



Department of Education Status Report

**Response to the Standing Committee
on Public Accounts Report by the
Auditor General of Canada**

**Department of Education
May 05, 2010**

Department of Education Status Report

A Response to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts Auditor General of Canada Report on the Public Schools Branch and the Advanced Education Branch, Department of Education

Recommendation #1

The Department of Education should

- establish performance targets for Yukon students overall and, to the extent possible, for each major student sub-group;
- determine what performance data it needs to gather;
- analyze data to identify critical trends and significant performance gaps;
- develop comprehensive action plans for significant gaps and relevant subgroups; and
- present, in its annual report, the critical trends, significant performance gaps, and the results of actions taken to improve performance.

Comment by the Committee:

The Department should report to the Legislative Assembly on the progress of this initiative, on an annual basis, until full implementation has been achieved.

Status Update: The Department will include a Status Report on the Implementation Plan as part of the Department's Annual Report tabled in the Yukon Legislative Assembly until full implementation is completed of this initiative.

- 1. The department has developed a draft Assessment Framework and Assessment Matrix for 2010/2011 and is on track for full implementation of the Framework by Fall 2011.*
- 2. A new Yukon Student Information System (YSIS) has been purchased and implementation is underway. Student tombstone data and attendance data is now being entered for Whitehorse schools and full data entry will be completed by the end of the 2010 school year for this component. A full policy review is*

underway to revise and update the Department of Education policy and procedures framework so that it too complies with the YSIS system needs. This includes the Attendance Policy, the Special Handbook Guidelines and a new Student Information Policy.

- 3. Data collection and analysis will be a follow-up step that will commence in 2011.*
- 4. Action plans, in accordance with the YSIS data, School Growth Plans and assessment framework data will be used to complete action plans that can address gaps by Fall 2013 when the systems are fully integrated and implemented.*

Recommendation #2

The Department of Education should investigate the feasibility of tracking the progress of its students in employment and in post-secondary education. This would allow it to monitor the success of its programs and policies aimed at helping students make the transition from public school to post-secondary education and the workforce.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to point 5: The Department should indicate whether the Graduate Exit Survey will be conducted for high-school graduation, as well as for graduation from post-secondary school. The Department should also indicate whether there are plans to track the post-secondary status and attainment of students attending institutions other than Yukon College (e.g. universities or colleges situated Outside) and whether the employment status of students who drop-out of high-school will also be tracked.

With regard to point 6: The Department should clarify why the student tracking formula will only track students who receive the Yukon Grant and/or the Student Training Allowance.

With regard to point 8: The Department should clarify the following:

- how often the Student Satisfaction Surveys are conducted (e.g. once a year, each year that a student is enrolled in the College; only in the graduating year, etc.), and
- whether the Student Satisfaction Surveys
 - (a) include students who do not complete their program and graduate from the College,
 - (b) are conducted for students graduating from high-school, and
 - (c) whether they will be conducted for students who drop out of high-school (to determine contributing factors, etc.)?

Status Update:

The High School Exit Survey will be administered to all Yukon high school students who were in a student cohort that started Grade 9 in September 2006. This will also include any students who left school before Grade 9, hence it is more appropriate to refer to this survey as a High School Exit survey vs. a Graduate Exit Survey as not all students will

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have graduated, and the survey will try to capture all students in the cohort. It will be a longitudinal study so the same group will be contacted three times over six years to track their progress. They will be surveyed as to their high school satisfaction, where and what post-secondary options they have pursued, if they have received funding from Yukon and their employment status. The survey will commence this fall and be administered by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics (YBS).

Currently, the YBS is finalizing the survey questions. A meeting is planned with CYFN and upon the recommendations of the First Nations' community, YBS will be meeting with a focus group of First Nation "student leavers" to assess the questions and to gain some preliminary feedback. The survey will be administered for the first time by a series of 30 minute phone interviews this fall and the follow up survey interviews will occur every other fall for the next four years.

The Department will be following up with Yukon College to collaborate on the findings of the Yukon College Student Exit Survey (referred to above as the Yukon College Satisfaction Survey) so that areas of mutual concerns can be addressed and to establish better ways to track post-graduate employment of Yukon College students as a way to evaluate program success. To date, the department is aware that Yukon College conducts the Student Exit Survey on an annual basis and only those who are actually graduating and will achieve the credential are surveyed. The survey occurs in April of each year.

Recommendation #3

The Department of Education needs to coordinate their efforts with Yukon College to identify and, to the extent possible, address the root causes that lead to a lack of student readiness for the shift between high school and post-secondary education.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to the Auditor General's recommendation - The Department should explain how it will identify the "root causes" that lead to a lack of student readiness for the transition to post-secondary education.

