

## **GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION 5-17(2): ANTI-BULLYING MEASURES**

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**Motion: NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that this Legislative Assembly strongly recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories establish a territory-wide campaign to denounce bullying including cyber-bullying and to provide information and resources for schools, parents, victims and bystanders;**

**AND FURTHER, that the government review anti-bullying legislation measures being undertaken in other jurisdictions and bring forward a bill for consideration by this Assembly within 18 months;  
AND FURTHERMORE, that the government provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.**

### **GNWT Response**

Canadian media reports indicate that there has been an increase in the number of concerns raised by parents about school-based bullying. During the 2010-2011 Northwest Territories (NWT) regional forums on Aboriginal Student Achievement, participants identified the need for schools to develop safe learning environments and to address issues such as bullying.

Education bodies across the NWT are currently dealing with bullying in a variety of ways. Each district has implemented anti-bullying initiatives based on their need and available resources. For instance, five NWT regions report involvement in the national Pink Shirt Campaign and three regions report dedicating week long campaigns to address school-based bullying. Further, every school jurisdiction in the NWT implements some form of anti-bullying program in their school and many use material from multiple programs to teach appropriate behaviour. Teacher professional development workshops on bullying related behaviours are offered in-person or online in every school jurisdiction in the NWT. Topics range from establishing proactive discipline procedures to dealing with the impact of cyber-bullying. Finally, at least three jurisdictions report on community partnerships, including the RCMP, in dealing with bullying.

In 1999, the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) identified a research-based framework known as Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) in which schools build their own school-wide behavioral support systems. PBS frameworks lead to the development of school-wide discipline systems that address the needs of all students, including bullying, and supported by all staff.

Since 2000, ECE has invested considerable resources to assist schools in developing expertise in establishing school-wide systems for dealing proactively with inappropriate behavior. High staff turnover results in the need for ECE to continually update and seek ways to sustain PBS training across the NWT. ECE is currently exploring the use of technology based tools to provide additional on-site PBS staff training.

The way that Education bodies across Canada address bullying varies by jurisdiction. Ontario and Quebec governments have introduced bullying related legislation. Among ECE's Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) partners, Manitoba is the only one with legislation related to bullying as found in their *Safe Schools Charter*. The Government of Alberta recently introduced *Bill 2* that included a revision to the *Education Act* with a clause on bullying; however, the Bill did not pass.

British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan governments have not introduced anti-bullying legislation to date. However, British Columbia and the Yukon have established Safe Schools policies. Nova Scotia recently implemented a task force on cyber-bullying.

To get anti-bullying legislation passed in the NWT, the timing of the Legislative Assembly Session and the time required to process and review legislative proposals by Standing Committees are factors to consider. In effect, there are twelve stages to pass legislation including:

- (1) development of a legislative proposal;
- (2) review by Standing Committee;
- (3) compilation of a report assessing the legislation by the Legislative Initiatives Committee;
- (4) Cabinet to consider if a bill is drafted;
- (5) drafting of the bill;
- (6) notice of introduction;
- (7) first reading; (8) second reading;
- (9) Standing Committee review;
- (10) the report stage;
- (11) third reading; and the final stage;
- (12) assent and proclamation by the Commissioner.

The Department will review the *Education Act* and intends to submit a legislative proposal to amend the *Act* to including provisions addressing anti-bullying measures within 18 months. The Department will work towards this requirement by the Fall of 2012.

This document forms the Government of Northwest Territories' comprehensive response within the 120 day deadline.