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To MLA Tom Sammurток

**Bill 37 amendments to *Nunavut Education Act***

I am writing as a constituent of Monica Ell and have included her in this correspondence so that she is aware of the issues I have brought to you. I graduated in high school when the Government of the Northwest Territories, and in effect, the Baffin Divisional Board of Education had the authority over the curriculum, management, policy making and hiring of school staff. I acknowledge and give credit to this system that allows me to be resourceful and a proud Inuk. I was raised with the belief that the dream of Nunavut would mean Inuit and communities being the governing people that would make decisions that impact the lives of our children and grandchildren. I have obtained a post-secondary education in Ontario and currently a student at law. Unfortunately, my children have not received the same quality of education. While I am very proud of them all, some have graduated from a system that has not kept their best interests in mind and the rest continue to be educated within this inadequate system.

The Department of Education (DOE) has been failing Nunavummiut since April 1, 1999. The first failure they were allowed to make was for them to make a recommendation to dissolve the Divisional Boards of Education. Their next set of failures included disrespecting Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), in an effort to create a made in Nunavut *Education Act*. The failed relationship resulted in District Education Authorities fending for themselves. The first effort towards a new Education Act was ultimately rejected.

Prior to 2008, DEAs realised the only way to better advocate was to create the Coalition of Nunavut DEAs (the Coalition). The DOE reacted by legislating and minimizing their role in yet another failure in the 2008 *Education Act*. The 2008 *Education Act* had called for a review five years after it came into effect. Unfortunately, the DOE failed in their role again when there was no review in 2013/2014. In addition, the DOE has failed to ensure that Nunavummiut are properly educated. This is due to the DOE inadequately funding, training and capacity building in all aspects of education such as teacher training, DEA training, curriculum development, language of instruction and inclusive education.

Bill 37 is a major preventable failure that has been submitted for Standing Committee review. The proposed amendments will have long term damaging affects to Nunavummiut and will be another prime example of another issue that will inevitably lead to failure. I ask you to remember that since 1999, graduation and attendance rates have hardly risen and dropout rates continue to be high. According to the Nunavut Bureau of Statistics, enrolments have consistently averaged about 500 new students. In addition, since 1999, there have only been about 3132 graduates from Nunavut's

education system. This is approximately 1 in 4 Nunavummiut that have graduated. The statistics provided by the Bureau does not provide enrolment data going back to 1999 and only from 2003-2014. When I look at their data, I see a policy of social promotion. Their data indicates that enrolments and graduation rates:

Grade 9	totalled 8137
Grade 10	totalled 12,461
Grade 11	totalled 8050
Grade 12	totalled 6094
Graduates	totalled 3132

These failures now rest on your shoulders, as distinguished Members of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. You must decide if these failures will be allowed to continue and you must hold the DOE accountable during your deliberations.

I have gone through Bill 37 and the 2008 *Education Act* several times and am deeply concerned with the direction that the DOE appears to continue to be heading. All other jurisdictions outside of Nunavut have been acting on commitments to empower its indigenous peoples. Nova Scotia for example enacted federal legislation for Mi'kmaw Education to be controlled by Mi'kmaw people. Interestingly enough, their action came into effect in April 1999. They, however, have had an upward trend of graduation rates, including at least a hike of 70% graduation rate and that rate being maintained.

What the Province of Nova Scotia did is in line with Canada's commitments to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. Articles 29 and 30 speak specifically to indigenous people and education. Canada as a signatory to the Convention must ensure that these articles are implemented. They state:

***Article 29***

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
  - (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
  - (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

***Article 30***

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. Online at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

What Bill 37 proposes to do is to make the Government of Nunavut liable for going against these articles. The provisions relating to reducing Inuktitut language of instruction, and delaying, removing or reducing provisions in the *Inuit Language*

*Protection Act* must not proceed. Allowing these amendments to proceed will mean Inuktitut will be lost at a greater pace than it is now.

In addition, students in the inclusive education program or those who must be assessed will experience great difficulties because of the complexities in Bill 37. The DOE conducted community consultations inadequately with Nunavummiut on the fate of their future. They said amendments would make inclusive education easier or simpler, however Bill 37 makes the program a lot more complicated.

This is further exacerbated by the DOE's proposals to tip the balance off the scales in regards to shifting DEA authorities away from the DEAs and into the hands of the Principal, school administration and the Minister. I am appalled that while the Principal and indeed in some circumstances, teachers will have direct access to the Minister, any relationship that the DEA has with the community is diminished and connections to the Minister severed. This can be seen in the inclusive education provisions, where currently, DEAs have oversight and Bill 37 proposes to shift that responsibility to the Principal. In addition, the DEAs role is diminished to "assisting" a teacher to fulfill their duties according to section 43(2) and "a DEA is not to be a party to nor intervene before a review before the board", according to section 50(3).

I don't speak for the Coalition, but I was with the Iqaluit District Education Authority when a group of us saw the need for the development of the Coalition. The Coalition is a positive news story from Nunavut, because it emerged out of community level concerns. DEAs were feeling lost with the dissolution of the boards. The DOE proposal to replace the Coalition is a drastic effort to diminish the voice and the decision-making powers of the DEAs. DEA members know their communities, they know their needs and know how to address issues at the community level. Replacing the Coalition with a government established Council would only suppress the local knowledge and proper venue for DEAs to advocate the fate of their children and grandchildren's educational future. The government is a big enough agency, it does not need to control the community driven approaches that are necessary to improve the quality of education in Nunavut.

During this time, I am proud to be a beneficiary of NTI who has made a call for the rejection of Bill 37 by their resolution passed earlier in March. Their leadership and direction encourages me in this regard. I have also heard the Coalition indicate that they want Bill 37 rejected. These are important organizations that represent the interests of Inuit and the field of education. Listening to their recommendation will mean you understand and acknowledge the gravity of the situation. The DOE must be made to take these rejections seriously, rather than ignoring them and bulldozing their own interests over those of all involved.

I sincerely hope and strongly recommend that when the Standing Committee on Legislation meets to discuss Bill 37, that you task your researchers to provide you with the submissions made to the Special Committee to Review the Education Act and the summary of the Special Committees Proceedings in May 2015 be provided to you. You will note from the submissions and the discussions at the Special Committee Presentations, that a lot of hard work and effort was made to make sure that amendments that are proposed have the best interests of Nunavummiut at the forefront. Unfortunately, because the DOE has had its own narrow vision, much of these deliberations and submissions have been ignored.

Many of us Nunavummiut look to your leadership as lawmakers. We demand you to make a difference, to keep the Nunavut dream alive. Please do your part and make sure that if amendments are to occur on the *Education Act*, that you do so with a goal towards increasing the prominence of Inuktitut being taught in our schools. We demand you to ensure that our culture and heritage are incorporate at all levels of the curriculum. We demand that you ensure all students graduate with the adequacy and competency to attend post-secondary education, if that is what they wish to do so. For them to become hunters and seamstresses if that is what they wish to do so. We must, all of us, have confidence in you. We rely on you to pressure the DOE to work harder for our children and grandchildren.

I would be pleased to clarify any information that may be unclear or require clarification. Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lori Idlout', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lori Idlout

Cc Monica Ell-Kanayuk,  
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