With regard to point 9 – The Department should elaborate on the recommendations in the One Vision Multiple Pathways Report that apply to this recommendation.

With regard to point 10 – The Department should elaborate on the manner in which the Department will work with Yukon College in this regard. The Department should also elaborate on the phrase "the opportunity to meet the entry needs as defined by Yukon College." What, for example, constitutes an opportunity to meet those needs?

With regard to the College's response – The Implementation Plan should provide more description of the committee to which Yukon College refers, particularly with regard to the composition and mandate of the committee.

Status Update:

The Department believes that the root causes are as varied and diverse as the student body they reflect, and we expect much of this information to be uncovered in the 2010 High School Exit Survey.

Yukon College has been participating in the Public Schools Branch Transition Team to garner information about early school learners. A new and additional focus is being placed on the 18-24 year old group in the context of the Learning Assistance Centre at the college to address the needs of those students who are deemed to be low skilled, early drop outs and face multiple barriers. Finally, an Articulation Committee will be established to review each student in terms of Prior Learning Assessment and any targeted skill development needs.

Recommendation #4

Yukon College should report on the progress of the students registered in its Developmental Studies program to help assess the program's success.

Comment by Committee:

The Committee looks forward to seeing the action plan and the manner in which it will report the Developmental Studies program's success. Yukon College should report its timeline for the development and implementation of this action plan.

Status Update:

The Developmental Studies program at Yukon College has been fully revamped and redesigned to the new School of Access. The newly revised program is focused on employment skills and literacy and numeracy training as it relates to employment. In terms of accountability, the new funding agreement template with YG includes an evaluative component, and the Education Plan included in the evaluative funding agreement will address the questions that the committee has been raised.

All of this information will be included in a more informative Yukon College Annual Report and will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the Yukon College Act starting in 2011.

Recommendation #5

Yukon College should establish performance measures that include specific targets and expectations. It should also report to the Minister and to Yukoners the progress it has made to meet those targets and expectations and the results of actions it has taken.

Comment by Committee:

In reporting to the Legislative Assembly, the College should be more specific about how the strategic plan and the action plan address the Auditor General's recommendation.

Status Update:

Yukon College has developed a detailed profile of Yukon College learners over the past several years and has been compiling this information in a report entitled Strategic Indicator Snapshot. The College will continue to refine and develop the benchmarks and indicators contained in this report and assemble this information in the Yukon College Annual Report that is tabled in the Legislative Assembly each spring commencing in the spring 2011.

In addition to this report, the College has been reviewing the School of Access (formerly known as the Developmental Studies Program). This work involves compiling a data warehouse that will provide a full profile of the demographics, study patterns and learner needs of students at Yukon College and this data will also be incorporated in the Yukon College Annual Report in spring 2011.

Recommendation #6

The Department of Education should develop a comprehensive strategy for managing community training funds. Contribution agreements should have clear terms and conditions and should be properly reviewed, managed, and monitored.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to point 11 – The Department should explain why the Yukon Training Strategy (YTS) needs to be replaced and how the Labour Market Framework will improve upon the YTS. The Department should also identify the “subsidiary strategies” to which it refers.

Status Update:

In short, the Yukon Training Strategy (YTS) needed to be replaced because it was over 10 years old and did not reflect the current labour market realities. The new Labour Market Framework will improve upon the YTS primarily by being more flexible and adaptable.

The YTS Action Plans that will accompany the strategy can be changed and updated on an annual basis or as required to more readily address changing labour market realities. As well, there will be increased monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place that will focus on outcomes.

The Action Plans are more comprehensive than the strategy was in that there are five separate strategies to address labour market issues including the Comprehensive Skills and Trades Training Strategy, Recruitment Strategy, Retention Strategy, Immigration Strategy, Labour Market Information Strategy.

The Department also hired an independent contractor to evaluate the Community Training Funds and has implemented a number of changes as a result of that evaluation.

Recommendation #7

The Department of Education should develop a long-term strategic plan that includes clearly defined directions and specific measurable goals and objectives.

Comment by the Committee:

In order to comply with the Auditor General's recommendation the Department should:

- report the timelines for the completion of the "other linked exercises."
- explain how these exercises are linked to one another and the long-term strategic plan.
- explain how the Auditor General's Recommendation #7 will be implemented if these other exercises are not completed.

Status Update:

A draft Department of Education Strategic Plan 2010-2015 : Our Commitment to New Horizons, was released in April 2010.

The Strategic Plan is informed by a number of linked studies and initiatives that the department has completed over the past three years including the One-Vision Multiple Paths Report, the School Growth Planning Initiative, the Student Assessment Framework, the recommendations from the Audit and recommendations from the Education Reform initiative. These linked initiatives are all on track and will be completed as noted in the Department of Education Implementation Plan.

