

FINAL REPORT

Future Directions for Programming and Facility Use
For District Elementary Schools

Yellowknife Education District 1
Facilities Committee

June 2014

Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Facilities Committee

Final Report - Future Directions for Programming and Facility Use For District Elementary Schools

1.0 Introduction

This document serves as the final report from the Facilities Committee to the Board of Trustees of Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK 1). The report summarizes the process followed by the Committee members in their examination of matters set out in the Terms of Reference (see Attachment 1) provided by the Board. In addition, the report summarizes the results, findings and recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee is composed of thirteen members. Members were appointed from the Board of Trustees, District administration, school staffs and parents. The names of Committee members can be found within Terms of Reference. Ms. Heather Clarke was appointed to Chair the Facilities Committee. During their work, the Committee met seven (7) times (see Attachment 2) to discuss various topics related to their mandated duties. In addition, many of the Committee members also participated in public events organized in support of the project. Mark Cleveland facilitated the work of the Committee.

It should be noted that the members of the Committee hold a wide range of views on the topics discussed during the work of the past few months. Many of these views are expressed in this report. However, not every member is in agreement with all of the comments, conclusions and recommendations that are contained within this document.

Recognizing that the members of the District's Board of Trustees, including the two trustees that served on the Committee, have the duty to assess the final report and ultimately make decisions regarding recommendations contained in the report, the trustees serving on the Committee abstained in the Committee's final decisions related to this report's recommendations.

2.0 Background and Context

The establishment of the Facilities Committee occurred following a series of activities stimulated by a request from the GNWT, Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). ECE requested YK 1 transfer one of its schools to the GNWT. This request was prompted by a court decision directing the GNWT to provide the Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest with additional school space.

The request by ECE resulted from the Government's view that the District's school utilization numbers are low enough to permit the District to provide suitable programs for all students within four rather than five elementary school facilities.

Following an initial rejection of the GNWT's request, the GNWT requested that the Board re-consider its decision on the matter. As a result of this request, the YK 1 Board of Trustees decided to expand its considerations of the GNWT request, by consulting with the District's stakeholders and looking at how students might be best served, not simply in terms of facilities, but also in terms of the delivery of appropriate and high quality program and services.

To support the Board's considerations, the Facilities Committee was established and tasked to complete several specific tasks including the engagement of stakeholders.

3.0 Mandate and Goals of the Facilities Committee

The Facilities Committee is an ad-hoc, advisory, committee of the Board of Trustees of YK 1. The Board established the Facilities Committee by motion on February 11, 2014. The purpose of the Committee was defined by the following description that is contained within the Committee's Terms of Reference:

The Committee is a working group that will develop school facility grade configurations options for the YK 1 schools, present these options at a town hall meeting of YK 1 stakeholders, and report back to the Board of Trustees with a report summarizing the results of the town hall meeting, along with any resulting recommendations based on the stakeholders input.

Specific actions outlined by the Board in the Terms of Reference required the Committee to collect and analyze available information, including information related to existing District programming, school enrolments, school utilization as well as conduct meetings with District staff and the public.

To guide its work the Committee established a series of goals. These goals included:

1. Identify options for the future use of YK 1 school facilities (including grade configuration);
2. Based upon review, research and comment, provide the District's Board of Trustees with specific recommendations related to future school facility usage;
3. Engage a broad range of interested stakeholders, including parents, district staff and members of the general community in discussions of future school facility use;
4. Make recommendation(s) related to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment concerns regarding current YK 1 school facility utilization; and
5. Make recommendation(s) related to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment request for the transfer of a school facility to the GNWT.

In addition, the Committee members agreed to be guided in their work by four principles:

- Reflect the best interests of the students enrolled in the programs and other stakeholders involved in and using our education facilities;
- Encourage improving operational efficiency where possible;
- Result in a sustainable framework for the planning and delivery of schooling over time; and
- Support long-term, planned, redevelopment of existing facilities.

The work on the Committee focused on the District's elementary schools and did not include discussion of the programming or use of the high school - Ecole Sir John Franklin High School.

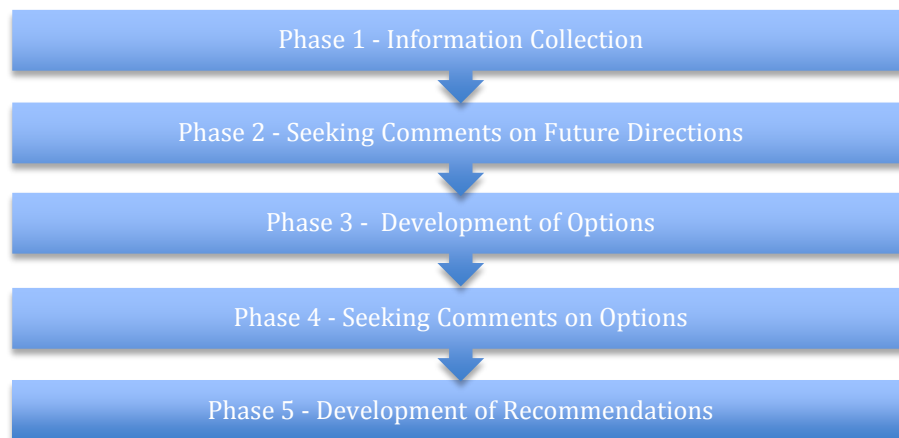
As well, in completing their work, the Committee members understood that the Board would not be undertaking any significant changes to grade configuration, programming or facility use in the 2014/2015 school year.

The direction of the Board, plus the more detailed goals and principles described by the Facilities Committee, provided the overall framework that guided activities throughout the past few months.

4.0 Committee Activities

The Board, through its establishment of a Facilities Committee elected to establish a public process through which various stakeholder groups had an opportunity to directly participate in consideration of the future direction of the District's programming and facility use. The phases of Facilities Committee activity are illustrated below.

Facilities Committee Work Processes



Activities associated with each of the identified phases are described in brief terms below.

Phase 1 – Information Collection

- Collect current and projected student enrolment in the 5 schools offering elementary education programming (Mildred Hall School, Ecole J.H. Sisson; William McDonald School, N.J. MacPherson School and Range Lake North School);
- Collect information related to current and projected school utilization;
- Determine estimated enrolments related to the introduction of Junior Kindergarten in 2016/2017;
- Understand the similarities and differences between school utilization calculations used by ECE and YK 1; and
- Identify existing programming offered by schools.

Phase 2 – Seeking Comments on Future Directions

- Develop questions related to District performance and student excellence for comment;
- Conduct meetings with members of the public;
- Conduct meetings with members of the District staff; and
- Conduct a stakeholder’s survey related to key questions.

Phase 3 – Development of Options

- Based upon information and comments received from discussions with stakeholders, develop an initial listing of optional approaches to future programming and facilities use;
- Analyze various options to determine feasibility and functionality; and
- Identify options for discussion with the public.

Phase 4 – Seeking Comments on Options

- Conduct meetings with members of the public (3 meetings were held) to discuss options;
- Conduct meetings with members of the District staff to discuss options;

Phase 5 – Development of Recommendations

- Review information collected;
- Review comments from stakeholders; and
- Prepare a report, including recommendations, for the Board.

The engagement of stakeholders included four opportunities (3 meetings and an evening “drop in” event) for public participation in the Committee’s deliberations. As well, two meetings were held for District staff members. An estimated 150 people attended the public and staff sessions. The Committee also circulated a survey to parents, guardians

and stakeholders that resulted in 399 responses. In addition, the Committee also received some written submissions directly from stakeholders.

5.0 Investigation and Analysis of Future Directions

The Committee spent considerable time examining and discussing the current delivery of programs and services as well as considering the “best estimates” of what is likely to occur in the future. Much of this work centered around four key themes. These themes were:

- Current and projected enrolments and school utilization estimates;
- District programming;
- Facilities; and
- The GNWT’s request.

The Committee members examined “facts and figures” as well as the suggestions, comments and advice received during the public engagement processes. A summary of the Committee’s considerations is outlined below.

5.1 Current and projected enrolments and school utilization estimates

Currently there are 1169 (September, 2013) students registered in the elementary programs offered by YK 1. Enrolment projections for the next few years suggest that the District can expect a small “natural” increase (projected at 5%) in elementary enrolments. This growth, coupled with growth from the introduction of Junior Kindergarten (JK) in the Yellowknife schools in 2016/2017 (projected at 10%) is projected to result in an enrolment in elementary education of 1392 by 2016/2017 – an increase of over 15% over the current level. Following the introduction of Junior Kindergarten current projections indicate that overall elementary enrolments will remain relatively stable for the next five to ten years. Some enrolment variation can be expected from year to year, but generally enrolments are expected to be consistent. It is also useful to note that overall City of Yellowknife school enrolments have decreased by about 8% over the past six years.

Current school enrollments and projected enrolment and utilization estimates can be found in Attachment Three (3) and Attachment Four (4) of this report.

Present YK 1 school capacity and utilization were topics of considerable discussion and debate for the Committee. ECE has an established territorial standard (2005) for the calculation of school capacity and utilization that is based upon the square metre allocations measured against actual enrolments. On the other hand, the District employs a different approach to determining capacity and utilization based upon “the number of physical teaching spaces” within a school.

For three of the elementary schools in question the variation between ECE's calculations and YK 1's calculation are not significant. However, in two schools (Mildred Hall School and Range Lake North School) the variation in utilization estimates differs by 15% to 20%. ECE's utilization rates are, in every case, lower than those of YK 1. The primary factor influencing the differences in estimates is the amount of "open space" present in the two schools and the treatment of this space in the capacity and utilization calculations. For the purposes of certainty, all utilization figures in the text below are based upon the standards established by ECE.

At the present time, the elementary schools in the District have an overall capacity of 2181 students. Based upon the current year enrolment this results in a District-wide utilization rate within elementary schools of 54%.

At the present time, three of the District's elementary schools have utilization rates of between 60% and 70%. Low school enrolments within the District are most pronounced in two District schools – Mildred Hall (50% utilization) and William McDonald (35% utilization). It is also important to note that all of the District elementary schools, with the exception of William McDonald School, are projected see at 10% increase in utilization following the implementation of Junior Kindergarten (2016/2017). In fact, two elementary schools, Ecole J.H. Sissons and Range Lake North School are expected to have utilization rates of about 80% or more following the introduction of Junior Kindergarten.

Enrolments and utilization rates could change should the GNWT's efforts to significantly increase the NWT population, announced last year by the Government, come to fruition. If the GNWT is successful it is likely that some modest enrolment growth could be expected. As well, the recently completed agreement with Canada that resulted in the devolution of additional governance and administrative responsibilities from the Government of Canada to the GNWT, with the associated transfer of staff positions (and associated families) may also result in further modest increase of enrolments within the overall Yellowknife education system.

5.2 District Programming and Grade Configurations

Over the years, YK 1 has been aggressive and innovative in its development and implementation of programming options in its schools. The implementation of programs including K - 12 French Immersion, Intensive and Post-intensive French, Aboriginal languages and culture, sports academies all have received solid support from parents, and the active participation from students.

Of particular note - the establishment of Ecole J.H. Sissons as a French as a second language Immersion school (K-5) has been very well received and by 2016/2017 will have a projected enrollment very close to its absolute capacity of 341 students.

As well, YK 1 offers a choice for parents and students with respect to grades 6, 7 and 8. At present, both Range Lake North and Mildred Hall offer K – 8 grade configurations, while N.J. MacPherson offers K – 5 and William McDonald offers the only “true middle school” experience in Yellowknife. N. J. MacPherson also offers a Montessori program for students up to grade 5.

The approach to the delivery of grades 6, 7 and 8 in a middle school setting has a number of strong supporters; as does the K – 8 grade configuration. At the present time, the District enrolls 169 students in its middle school while about 172 students attend these grades in District schools with a K-8 grade configuration. William McDonald provides a triple track program (English, French Immersion and Intensive French) for grades 6 to 8 students.

Generally speaking, the District has faced significant pressure over the past decade to increase programming options, strengthen Aboriginal language and culture and special need programming and to make additional programming options available in all schools. These pressures are resulting, at least to some extent, in the “dispersion of resources” and, according to the District administration, some loss of economies of scale in the delivery of some program and service offerings.

These pressures are occurring as the strategies for delivery of school programs have also been changing with increasing emphasis on individualized and small group instruction; as well as the requirement to address increasingly diverse student needs within the classroom.

The strong public interest in expanding programming is occurring at a time when overall revenues to the District under pressure as a result of a reduction in overall District enrolments. Further reductions in the funding that the District receives from the GNWT will occur in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 as a result of the GNWT’s decision to the implement of JK in all NWT schools.

Based upon the input it received and the information available, the Committee discussed a number of programming and grade configuration options that can be generally described as including:

- Maintaining the status quo;
- Making all District elementary schools JK to 8 grade configuration (and eliminating the middle school);
- Establishing a dual track English / French Immersion program for JK – 5; and
- Consolidating all grade 6 to 8 students in the middle school and having all early elementary schools have a grade JK – 5 grade configuration.

The Committee also examined a number of other “variations on a theme” – each tweaking one of the approaches described above.

In examining these options, the Committee tested the practical viability of the option (e.g. would the students population fit into the various schools) and the potential impact of the option upon program and service delivery. The Committee also considered how each option might impact overall District performance in relation to excellence, program consistency, level of disruption caused by the proposed change, costs associated with renovations that might be required, impact on operational costs, impact on utilization rates and the risks associated with the implementation of the option.

Throughout their work, Committee members were mindful that programming is the fundamental element of the District’s activities. As one member put it, “programming drives the bus...” As a result of this collective view, the Committee was particularly mindful of the importance of maintaining programming excellence and ensuring that parental options are maintained to the greatest extent possible. This view was reinforced throughout the engagement process in many of the comments, suggestions and advice the Committee received from parents, staff members, and other stakeholders.

5.3 Facilities

YK1 owns the five elementary schools that it operates. Construction of the schools was paid for by GNWT contributions. The GNWT retains the responsibility to fund school construction and renovations across the NWT. Generally, school construction and renovations are based on a list of factors. These factors include: enrolment / utilization, projected enrolment / utilization, school condition (health and safety), programming needs and the availability of funding.

Currently, YK 1 is using five schools to deliver Kindergarten to Grade 8 programming. In addition, early childhood education programming is offered on a fee-paying basis at N. J. MacPherson (Montessori), Ecole J. H. Sissons, Range Lake North and Mildred Hall.

Two of the five schools were originally constructed to accommodate K-5 schooling. Two of the schools were designed for K-8 grade configurations. William McDonald was constructed with a somewhat broader array of specialty classrooms associated with middle school programming.

The condition and design of the schools that are in use varies to a considerable degree. J. H. Sissons was designed and constructed in 1975 based upon an “open concept”. A “technical status evaluation” was completed in 2010 and recommended a mid-life building retrofit for the school. An education plan was prepared by a consultant contracted by the GNWT to guide future renovations to the school through the GNWT capital planning process. However, a renovation

project for J. H. Sissons is not currently included in the GNWT's Five Year Capital Plan.

N. J. MacPherson (constructed in 1988), Range Lake North (constructed in 1994), and Mildred Hall (constructed 1970 and renovated in 2005) remain in relatively good condition.

In completing its work the Committee discussed the capacity of various schools, the classrooms and other teaching spaces within the schools and the geographic locations of schools within the City.

Committee members also reviewed the general practices used by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to plan and construct school space. It was noted that ECE generally begins to plan new school space when utilization levels reach 80% to 85%. As well, it was noted that even though planning may be initiated when utilization reaches these levels, actual school construction might not occur for a number of years for various reasons (e.g. higher priority projects, limited funding availability, etc.).

Following its review of these matters, the Committee developed and presented three specific facility use options for discussion during the engagement process. These were:

- Maintaining the status quo;
- Transferring Grades 6, 7 and 8 from Range Lake to William McDonald; and
- Transferring French Immersion to William McDonald School and closing J.H. Sisson (or transferring it to the GNWT) and eliminating the middle school.

Committee members noted that school facilities are a primary resource of the District and currently provide the District with considerable flexibility. The importance of retaining access to William McDonald was noted as being of particular importance given the unique aspects of its design, and the resources that it provides within the District.

5.4 The GNWT's Request

The GNWT's request for the transfer of a school was based upon a court decision that requires the GNWT to provide suitable educational space to the Commission scolaire francophone. The court ruling relates to educational space in both Yellowknife and Hay River. Following the ruling of the court, the GNWT (ECE) approached both the South Slave Divisional Education Council (the Hay River District Education Authority) and YK 1 requesting the transfer of a school facility to the GNWT. The stated intention of the requested transfers was to provide the GNWT with school facilities that it could then assign to the

Commission scolaire francophone, thus addressing the direction provided by the court's decision.

The argument made by ECE in both situations was that low utilization levels in community schools would permit such a transfer without a serious negative impact on existing programming (See Attachment Five). Further, ECE argued that such transfers would be in the best interest of the public in that the transfers would alleviate the requirement that ECE spend an estimated \$28 million (an estimated \$15 million in Yellowknife and \$13 million in Hay River) to construct new space for the Commission scolaire francophone in accordance with the court's requirements.

The Committee noted that this is not the first occasion during which the courts have directed the GNWT (ECE) to provide school facilities for the Commission scolaire francophone and that the Commission has been pursuing space for a number of years. As well, the Committee noted that the recent court decision has been appealed by the GNWT.

In discussing this matter the Facilities Committee recognized that the court decision and resulting GNWT obligations were well outside of the scope of its responsibilities. Rather, Committee members focused their attention on the programming and facilities options that would be available to students if the District continued to operate five schools, or if it were to operate four schools.

6.0 Stakeholder's Comments

During their work the members of the Facilities Committee made extensive efforts to seek input from District stakeholders. This was achieved through a series of public events, meetings with District staff and the circulation of a questionnaire. Overall response was excellent. The views expressed during the engagement process were diverse and on occasion divergent. Specific comments received during the public and staff sessions were recorded and posted, along with a full set of reference documents on the District's website (YK1.nt.ca).

A summary of the survey results was prepared and is included with this report as Attachment Six. Many people spent considerable time completing the survey; adding detailed comments on questions and including broad general observations related to the District's operations and the engagement process.

During the public sessions, in the survey responses and in written comments received from parents and stakeholders, a large number of people expressed appreciation and thanks to the Board and the Facilities Committee for the public nature of the engagement process.

Some general observations and comments can be noted with respect to the stakeholder's comments. These include:

- There is considerable pride in, and commitment to, excellence in programming within the District;
- There are a wide range of views held on the best grade configurations for students – some believing strongly in, for example, having a middle school while others are equally supportive of the value of K – 8 school configuration;
- Parents and stakeholders value “neighborhood schools” and want at least some programming choices within the schools;
- There is an understanding of the importance of both effectiveness and efficiency of operations and some of the tough choices that come in trying to achieve these objectives;
- There is an openness to change – but only if the change occurs in a manner that strengthen programs and services in the District as a whole. A demonstration as to how excellence is to be achieved following any change is seen as a critical requirement;
- High quality teaching, academic core subjects and programs such as art, music, sports and languages are seen as the most important factors to student success in the District; and
- The French Immersion school (K – 5) and French language programming in general are seen as particular successes within the District and many see it as important to maintain or expand these offerings.

For many providing comments and suggestions there was a clear recognition that the Committee and the Board face some challenging decisions. Further, a number of people also expressed the view that there may not a simple and “perfect” solution to the question of future program directions and the determination of the best approach to facility use. As one member of the public indicated, “It’s like a puzzle, a lot of it fits together, but some pieces just aren’t quite the right size and shape....”

7.0 Committee Recommendations - Providing Opportunities for Student Excellence

This section of the report describes the Committee’s recommendations to the Board and outlines why the recommendations are being made.

In preparing its recommendations, the Facilities Committee members would like to thank all the parents, guardians, stakeholders and District staff who participated in the project and provided advice and comments.

It is important to note that the Committee recognizes that some additional work may be required to fully examine some of the recommendations that are being made.

7.1 A Broad View

From the broadest perspective, the Facilities Committee members are of the view that the Board will need to make some changes to its operation over the next few years so as to ensure that program and service excellence is maintained and to promote the increased effectiveness and efficiency of delivery.

As a result, The Committee recommends that the District establish the following principles to guide future changes to programming, facility use and grade configurations:

Recommendation 1 - The Board consider a number of changes to the District's programs and services, grade configurations and facility use.

Recommendation 2 - All changes be carefully planned and fully communicated to parents, guardians and stakeholders.

Recommendation 3 - All changes be carried out in a manner that minimizes disruption for students.

In making these recommendations the Committee observes that parents, guardians, members of the public or District staff all hold personal views of change plans. Not surprisingly, these views are diverse and reflect various perceptions, interests and objectives. While not all may be satisfied by whatever changes are made, establishing clear principles based on effective communications and providing opportunities for all stakeholders to be heard and understand the changes being made, is seen as important.

7.2 Future District Programming

Parents and stakeholders are clear that excellence and high quality programs must be a fundamental basis of the District's operations.

With this in mind the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 4 - Within the framework of the District's Strategic Priorities the District:

- ***Ensure that an emphasis on core academic studies remains a priority for all schools in the District;***

- **Enhance economies of scale in program delivery so as to provide the greatest possible resources for students be identified and considered;**
- **Recognizing their importance to student development and success, commit to the re-investing any funding “saved” as a result of achieving increased “economies of scale” in the delivery of sports, music and arts programming at each of the District’s elementary schools;**
- **Maintain current approach to French Immersion programming**
- **Maintain Montessori program as a programming option;**
- **Consolidate the Intensive French and Post-intensive French programs; and**
- **Provide expanded access for grade 6, 7 and 8 students to the specialty classrooms and facilities at William McDonald.**

Members of the public and educators alike, are firm in their views that the District must make every effort to continue to strengthen existing programs and services. Further, comments and suggestions made during the engagement process suggested that when program or service weaknesses are identified, early and comprehensive actions need to be taken to resolve concerns and improve support for students. As well, comments suggested that wherever possible, efforts should be made to focus as many resources as possible on programming and services to students.

7.3 Future Facility Use and Grade Configurations

The Committee believes that a determination must be made as to whether the District will operate four or five elementary schools in the future. The decision is not an easy one. The Committee members observed during their discussions that making a decision as to whether to operate four or five elementary schools would likely be based upon a number of factors and the relative weighting given to the various factors (See Attachment Seven). The Committee’s view is that the Board needs to consider these factors with considerable care prior to making a decision on this matter.

The Committee also noted that many parents, guardians and other stakeholders have a very strong passion and commitment to the schools that their children attend. Changes to the numbers of schools, or grade configurations can be expected to be disruptive and should only occur following detailed planning and extensive communications with all involved.

As a result of their deliberations, the Committee developed facility and grade configuration options based upon two scenarios. These being: the operation of four elementary schools; and the operation of five elementary schools.

Recommendation 5 - The Committee believes that the preferred approach would be for the District to operate four elementary schools. As well, Committee members agree that for this approach to be successful certain programming matters must be resolved in advance of any reduction in current school facility usage.

Operation of Four Schools

In its second round of public presentations the Committee presented one option related to the operation of four schools (See Attachment Eight). The option suggested the closure of Ecole J. H. Sissons, the elimination of a middle school and the operation of the French Immersion School at William McDonald School.

Many of the participant comments at the public session, as well as comments made to the Committee following the public sessions, took issue with this proposal. There were two primary reasons given for objections to the option. The first was the view that J. H. Sissons serves as a neighborhood school and is a resource that should be maintained. The second view expressed was that the middle school experience is critical to the success of a number of the District's students.

The Committee considered this input carefully. In addition, the Committee also noted that its survey showed conditional support for consolidating the number of elementary schools operated by the District if the result was an improvement in economies of scale for program delivery, cost savings for the District and potentially increased access to specialty teachers.

After careful consideration of all of these views and other input and information received during its work on this matter, the Committee determined that the operation of a four school elementary system would be functional and viable for the District. In making this choice, the Committee agreed that the option presented at the public meetings in late May, needed to be changed. As a result, the Committee included the requirement for a middle school in the model.

The Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 6 – If four schools are operated:

- ***A French Immersion JK – 5 school is maintained;***
- ***Mildred Hall is operated as a JK – 8 school;***
- ***A middle school is maintained;***

- ***Ecole J. H. Sissons is closed; and***
- ***Renovations required at any of the elementary schools necessary to support the full delivery of programming are completed.***

Under this “scenario” the specific grade configuration for each of the three involved elementary schools (Range Lake North, N. J. MacPherson and William McDonald) will require additional examination and analysis. However, the Committee is of the view that suitable accommodation of the identified programming requirements can occur assuming all of the conditions described above are met.

The Committee believes that choosing to close or transfer a school would a very difficult decision. If a decision of this nature is to be made then it will be important that concerns about reduced District flexibility, less access to District programs by some neighborhoods and higher utilization rates in some schools are fully understood. Further, the benefits of such an action such as increased efficiencies, some cost savings, improved economies of scale supporting improved programs must also be articulated. The Committee was not in a position to complete this work during its term of activity.

During the public engagement process a number of parents and other stakeholders made a strong case for maintaining a middle school option within the Division. The only facility in Yellowknife that is fully equipped and “purpose built” for such programming is William McDonald School. Maximizing the use of the facility is important and program and student consolidation is a logical step in achieving this goal.

During their deliberations, Committee members were advised that research in Canada and the United States of America shows there is little difference in the academic results achieved by students participating in either a middle school or a K-8 education grade configuration. However, the Committee also heard many times during the engagement process that parental choice in this matter is critical and that some students are best served by each of the approaches to grade configuration.

The Committee acknowledges that there is an equally strong case for schools configured to reflect a JK – 8 programming. As a result, the Committee believes that both a middle school and JK – 8 grade configuration option within the District is important.

The operation of four schools, with the elimination of J. H. Sissons would significantly alter the utilization rates for the elementary schools within the District. While it is not possible to arrive at absolute figures pending decisions on the grade configurations at the various schools, the District utilization would rise to about 76%.

In addition, Committee members suggested that should Ecole J. H. Sissons become surplus to the District's operational needs, the potential for leasing the facility to another party should be examined. The Committee heard that school facilities are important to their neighborhoods and their use should, if at all possible, be continued in a manner that supports the neighborhood. As a result of this, the Committee discussed the importance of exploring approaches to maintaining the facility even if it was not being used for school delivery. While the Committee members did not explore any details related to the potential for leasing or conduct research on the matter they wished to highlight the importance of maintaining overall control of the school facility and the land parcel on which the school sits.

Operation of Five Schools

The discussion of options during the second round of public and staff meetings included a presentation that identified two options related to the operation of five elementary schools. Comment and input during these sessions suggested that if the District were to continue to operate five schools it would be appropriate to make some adjustments to grade configurations. Other information collected by the Committee and the discussions of the Committee members supported the view that some change in grade configurations will be required to relieve crowding at Range Lake North School in the near future. The Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7 - If five schools are operated:

- ***Grades 6, 7 and 8 be transferred from Range Lake North School to William McDonald School, by 2016/2017;***
- ***Intensive French and Post-intensive French programs are consolidated at William McDonald;***
- ***Mildred Hall is operated as a JK – 8 school;***
- ***A French Immersion school continues in operation;***
- ***N. J. MacPherson and Range Lake North are operated as JK – 5 schools; and***
- ***The Montessori Program is operated at N.J. MacPherson.***

The recommended changes would result in a significant increase in utilization of William McDonald School. The transfer of the grades 6, 7 and 8 from Range Lake North would increase the utilization of the school to about 57% while reducing Range Lake North School from about 80% to 54%. This effort would reduce crowding in the Range Lake North School that is expected to be significant by 2016/2017.

Given present projections, the utilization rates and projected enrolments within the District are anticipated to increase by about 15% by 2016/2017. The resulting utilization for the District will then be about 64%.

As an additional point, the Committee members suggest that every effort should be made to explore the potential for sharing schools between education authorities, in the City of Yellowknife. The view expressed was that the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system in the City should promote sharing of resources with a goal of promoting educational opportunities and student success.

Following implementation of this option, the District would be operating three JK – 5 schools (two English schools and one French immersion school), one JK – 8 school and a middle school.

7.4 Policy and Research Considerations

In completing its work, the Committee identified some gaps in the existing information and policies of the District. Members felt that action should be taken to address these gaps, so that any future deliberations related to school operations are supported by an expanded information base. During the engagement process the Committee members were reminded that decision-making must involve hearing from parents, guardians, stakeholders as well as students, and must also include close examination of a ranges of facts and figures.

