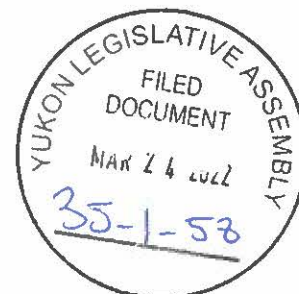




Minister's office (CM-3)
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

November 20, 2019

Porter Creek Secondary School
Gender and Sexuality Alliance
1405 Hickory Street
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4M4



Dear Students of the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance:

Re: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy

Thank you for your letter of November 5, 2019 and for sharing your concerns and advocating for your friends and fellow students about the implementation of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy (SOGI) in Yukon schools.

We want to ensure that young people feel safe, welcome and successful in school. The SOGI Policy was introduced in 2012 to support students who identify as LGBTQ2S+. It recognizes that homophobic and other gender-based comments, discrimination and bullying are demeaning and not permitted in Yukon schools. When this policy was introduced, Yukon educators received training and additional training is available for school staff upon request.

There is also a *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* for all Yukon schools, which recognizes that students and school staff have the right to be and feel safe within their school community. Under this policy, each school is responsible for creating their own policy and process for addressing bullying behaviours. The Department of Education also recently updated Yukon's Physical and Health Education curriculum and resources to ensure they are inclusive of transgender students.

For students needing supportive mental health and wellness services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services at the Department of Health and Social Services provides clinical counselling support across the Yukon and they can be reached at (867) 456-3838. There are also a number of private counsellors in the Yukon who provide similar services.

In 2018-19, the Government of Yukon engaged with the public to get feedback about its services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and learned many continue to feel the effects of discrimination. This finding is similar to the issues raised in your letter.

We are currently developing a government-wide action plan to ensure programs and services, including those in schools, are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ communities.

Minister Frost (Health and Social Services), Minister Dendys (Women's Directorate) and myself (Education) would be happy to meet with your GSA in the Porter Creek Secondary School Rainbow Room to hear more from you.

Please contact my assistant, Michele Shaw at michele.shaw@gov.yk.ca or 334-4175 to find a time that will work for everyone.

I also encourage you to share your feedback directly with your school principal, Souhail Soujah, and your School Council, for their consideration in supporting school staff to implement both the system-wide and local school policies to ensure safe and caring learning spaces in school.

Thank you again for bringing these concerns to our attention. The good work of youth and GSAs like yours help us to identify gaps and actions to provide safer and more inclusive school communities and support Yukon students to be successful at school. On behalf of Ministers Dendys, Frost and myself, we look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tracy-Anne McPhee', written in a cursive style.

Tracy-Anne McPhee
Minister of Education