Information and comment provided during the 2002 Education Act Review has also been included. It will align future budgeting commitments and will serve as a blueprint

for the department for the next five years. The Department intends to finalize and approve the Strategic Plan by December 2010.

Recommendation #8

As part of the strategic planning process, the Department of Education should develop an integrated risk-management plan that identifies and [assesses] the key risks the Department faces and the measures it will use to mitigate these risks. This information should be communicated to relevant staff so that there is an ongoing effort to identify, manage, and report key risks.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to point 14 – The Department should clarify what exactly the term “environmental scan” means in this context. It should explain how “environmental scan” differs from and complements, the “integrated risk management plan” referred to by the Auditor General in Recommendation #8.

Status Update:

The Department has incorporated an Environmental Scan section into the 2009-2010 Annual Report and plans to continue this in future reports.

An Environmental Scan involves the department taking stock of and considering what factors may influence Education in the foreseeable future. The section is meant as an opportunity to reflect on trends and changes that are current in the world of Education and to share that information with our partners. It is clearly an early step in

The scan varies slightly from the Integrated Risk Assessment Plan that outlines more direct threats to the way we will be required to deliver programs and the kinds or numbers of programs we may be expected to deliver. In short, the Integrated Risk Management Plan is intended to be more explicit with respect to risks, and adopt a more systematic approach to managing any risks that make be seen to be on the horizon. This may include significant changes to enrolments, potential new mines or a negotiated agreement for a self-governing First Nation to assume responsibility for education.

Recommendation #9

The Department of Education should develop a policy that lays out the specific purpose of school plans, expectations for their preparation including the link with the Department's strategic plan, the expected frequency of preparation of plans, and how school plan results should be reported. The policy should also incorporate review and feedback mechanisms.

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Comment by the Committee:

Should the Department adhere to its timeline in complying with this recommendation; the School Growth Planning Policy will be approved about the same time that the Committee's report is tabled in the Legislative Assembly. While the Department commits to having the policy approved in the Spring 2009, it does not say how or when this policy will be made public. The Department should explain the process by which the policy is developed and approved.

Status Update:

The Department has approved a School Growth Planning Policy and has linked this policy along with all other department policies on the Department of Education website. Department policies are developed in consultation with a number of advisory committees including representatives from the First Nation Education Advisory Committee, School Councils, the Association of School Administrators and department representatives.

All of these groups are consulted with on a regular basis and are kept informed of new and finalized initiatives, such as this policy.

Recommendation #10

The Department of Education should:

- develop and implement a comprehensive human resources plan that clearly defines its current and future human resource needs and integrates them with its strategic plan, and
- develop an action plan or a strategy to deal with existing differences between current resources and short-and long-term staffing needs.

Comment by the Committee:

Once again the Department should clarify the interconnection between compliance with this recommendation and the other linked exercises, and how the Department will comply with the Auditor General's Recommendation #10, if these other exercises are not completed on time.

Status Update:

A Stakeholder Staffing Allocation Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the Yukon Teachers Association and its subcommittee, the Association of Yukon School Administrators, School Councils, the Catholic Education Association of Yukon and Department of Education representatives has been meeting regularly since December 2009 with a consultant to review the former staffing formula and process used for staff

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*assignment in Yukon schools. The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon participated in the first four meetings and withdrew before the completion of the process. The committee finished its work on March 4, 2010 endorsing recommendations for revisions to the existing staffing formula and process. The committee was striving for an inclusive, collaborative fair, transparent and collaborative process and adopted the following principles to guide their work: * Equity; Transparency; Fairness; Sustainability; Predictability and Accountability.*

The committee unanimously voted to endorse both the process followed and the recommendations that were made. The new formula has addressed those factors that will need to be consistent and within each school. Those factors needs to be considered in making schools different and recognized through differentiated staffing. It is hoped that the new formula will be piloted in the spring of 2010. Because there still is not accurate data, (something the Department is hoping to rectify within the next year) there will be one more stage to review next year in regard to the allocation of Educational Assistants and school vulnerability.

Also, because the new formula will require some significant adjustments to staffing within some of our schools, a transition plan has been recommended by the committee for this year. The plan includes a lowering of staffing numbers over a period of time in those schools where the current staffing is in excess of the formula.

It is expected that this process will continue independently to be linked to other department initiatives including School Growth Process Plans and the One Vision Multiple Paths initiative.

Recommendation #11

The Department of Education should work with the Property Management Division to develop a long-term facility plan that takes into account the age, capacity, and location of facilities and student enrolment trends.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to point 18: The Department should explain:

- the composition of the Committees that have been established to oversee this work.
- which government department has primary responsibility for implementing this recommendation – Education, or Highways and Public Works.

