



April 2, 2021

Catholic Education Association of Yukon
16 Duke Street
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Dear Members,

Re: Yukon Party position on Catholic Education in the Yukon

Thank you for your letter dated March 22, 2021 to the Yukon Party. Seeking our position on a number of issues on Catholic Education in the Yukon. We have summarized our responses below.

What is your party's position on Catholic Education?

A Yukon Party government would continue to support Catholic Education in the Yukon as it has under previous governments.

What does your party think are some notable challenges facing Catholic schools in Yukon today? How will your party help address this challenge?

We believe that it is our Catholic education partners such as school councils, the Episcopal Corporation, teachers and parents are the best placed to tell us what they believe are the challenges facing Catholic schools in the Yukon. We commit to meeting with all stakeholders within the first 30 days of taking office to listen and discuss ways that action can be taken to address those identified challenges.

However, there are several that we can see that our party is committed to working with the community to address. One of the key principles of our party's is the belief in grass roots policy development. Similar to our proposed Yukon Universal Child Care plan, we believe that parents are the best ones to determine what is best for their children. This would also be true with respect to children's faith formation and learning.

We recognize that unlike other jurisdictions in Canada, Catholic Education is not constitutionally protected in the Yukon, but rather continues as a result of convention and based upon the 1962 agreement between the church and government. It is our understanding that there is a desire to



update this agreement, to which we are committed to working with the Episcopal Corporation and other catholic education partners to provide certainty and stability going forward.

Another key challenge is navigating a balance between upholding the current agreement while also recognizing that the Yukon's Catholic schools are part of a publicly funded system. This differs from the situation in other provinces for example, where Catholic Schools are largely funded by the church. We recognize that this brings the additional challenge for Catholic educators and parents. We are also aware that in the last collective agreement between Yukon government and the Yukon Teachers Association, a clause that provided for the preference of the hiring of Catholic teachers in the three Catholic schools was inadvertently removed, and an agreement was made to continue with the use of the policy. We would also commit to addressing this issue.

Thirdly, and one we will address further in your final question is the need for immediate planning with respect to aging infrastructure and insufficient space to accommodate the growing numbers of students in all three Catholic schools.

If your party leads the government, how will it support Catholic schools and education in Yukon and build more collaborative relationships with key stakeholders?

We believe that the best outcomes for Yukon students are only possible with strong collaborative relationships with all education partners. We have heard from a number of these partners, especially in recent years, that while some dialogue has occurred, but that movement towards action has been slow. We support the purpose and role that student councils play in determining the best way to implement changes and deliver educational programs in their respective school communities. It is our intention if we form the next government to meet with stakeholders to establish agreed upon priorities and commit to targets and timelines for action to address a number of emerging and long-standing issues.

What is your party's position on implementing the recommendations of the 2019 Auditor General's report and will your party accept the recommendations of the current review of Inclusive Education?

A new Yukon Party government will work with the school community and other stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the 2019 Auditor General report. The review of Inclusive Education is still ongoing and we are committed to thoroughly reviewing the final report and working with school partners to identify a path forward.



The Catholic School facilities, particularly Christ the King Elementary School and Vanier Catholic Secondary School are aging, at capacity and in need of replacement. What is your Party's plan to address this issue?

A Yukon Party government would commit to undertaking a comprehensive review of all Yukon school infrastructure within the first year of its mandate, and developing a long-term School Revitalization Plan by working with School Councils and other stakeholders in the education community. We have heard from many school communities the need for a more robust and evidence-based approach to school infrastructure planning is done. School communities require a greater commitment from government to ensure that the planning and construction of new schools, school replacements and upgrades are managed in a way that focuses on prioritizing the use of population growth data, health and safety requirements, and emerging new trends in learning environments are not tied to the four-year mandate cycles of government.

Other comments you would like to make?

The Yukon Party commits to helping our schools recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through our Education Pandemic Recovery Plan. We will work to ensure that students affected by the education delivery changes are supported, both in their mental health and in their academic needs. We will work with school communities to address literacy and numeracy outcomes across all grade levels, and will name changes necessary to ensure students have better access to a diversity of education pathways, such as experiential learning, virtual learning and the trades.

Beyond our commitments to students, the Yukon Party will work to engage teachers more directly in the education system decision-making processes. Teachers are our most valuable asset for delivering high quality education to Yukon students. We will work with teachers to address their needs and concerns.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to consider these questions.

Sincerely,

Currie Dixon
Leader of the Yukon Party