

J. V. Clark School Council  
P.O. Box 38  
Mayo, Y.T  
Y0B 1M0



September 10, 2020

Department of Education  
1000 Lewes Boulevard, YT  
Y1A 3H9

To: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee

JV Clark School has struggled with keeping teachers in the community of Mayo for many years now. In the past five years alone teacher retention has become of even greater concern, requiring the need for three to four new teachers for September each year. This 2020/2021 school year we required five new teachers for September. Only one position was filled by September, and three are still posted until filled.

It is unacceptable that our school starts the year with less than half of all available teacher positions filled. Our students are now in a position where they get a new teacher on call (TOC) every two weeks. This does not help maintain a sense of consistency during such unpredictable times. What are students supposed to expect if our school has to shut down due to COVID-19? Are TOC's expected to conduct online learning? In order to alleviate the current situation, classes have been combined to the point that teachers and TOC's are being asked to teach three different grades per room which puts undue stress on both the teachers and the children, not to mention class sizes during a time when we are supposed to be practicing social distancing. Our principal has also stepped into the classrooms to help teach, taking time away from her administrative duties.

School Council has held many discussions around this issue to identify causes and possible solutions. Many factors feed into this issue: available housing, temporary positions, timing of when a position is posted, and no local hires to name a few.

Has the Department of Education considered owning their own houses specifically for teachers within communities outside Whitehorse? We are aware that Yukon Housing is the department for housing issues, but they need to supply housing for everyone in Mayo. Yukon Housing already has a shortage of houses without the pressure of housing teachers every September. If Yukon Housing cannot save houses for teachers, then a solution needs to be made. Owning a small four or six-plex building in town would solve this problem. Teachers are reluctant to apply for jobs in a community where there is very limited options for housing. Our private sector for housing options is full, every possible livable house is currently lived in.

Yukon Housing is not increasing housing in Mayo. Just this past summer two condemned Yukon Housing houses were sold to a private resident instead of being re-built into a livable Yukon Housing house. A house fire this spring took two more Yukon Housing units, and there has been no movement on re-building them. If Yukon Housing is not going to take the need for housing in Mayo seriously, then another approach needs to be taken to increase housing for teachers. Our students are the ones that suffer.

It seems every year positions at our school are posted as temporary. Teachers express that they want to stay in the community but their job is temporary and so they are forced to apply on other jobs at the end of the school year, often applying at other schools as Mayo's positions are posted later in the summer. Teachers who do not have a contract for the next school year lose their Yukon Housing house, they cannot wait for jobs to be posted in the summer. Jobs need to be posted as permanent in the communities. If teachers have permanent positions, then the pressure of finding and maintaining accommodations is mitigated.

We understand that in some circumstances positions are posted temporary because they are held by another teacher on some kind of temporary leave (eg. Maternity/parental leave, stress leave professional development). But at what point does a teacher have to resign their position at a school? JV Clark has had positions held by teachers who have moved out of the community and bought houses in Whitehorse, clearly demonstrating that they do not plan on returning to the school. We understand that teachers need to look out for their interests and don't want to give up a permanent position if they don't have a position else where. But we need to think of our students, and put them first. Policy needs to change around when a teacher can take leave from their position and still maintain ownership of that position and for how long they can hold that position. We need consistency for our students, not new teachers every year.

Temporary teachers can transition into permanent position after 16months of temporary employment. The problem is that teachers in Mayo leave before they reach 16months because their position is temporary and their housing is tied to having current employment.

In Mayo we have two fully qualified LOCAL teachers, who applied for positions at the school and did not get hired due to the points system that YG follows when hiring applicants. There needs to be more consideration for local hires in the communities. Principals should have more say in who gets hired in their schools; they are the ones who know the school environment and community best and are therefore, the best judge of who would best fit in the community. Personal suitability questions as part of the interview process should be more of a consideration.

Mayo is not the only community with these problems. Policies that work for Whitehorse and other large cities do not work in small remote communities. Things need to be different in the communities; either separate policies or a change in policy altogether.

Our community has a lot to offer and we take pride in being warm and welcoming to everyone. But if there is no incentive to stay, i.e. housing, and a permanent job, then potential teachers don't apply and current teachers can't stay.

These issues have been in our community for a long time and are getting worse not better. This is not the first time school council has voiced a concern, but we have seen no actions taken by the department of education or the department of housing to find solutions.

Minister McPhee was in Mayo in August and met only with First Nation Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. JV Clark School is a Yukon public school not a First Nation school. What message does it send to the community when the minister for education visits a community and only meets with the representatives of half the community? To School Council, it says YG is not taking the concerns of the whole school seriously.

We respectfully request a response as to what actions the Department is going to take to deal with these issues immediately. We cannot allow our children and current staff to fall through the cracks.

Sincerely,



Sarah Paschuk

JV Clark School Council

Cc: Scott Kent, Yukon Party

Geraldine Van Bibber, Yukon Party

Chris Stacy, Super Intendant

Sue Ross, President Yukon Teachers' Association

Elaine Taylor, Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees