

YELLOWKNIFE (March 17, 2014) – The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) has been in exploratory discussions with education partners on school utilization in Hay River and Yellowknife since September 2013. These discussions were motivated by the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories’ orders that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) provide Commission scolaire francophone (CSF) schools in Yellowknife and Hay River with gyms and additional classrooms.

ECE reached out to the CSF, Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1), the Hay River District Education Authority (HRDEA) and the South Slave Divisional Education Council’s Superintendent to discuss options to exchange schools that would meet the long-term needs of all students in their communities, use existing school infrastructure more efficiently and remain compliant with the court orders.

Last week in Hay River, both the CSF and the HRDEA withdrew from any further exploratory discussions on the exchange of schools in Hay River. The GNWT has accepted the decisions of the two Authorities and will focus on presenting its case to the Court of Appeal on March 24.

“I am disappointed that we were unable to come to an agreement in Hay River,” said Minister of Education, Culture and Employment Jackson Lafferty. “Without ever jeopardizing our overall goal to provide high quality education for students, we approached our partners to explore whether we could make better use of existing schools to meet some of the facilities aspects of the court order. We felt this approach would meet the needs of all parties, make better use of existing schools and avoid having to spend an estimated \$13 million on new infrastructure when utilization rates and enrolments have been declining over the last ten years.”

No final decision has been made on school exchange options in Yellowknife. During the month of May, YK1 will be engaging with its parents to present the proposal from the GNWT.

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