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OUR FILE REFERENCE: AR91535

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TO: Derek Fildebrandt
Committee Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
3rd Floor Federal Building

DATE: November 23, 2015

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SUBJECT: Written Response to Questions from Standing Committee on Public Accounts

I am pleased to provide the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with the attached follow-up responses to questions from the committee's meeting regarding Northland School Division, held on October 27, 2015.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Lorna Rosen

Attachment

October 27, 2015 Meeting of Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Written Responses to Questions from the Committee

Question:

Do you have any data about the number of children from the school division that are actually in care right now, that are in the care of the province?

In my tenure as Human Services minister something that I've learned is that Human Services has one of the most profound impacts on a child because they have the power to pick up and remove a child from their home and from their community. So I would really love to see the impact of Human Services as it relates to education in your community in the Northland school division, and I bet dollars to doughnuts that it's very significant.

Response:

- According to Child and Family Services, there are currently 19 school-aged children in care within Northland School Division:
 - Northwest Child and Family Services currently has four children in care from within the Northland School Division. All four have “Success in School for Children and Youth in Care” plans in place.
 - North Central and Northeast Child and Family Services do not have any children in care from within Northland School Division.
 - Fifteen children from Northland School Division are currently in care with Métis Settlements Child and Family Services. Eleven of the 15 have “Success in School for Children and Youth in Care” plans in place.
- These numbers reflect those served through provincial funding and do not include children and youth on reserve and receiving services through a Designated First Nations Authority.

Question:

The question that I had was specifically about the integration of cultural and spiritual traditions in the programming and the curriculum itself. I'm just wondering: what aspects of the truth and reconciliation recommendations as well as the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people are being integrated into the programming as you move forward?

Response:

- To honour the commitment made to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Alberta Education is working with education partners, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, to enhance Alberta's curriculum. The goal of this work is to provide additional opportunities for students and teachers to learn about residential schools, treaties, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, perspectives, culture and contributions throughout the Kindergarten to Grade 12 programs of study.
- Future curriculum will meet a curriculum standard – to include or reflect ways of knowing and the diverse perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people living in Alberta in relation to historical and contemporary contexts, as well as mandatory content on the significance of residential schools and treaties.
- In collaboration with stakeholders, ongoing professional learning opportunities will be created for educators and are expected to be available in 2016/2017.
- Alberta Education has developed resources to support educators in teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit content. These can be found on LearnAlberta.ca.

Question:

My question is about this crossministry team that's been formed. We keep saying that this is going to be the solution to the problem. I'd like to know if one of these teams has been formed in the last 60 years. I also would like to know what data will show. Has this been done in the past? If it has been done in the past, is it going to work? Do they have a mandate, and who set this mandate? Who does this new committee answer to?

Response:

- Within the history of Northland School Division there have been a number of groups completing a multitude of studies (1969; 1974; 1996), investigations and inquiries (1980; 2010), and engagement and audit activities (2012; 2015) to review school jurisdiction operational issues. A cross-ministry team has never been formed.
 - Recurring themes of focus from 1974 through 2015 included governance; student achievement and attendance; education programs and resources; instructional and administrative leadership; recruitment of and conditions for teachers; school facilities; and financial management.
- On July 10, 2015, the Minister of Education established the cross-ministry steering committee with representatives from Education, Health, Human Services and Aboriginal Relations. The committee's mandate is to provide ongoing oversight and strategic guidance to Northland School Division in support of its efforts to improve its educational outcomes. The committee reports to the Minister of Education.
- The Minister agreed that there has to be a fresh approach with Northland School Division. The steering committee must have the freedom to explore all options to make a lasting change for students and communities; what has been done in the past has met with limited success.
- The committee is developing a strategic plan that will:
 - provide a holistic approach to support Northland School Division that takes into account systemic challenges within the community related to health, social well-being, the legacy of residential schools and socioeconomic indicators; and
 - inform and support the work of the Official Trustee and provide guidance on transitioning the division to an elected board by October 2017.

Question:

What percentage of First Nation teachers do we have in these underperforming schools?

Response:

- Northland School Division does not ask its staff to self-declare if they are First Nations, Métis or Inuit.
- However, based on a scan of school-based administrators, Northland has approximately 51 teachers of First Nations or Métis heritage (about 25 per cent), which includes six school principals. This number nearly doubled under the Community-Based Teacher Education Program, which involved collaboration between Northland, Northern Lakes College, the University of Alberta and Alberta Education.
- Of those teachers working in Northland, 21 receive a language proficiency allowance for being fluent Cree or Chipewyan speakers.