With regard to point 19: The Department should clarify:

- how many of its schools were built prior to 1990,

- why the long-term replacement plan will only include schools built prior to 1990,
- at what point schools built after 1990 will be included in the long-term school replacement plan; and
- how the replacement of schools will be prioritized.

Status Update:

The Audit Schedule and the facilities audits currently underway are one and the same. The challenge had been to develop an effective methodology to audit the school buildings. The Technical Support Unit of the Property Management Agency had adopted the practice of conducting full building audits by focusing on a single building at a time to conduct an audit of all disciplines at that time. There is value in this however given that there are a number of critical disciplines that had not been covered in some time, including roofing and structural audits the department has put some priority on conducting a system-wide audit to ensure that those key disciplines were quickly brought up to a common evaluation level. To date, the roof audits were undertaken in 2008/09 and the structural audits in 2009/10. The roof audits are now fully completed and the structural audits are currently underway. The Department is working closely with the Property Management Agency to ensure that these more immediate audits are conducted along with the system-wide audits by PMA.

Of the 28 Yukon schools only the following schools were built after 1990: Elijah Smith, (1992) Golden Horn Elementary, (1990) Hidden Valley Elementary School, (1992) Holy Family Catholic Elementary School, (1993) École Émilie Trembley School (1995) Chief Zzeh Gittlit School (1998), Ross River 2000, JV Clark 2002, Tantalus (2007). There were also major additions to Porter Creek in 1997 and Eliza Van Bibber in Pelly Crossing in 2004.

The Department of Education is working with the Technical Support Unit at the Department of Highways and Public Works to ensure that the building auditing measures by the respective departments are fully combined and to minimize any overlap. The new, combined model of facilities auditing is expected to have a much longer planning horizon of approximately 5 to 10 years for detailed system upgrading, and a 30 to 40 year time horizon for total building replacement projections. School replacement schedules for schools built before 1990 will be done in accordance with the needs that are revealed through the system-wide audits and in accordance with budgeting allocations made by the legislative assembly.

Recommendation #12

The Department of Education should take the appropriate steps to ensure that teaching staff are evaluated on a timely basis, as required by the *Education Act*, the *Education Labour Relations Act*, and departmental policies.

Comment by the Committee:

The Department should report to the Legislative Assembly on the progress of this initiative, on an annual basis, until full implementation has been achieved.

Status Update:

To date, the Human Resources Branch of the Yukon Department of Education has sent a list of all outstanding Employee Performance Evaluations to school Administrators in the Fall of 2009. Administrators were advised at that time to outline a plan for compliance with this requirement and to provide their Superintendents with a plan. This work is now underway and to date all school administrators have prioritized the evaluations required for teachers and are completing those highest on the list first. Due to the numbers it is expected that all teachers will be on a three year cycle by the end of 2011.

Recommendation #13

The Department of Education should work with the Property Management Division of the Department [of Highways and Public Works] to conduct regular and comprehensive facility audits to ensure that major building deficiencies are identified. The audits should address environmental, health, and safety issues, as needed.

Comment by the Committee:

With regard to points 22 and 23 - The Department should clarify the difference, or relationship, between the Audit Schedule and the facilities audit currently underway. The Department's implementation plan seems to suggest that they differ, given that there are different timelines for their completion.

With regard to point 24: The Department should clarify how the measures it will undertake dovetail with those of the Department of Highways and Public Works. At the Committee's public hearing, it emerged that the long-term school facilities planning undertaken jointly by these departments was limited to a 2 to 3 year planning horizon. The Department of Education should clarify whether this joint planning will now have a longer-term (i.e. several years) horizon.

Status Update:

The Audit Schedule and the facilities audits currently underway are one and the same. The challenge had been to develop an effective methodology to audit the school buildings. The Technical Support Unit of the Property Management Agency had adopted the practice of conducting full building audits by focusing on a single building at a time

to conduct an audit of all disciplines at that time. There is value in this however given that there are a number of critical disciplines that had not been covered in some time, including roofing and structural audits the department has put some priority on conducting a system-wide audit to ensure that those key disciplines were quickly brought up to a common evaluation level. To date, the roof audits were undertaken in 2008/09 and the structural audits in 2009/10. The roof audits are now fully completed and the structural audits are currently underway. The Department is working closely with the Property Management Agency to ensure that these more immediate audits are conducted along with the system-wide audits by PMA.

With regard to point 24, it is important to clarify that at the time of the Auditor General's work with the Department of Education, it was expected that Department of Highways and Public Works would have its new Facilities Auditing Unit established very soon. In fact, development and full operation of this unit is still underway and therefore the building audit function at the Department of Highways and Public Works has been covered by their Technical Support Unit.