

Coalition Goals

The Coalition held a short discussion on what our goals for the next year should be. As the term of this Coalition is almost at an end, it was decided that the Coalition would concentrate on two main areas: 1. Being the Watchdog for DEAs; 2. Planning workshops for training DEAs.

AOB –By-Law Changes

The executive members discussed a few items in the by-laws that should be brought up for discussion and change at our Annual General Meeting.

1. Staggered terms for executive members for the sake of continuity
2. Setting the amount to be paid for membership in the Coalition at \$100.00 per year, and the time-frame for payment to be made
3. Allowing the Iqaluit DEA chair to be a member of the executive committee as Iqaluit has almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total population of Nunavut, and over 1200 students in their schools. This is a large number of parents and students that would not have direct representation if they do not have membership on the executive committee.

The Coalition also needs to pass a motion choosing the auditor for the Coalition of Nunavut DEAs.

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY BOARD ROOM THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2008 MINUTES

Meeting Start: 4:05 p.m.

Attendees: Jeeteeta Merkosak Simon Kuliktana Jesse Idlout Jake Ikeperiar
 Johnny Kootook Alice Ladner Ed Picco Kathy Okpik
 Brad Chambers

Minister Picco opened the meeting with some comments on Bill 21. He stated that at least 90% of the comments on Bill 21 had been positive. He said they are seriously looking at giving more control and power to local education authorities. He presented the Coalition executive with some Speaking Notes and asked that we read them over as the information on power and control was laid out in these Notes.

Simon Kuliktana stated that he believed the Coalition was receptive to Bill 21 once a few changes had been made. He stated that the Coalition was worried about DEAs being given more responsibilities, but no authority to go with it and that was one of our main concerns.

Minister Picco asserted that Ministerial power was in Bill 21 for checks and balances. He didn't feel that the Department of Education should not have the power to change a decision made by a DEA if the decision was not reasonable. In the proposed new Act, if a community wants to take on new responsibilities, they would just have to contact the Minister and show they have the requirements in place to be able to take on the new responsibilities and it would be approved by the Minister.

Simon raised the issue of having DEAs take part in hiring and firing of school staff, but that with the Union, DEAs cannot take full control even when there are major problems with staff and discipline. He understood that it would be a while before a community could have full control, but questioned how these issues could be handled.

The Minister commented that the Act gives local control to DEAs, but that there are standards that have to be followed. As long as the DEA is not circumventing the Principals' contract, program requirements,

etc., the DEA should be able to resolve the issue. The Minister asked Brad Chambers to confirm what he had said, which Mr. Chambers did.

Jesse Idlout brought up the concerns the Coalition has involving disabled students. Some of these concerns are: no teaching materials in Braille or Inuktitut sign language. There is talk about bringing people up from the south to teach sign language, but Jesse knows there are a number of deaf Nunavumiut who know Inuktitut sign language and could be trained to teach the deaf in Nunavut. He also mentioned that if the hearing impaired were not taught Inuktitut sign language along with American Sign Language, they would be unable to get jobs in the Nunavut Government which requires the ability to work in English and Inuktitut. He also mentioned the need for handi-vans for disabled students.

Kathy Okpik stated that the Department of Education (DoE) did a lot of work on the hearing impaired, but sign language wasn't emphasized. Most of the concern was centred on how to respond to the needs of the child. She said that the concern about jobs came under supportive issues for the disabled which could not be put in the *Education Act*, but that a variety of Government Departments need to take a stronger role to put measures in place for the disabled. The Minister added that the DoE would be setting up meetings in every community to discuss the proposed new *Act* and disabilities could be discussed further at that time.

Simon mentioned that there is a strong need for a variety of data and statistics on disabled students, as well as the total number of students attending schools in Nunavut, broken down by school, grade, and language (English or Inuktitut). Also, the number of students not attending, and the number of students that dropout. Kathy said the department could provide the number of students in Special Education classes. She confirmed that the department would meet the need for sign language; however, sign language is not mentioned specifically in the proposed *Act*.

Jesse stated that the Disabilities Society had never really thanked the Coalition, but it has really helped bring the cause of the disabled to the attention of the DoE. He reiterated that their main concern was lack of teaching materials for the disabled.

Jeeteeta Merkosak commented that she first became a member of the DEA when there was a Baffin Board of Education. She has been with the DEA for 13 years. In 1967 parents were told what would happen to their children concerning education and that is how children ended up in the Federal Day Schools. Reading the proposed new *Education Act*, it doesn't seem to have changed much. The dropout rate is still high. There needs to be improvements in the system. We don't see Inuktitut materials in the schools even though there is a Curriculum Department in Arviat. There are 10 elders in the school in Pond Inlet and more curricula are slated for Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, but more funding is needed. The Coalition noticed that many comments made by the Education Act Standing Committee didn't end up in Bill 21. We hear that DEAs have more authority – as Chair of the Pond Inlet DEA she had good communication with school operations, but some communities have little, or no, communication. There is often a dead end to discussions with the RSOs and DoE. Looking at discipline, if schools followed IQ, the rates of suspensions and expulsions would drop. There is still uncertainty about Language of Instruction.

Minister Picco stated that the proposed new *Education Act* was not going to stop the dropout rate from being so high. Social/family issues, kids staying up late, not enough supervision – all these issues played a role in the dropout rate. The Education Act can't resolve these problems. DEAs have local control in schools. They can find out what the problems are and work to resolve them. The Minister is concerned about the lack of Inuktitut materials making it into the schools. They have a Curriculum Department that is working very hard, and they have seen the materials. The Minister asked Kathy Okpik to check and find out what's going on. He apologized for not knowing what the issue was. The Minister commented that students shouldn't be put in different grade levels when moving from one community to another. This problem also indicates a problem with the curriculum materials in the schools.

Minister Picco explained that the proposed new Education Act would put an extra \$14 million into education. All the schools across Nunavut would get extra money for curriculum, computers, programs, etc.

Regarding discipline issues, the Minister felt this is the toughest issue, but Bill 21 tries to give support to the DEAs on discipline issues with things like in-school suspensions. The Minister stated that a subsection on discipline in Bill 21 states that discipline has to run under IQ principles.

The Minister stated that he appreciated the work the Coalition is doing and that he has tried to address our issues. If the Coalition is not happy, let him know and he will try to fix Bill 21 to suit what we want. Minister Picco acknowledged that the DoE has heard standards across Nunavut are not the same. He mentioned that this is a nationwide problem, with 3 out of 10 students across Canada having to upgrade before going on to university. The DoE is trying to set testing standards. They have people in Pangnirtung working on the criteria for testing standards. The Minister also stated that the extra \$14 million is contingent on Bill 21 being passed as he needs a vehicle for the funding.

Minister Picco and Kathy Okpik, the DM, asked the Coalition to prepare a paper to present at the next set of meetings planned for the review of Bill 21 on April 23 and 24, 2008. The DoE will provide the Coalition with funding to get outside legal counsel on writing up our position paper.

All parties agreed that the Coalition's next AGM should be held in the middle of June, after the Legislative Assembly Session is finished. The DoE will help with the costs of bringing all DEA chairs to Iqaluit.

Date

Chairperson

Date

Office Administrator