education system as it stands is characterized by silos and segregation of knowledge. This amendment to the Act is a single small step to breaching those silos, nevertheless I hope that this change will provide a tool for school boards and education champions around the Yukon to pull the education system forward to some of the innovations that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation have done so well.

I recognize that a full review and a possible rewrite of the Act is needed, but that process could take years. This proposed change can make a small but meaningful change now.

I would very much appreciate hearing from you about this amendment. Currently, it has passed second reading and I anticipate that debate on this will continue in Committee of the Whole before we proceed to the third reading. I have included a short briefing with this email that explains in more detail what this amendment does for Yukon students.

Your thoughts on this would be welcomed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate White
Leader of the Yukon NDP
MLA for Takhini-Kopper King

CC: Charles Pugh, Executive Director for Ta'an Kwäch'än Council