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June 30, 2026

Annette King
Child and Youth Advocate
2070 2nd Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Re: Response to the Undercurrents report regarding SOGI inclusion in schools

Dear Annette King,

Thank you for your thoughtful review of the implementation of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Policy in Yukon schools. As you noted, the previous Minister of Education requested this review, and I am equally committed to safe and caring schools for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The original SOGI Policy was introduced under my leadership in 2012, and this is a timely and welcome review.

Here is our response to each of the Undercurrents report recommendations.

1. YG Response: This report will be tabled by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in Spring 2026. The Advocate respectfully requests that EDU provide an initial response by June 30, 2026 and a follow up response outlining progress made toward addressing the Advocate's recommendations by December 1, 2026, and annually henceforth, until YCAO's systemic progress tracker shows satisfactory outcomes.

Agree. This letter serves as the Department of Education's initial response, and the department will provide a follow up response on December 1, 2026.

2. Incident Response: Schools require guidance on how to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to complaints related to discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. The Advocate recommends EDU work to develop and implement standardized procedures for schools to integrate into their school-based SOGI procedures, including

documentation, reporting, tracking, communication and evaluation of the effectiveness of the action taken.

Agree in principle. A SOGI school procedures template is currently under review, and the expectation is that schools will begin engaging their school communities and adapting procedures for their schools during the 2026-27 school year. The Department of Education is working with the Catholic Episcopal Corporation on customizing these procedures for Catholic separate schools while upholding all elements of the SOGI Policy. By the end of the 2026-27 school year, all schools will be expected to have procedures in place.

Standardizing documentation, reporting, tracking, communications and evaluation across all school authorities is a larger project that will require scoping, time, resources, and engagement. The Department of Education will explore options for standardized reporting to determine whether there is a feasible path within the department's capacity to go forward.

3a. Develop and chair a sub-committee of education partners (such as the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education), to create space for dialogue and exchange of knowledge and experiences. This sub-committee will aim to find common ground in addressing existing tensions regarding topics such as SOGI, racism, sexual health education, and religion in public policies. Reflecting diversity in culture and values, this sub-committee would apply a child rights analysis to the conversations; facilitate vetting of resources and materials; and hold mediated public dialogue, information and training sessions for the school community.

Agree in principle. The Department of Education appreciates the concept and acknowledges the importance of dialogue and knowledge exchange. The department will take time to investigate the best forum for hosting these types of discussions. The Advisory Committee for Yukon Education does not meet frequently and is not best positioned to influence work at the school community level. Other advisory options will be explored.

3b. Meet with the Catholic Episcopal Corporation (CEC) to engage in a respectful, proactive dialogue about the findings of this review. Work with the CEC to establish concrete steps for applying the SOGI policy to Catholic based educational organizations, religious instruction, pastoral guidance, and religious educational materials used or intended for use in schools, ensuring a child rights-based interpretation of inclusion.

Agree. The Department of Education and the Catholic Episcopal Corporation meet regularly and remain committed to working together on matters related to the delivery of Catholic education programming and resources.

The department and the Catholic Episcopal Corporation share a common commitment to creating safe and caring school environments that are in the best interests of students. The department further agrees that robust anti-bullying protection and mental health supports remain essential operational priorities.

The department is committed to genuine pluralism and educational diversity and recognizes denominational and Catholic separate school rights.

The department and the Catholic Episcopal Corporation are collaborating on customizing SOGI procedures for the Catholic separate schools. In addition, the department and the Catholic Episcopal Corporation are working together to identify appropriate and inclusive religious education resources that respect children's rights and human rights legislation while also upholding our commitments under the 1962 Agreement and the recent memorandum of understanding with the Catholic Episcopal Corporation.

3c. Code of conduct, awareness of responsibilities: *Work with school communities to establish standards for a school-wide code of conduct referencing the SOGI policy and school-based SOGI procedures. Ensure all staff, students and EDU partners (including members of school councils, boards, and community committees) have access to the EDU SOGI policy, school-based SOGI procedures, and are aware of their responsibilities by signing the code of conduct.*

Agree in principle. The Department of Education is improving access to SOGI inclusion information and materials. A web page dedicated to SOGI inclusion is live on Yukon.ca, and more content will be added over time. All schools (and programs such as the Gadzoosdaa Student Residence) are expected to be discussing SOGI with their school and family communities as they work with their school and program communities to develop school SOGI inclusion procedures in the fall of 2026. The department will support all school authorities and program leaders to assist in their development of their procedures and to increase awareness of everyone's responsibility to ensure students of all sexual orientations and gender identities are safe and respected in schools.

