

Christ the King Elementary School Council

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December 1, 2020

Honourable Tracy-Anne McPhee

Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse

Yukon, Y1A 2C6

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Regarding: School Cancellation Policy

Dear Minister McPhee

Thank you for your November 20, 2020 letter congratulating and offering assistance to the new councils. Christ the King Elementary School Council (Council) is reaching out to you because of our concerns regarding the safety of students and faculty during extreme weather events.

On November 2, 2020, Yukon schools were impacted by a significant winter storm. The Department of Education made a decision to keep schools open, yet roads throughout the territory were closed and the City of Whitehorse recommended against any non-essential travel. As a result, students and faculty headed to schools in conditions that were unsafe and exposed them to unnecessary risk. Some examples of the dangerous conditions that students and faculty were exposed to as a result of the Department of Education's decision included:

- students walking to schools and bus stops on uncleared streets with poor visibility exposing students, especially elementary students, to a high risk of being struck by a vehicle;
- students traveling on buses in dangerous road conditions where there was a high risk of collision or run off the road accidents;
- students waiting for long periods at bus stops due to bussing delays;
- faculty as well as parents driving their children to school on dangerous roads in poor visibility; and
- schools not being prepared to safely receive students and faculty with uncleared parking lots, bus lanes and sidewalks.

This event highlights a gap in the Department of Education's school policies and provides an opportunity for improvement. We understand that this snow event was very unusual, but climate change is increasing the frequency of extreme weather events. Council does not want to see children, parents or faculty exposed to these risks in the future when another event like this occurs. Therefore, Council requests that the Department of Education:

- complete an internal review and develop a modern school cancellation policy that maintains the safety of students and faculty;
- provide an update on timelines to develop and implement a school cancellation or similar policy to ensure the safety of students and faculty;
- present a draft policy to Council for review and comments; and
- present a final policy to Council for approval prior to release.

Council looks forward to your timely response and consideration.

Respectfully,

Christ the King Elementary School Council

Melissa Yu Schott (Chair), Carrie Ariss (Secretary-Treasurer), Gina Macleod, Amy Ryder, Paul Murchison

cc. Scott Kent, Yukon Party, Education Critic (Scott.Kent@yla.gov.yk.ca)
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