



Yukon Teachers' Association

News Release

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The challenges faced by children, families and communities in accessing quality education in rural schools are real, and Government just made it a whole lot worse. The recent changes to Yukon Government's staff housing policy will most negatively affect rural Yukon communities and schools. With growing Teacher shortages in B.C. and NWT, our government has adopted a tone-deaf staff housing policy that will make it even harder to attract and retain Educators in rural Yukon.

No one, not even YG will deny that for decades there has been a lack of adequate and available housing in rural Yukon communities.

Try to find a rental online, and you will have no luck. Options are then limited to buying or building. Building a house (or even contracting someone to do it) is not something most Canadian's ever contemplate doing. Buying a house is an option – if there is a house to buy! Most rural communities have no, or maybe 1, property listed online for sale.

In 2016, prior to the election, YTA wrote to the now Government asking what it planned to do about the rural housing shortages that effect most Educators wanting to work in Yukon communities. The Government committed to undertaking a full assessment of the needs, and to developing a plan to address the gaps. Three years later, the new staff housing policy does nothing to address the gaps. Instead government has imposed an arbitrary 3 year time limit on staff housing without a plan to increase the supply of housing.

It is ironic for the Government to publicize its new policy of moving to market rents, when there is nothing to rent in most rural communities. This is the white elephant that Government does not want to acknowledge.

YTA asked hard questions of Government before the new policy was implemented but did not receive a considered response to these issues prior to roll out. The majority of staff effected by the changes are Educators, so we are disappointed to learn the ins and outs of Government's plans via public media. What we now know is that despite Government's promise of creating a program that will encourage rural Educators to set up permanently, there is no plan or program in place to support the new policy and this publicized "political" goal.

What this all means for rural Yukon communities and schools is higher turnover and lower teacher retention. Kicking Educators out of staff housing after 36 months does nothing to fix the shortage of adequate and available housing in Yukon rural communities – it just gives them a good reason to look for a job elsewhere.

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