The department will continue to research best practices to inform options for development of territory-wide standards for a code of conduct and provide an update in December 2026.

3d. Training and resources *Ensure ongoing communication with EDU employees, including education professionals, administration, and departmental staff, about mandatory training and supplemental resources. Track and report on their participation in mandatory training and orientation to the SOGI policy.*

Agree in principle. The Department of Education is exploring options for tracking and reporting on participation in mandatory training. This would require consultation with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and there may be significant financial considerations. In the meantime, the department has been working to remove barriers for SOGI leads to participate in training through regular meetings, and the department is increasing informal training supports and resources through the SOGI leads to ensure all educators and program leaders have access to information.

3e. Update all existing EDU forms, policies and curriculum to be SOGI-inclusive and to enhance cultural safety.

Agree. This work is already underway across the Government of Yukon as part of the LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan. The Government of Yukon Style Guide provides direction for inclusive writing. All new and updated Government of Yukon publications, including forms and policies, are required to comply with this guidance.

If the YCAO's office has specific forms, policies, and curriculum resources they have identified that need updating through their engagement or reviews, the Department of Education is pleased to follow up with a specific conversation and to prioritize updating such resources.

3f. Orientation and training for school boards, councils and community committees *Develop and deliver specific orientations and trainings for school councils, boards, and community committees to clarify their legislated obligations under the EDU SOGI policy with respect to implementation and monitoring. Develop and implement transparent and sustainable measures (such as mandatory training and evaluation) to uphold accountability of school councils and school boards' decisions, actions and respect of the Human Rights Act, the Education Act, and EDU regulations and policies, during their meetings and communications; including but not limited to a school council dispute-resolution process for issues related to school council members and internal processes.*

Agree in principle. The Department of Education is reviewing its authority and responsibilities for overseeing school boards, programs, and councils. In the meantime, introductory SOGI inclusion training will be offered to school boards, programs, and councils, and the department can provide additional, topic-specific training or support for any school community on request.

4a. Student participation *Facilitate a process for students to participate in identifying and selecting safe staff members by amending the existing SOGI policy section "Student Counselling and Support." Ensure that at least two staff members per school are appointed as a temporary measure, until the whole school staff is SOGI trained and respectfully implementing the policy.*

Agree in principle. The Department of Education acknowledges the intent of this recommendation. The draft school procedures template has a provision for students to participate in the selection of the designated safe staff members. It is important to remember that individual students will decide for themselves who they feel safe reaching out to. The department's goal is to strengthen 2SLGBTQIA+ competence within each school and to ensure all staff know who they can contact for information about how to support a student.

In the meantime, the Department of Education is working to improve access to training and resources within schools and program areas to increase the number of knowledgeable staff, and the department is promoting information about SOGI inclusion in schools on Yukon.ca.

4b. Modify infrastructures/buildings to ensure inclusion of all students, including during extracurricular activities. Ensure students have access to safe, secure, respectful gender-neutral washrooms, changerooms, dorms, and field trip accommodations.

Agree in principle. The Department of Education acknowledges the intent of this recommendation, and this work is already being undertaken. This is a long-term commitment, and all new Government of Yukon buildings are designed to be gender inclusive. The department is continuing its work with schools to improve safe access to washrooms and changerooms. Additional modifications to buildings will be made when budgets allow and as renovations are undertaken. The department is pleased to report that Gadzoosdaa Student Residence recently updated its showers with floor-to-ceiling doors to provide more privacy and safety for students.

4c. Inclusion in sports Support trans and non-binary students in sports by developing procedures grounded in human rights frameworks that consider gender stereotypes and vulnerabilities surrounding body image.

The Department of Education will consult sport governing bodies and Sport Yukon before fully accepting this recommendation.

The Department of Education is currently updating Yukon School Sport procedures to include trans and non-binary students. These procedures will include a reference to the SOGI Policy. In addition, the department's SOGI procedures template will address SOGI inclusion and safety in recreational sports within schools, including intramural competitions.

4d. Intersectionality Ensure that SOGI inclusive content and practices respect students' varied cultural backgrounds and diverse abilities.

Agree. As chief educational officers for their schools, this is an expectation of what principals are responsible for leading, with school council and community committee support. Schools are expected to work with their school communities (First Nations, school councils/community committees, staff, students and parents/guardians) to develop SOGI inclusion procedures for their school, to reflect the diversity and unique needs of their school communities. To promote compliance, a template for school procedures will be provided as a generic approach, and schools will customize it based on discussions with their communities. To promote these discussions, the draft procedures specifically address intersectionality.

4e. Vet educational material Create a clear and transparent process that aligns with EDU policies to vet all educational material, services and resources used or intended to be used in schools.

Agree. There are processes already in place for vetting new educational material, services and resources for schools.

Yukon uses British Columbia's Guidance on Learning Resource Selection. Criteria include:

- sensitive topics and themes;
- assessment for tokenism, stereotyping and/or discrimination based on protected grounds as well as numerous other identity factors; and
- alignment of curriculum and age-appropriate assessments.

As the Undercurrents report states, Yukon has developed a Guiding Document for Selecting curricular resources – Catholic Religion materials, adapted from Focused Education BC.

Schools have autonomy to select resources for their schools using their Curriculum Materials Credit Allocation budgets. The Curriculum and Assessment branch is working on developing a checklist for schools to strengthen and align selection with current vetting processes.

4f. Opting out of mandatory curriculum Clarify and formalize a standardized process to ensure students' best interests and views are upheld when students are opted out of any lessons from EDU's mandatory curriculum. Ensure the students' access to the required information to meet learning objectives. Assess the outcomes of any alternate program.

Agree in principle. The Department of Education will review processes and develop an appropriate approach to strengthen processes and communication with educators and families.

5a. Training Providing access to students to adequately trained in-school safe contacts, school wellness specialists, and health nurses who can connect students to clinical supports and relevant resources. Ensure students have access to identified safe spaces and safe contacts at all times.

Agree. The Department of Education will encourage schools to ensure students and families know who their identified safe person is and where the SOGI-inclusive safe space is. All schools have access to a School Wellness Specialist or a School Counsellor and other school staff who can provide supports directly, or they can connect students to clinical supports and relevant resources outside the school setting. The Yukon.ca SOGI website includes resources such as the 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline, Kids Help Phone, Hope for Wellness Helpline and Government of Yukon counselling and supports that are queer-competent.

5b. and 5c. Sexual health education 5b. Ensuring all students, staff, and families are able to safely access up to date resources and supports related to SOGI-inclusive and comprehensive, rights-based, sexual health education. And 5c. Ensuring that mandatory sexual health education curriculum is delivered and assessed every year for every student.

Agree to 5b and 5c. It is expected that mandatory sexual health education curriculum is delivered and assessed each year for each class.

To strengthen accessibility to SOGI-inclusion information, the Department of Education has added a new page on Yukon.ca titled "Learn about sexual orientation and gender identity in schools." This page includes links to useful resources for families. In addition, the department has developed a

comprehensive guide to SOGI inclusion for all Yukon school administrators. It is currently in review and expected to be shared with administrators in the fall of 2026.

The department is developing a new SOGI Resources SharePoint page on Yesnet for educators. This page will give Yukon educators and administrators centralized access to tools, guidance, and materials that support SOGI inclusion. The department is also working to post initial resources by the beginning of the school year. At the first SOGI leads meeting, the department will invite feedback on what additional content would be most useful for that page.

Information for families, staff, and the public about the department's Comprehensive Sexual Health Education curriculum is available on Yukon.ca, and the curriculum is SOGI inclusive. The Department of Health and Social Services' Health Promotion branch is also available to support classrooms and community on sexual health education.


5d. Accessible SOGI inclusion education Ensuring education and student activities related to SOGI are promoted and accessible to the school community.

Agree. The draft school procedures template includes a provision to encourage participation in planning inclusion activities. Schools and program areas are expected to engage their communities and school councils and/or advisory committees when developing their SOGI inclusion procedures.

Many of your recommendations will require budget, staff time, and consideration of options. The Department of Education is doing the work to investigate what is feasible and will have the most impact with the resources available. There is concurrently a review of the department underway by an independent panel. The findings and recommendations of this review will also guide the department's next steps.

The report's insights will support concerted efforts within the Department of Education, school authorities, and schools to strengthen SOGI inclusion and realize our vision of safe and caring schools for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Thank you for recognizing the great work that some teachers are doing, and for applauding the youth who are demonstrating great leadership, in SOGI inclusion. I too would like to congratulate and thank these SOGI champions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SKent', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hon. Scott Kent
Minister of Education