The Committee believes that strengthening the District's information base would be a valuable step in preparing for the future. As a result:

Recommendation 8 - The Board:

- ***Develop a policy that describes the process and associated procedures that will govern the closure of a school should enrolments and utilization fall below an identified level;***
- ***Research and analyze the location of the homes of students attending elementary schools within the District and determine how students that are located at a distance from their school are traveling to school each day; and***
- ***Establish a mechanism to assess the impact of the addition of Junior Kindergarten to schools offering JK – 5 and JK – 8 programming.***

Over time, change is likely to continue within the education system. One significant change factor may be the GNWT's Education, Renewal and Innovation (ERI) initiative. The ERI is currently being discussed during consultations being held throughout the NWT. Given that change can be expected to continue, it is important that as much information as possible is available to guide decision-making in the future.

8.0 Closing Comments

In closing, the Committee would again like to thank the parents, guardians, school staff members and other interested stakeholders for the constructive and positive input that they have provided throughout the Committee's work. As well, the Committee members would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their commitment to engagement throughout the project.

Defining the future directions for programming and facility use is a very challenging task. However, it was very clear - to all of the Committee members - that any decision-making related to programming, services and facilities use must be based upon ensuring the current and future students of the District have the best possible educational opportunities; are supported by excellent staff and receive care and love from supportive parents and guardians. Working together, we can do our best for our children.

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Attachment One – Facilities Committee Terms of Reference
- 9.2 Attachment Two – Project Timeline and Committee Activities
- 9.3 Attachment Three – Current Student Enrolments and Utilization Rates – 2013/2014
- 9.4 Attachment Four - Projected School Enrolment and Utilization Rates – 2016/2017
- 9.5 Attachment Five – ECE – School Swap Facts – Yellowknife (April 2014)
- 9.6 Attachment Six - Future District Programming and Facility Use Questionnaire Backgrounder - Summary of Responses
- 9.7 Attachment Seven – Analysis of Facility Use Options
- 9.8 Attachment Eight - Grade Configuration and Facilities Use – Options Presented to the Public
- 9.9 Attachment Nine - Summary of Facility Committee Recommendations

ATTACHMENT ONE

FACILITIES COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose:

The Committee is a working group that will develop school facility grade configurations options for the YK1 schools, present these options at a town hall meeting of YK1 stakeholders, and report back to the Board of Trustees with a report summarizing the results of the town hall meeting, along with any resulting recommendations based on the stakeholders input.

Composition:

- Trustees representatives: H. Clarke, Committee Chair; J. Stephenson;
- Senior Administration: M. Huculak; B. Giacobbo; Tram Do;
- School representatives: A. McDonald-SJF; S. Zouboules-NJM; B. Rivet-JHS; C. Lizotte-RLN; M. Malakoe-MHS; L. Lalonde-WMS; and
- Parent representatives: D. Wasylciw-NJM; P. Davie-JHS

Term of Members and Reporting:

The Committee will have its first meeting on February 26, 2014 and make a presentation to the Board by May 15, 2014. The Committee will provide a final report to the Board by May 29, 2014, that summarizes the stakeholder input, along with any recommendations to the Board. The Committee is dissolved upon submission of this report.

Resources:

1. The Director of Corporate Services and/or Superintendent will provide assistance to the committee as deemed necessary.
2. The Facilities Committee may have access to other third party expertise as deemed necessary.

Finance:

Any incurred expenditures require approval by the Superintendent.

Meetings:

The Facilities Committee will meet as often as required to meet the timelines. All Committee Members are expected to attend each meeting, in person or via tele-conference. The Committee will invite members of YK1 District Administration or others to attend meetings and provide pertinent information, as necessary. Minutes of each meeting will be prepared.

Timeline:

- February 11, 2014 Board Meeting
- February 18, 2014 Establishment of Committee
- February 26, March 13, 2014 Committee meetings and presentations to stakeholders and public
- April 15, 2014 Town Hall Meeting
- February 17, June 15, 2014 Communication Plans
- May 15, 2014 Presentation of working group to Board
- May 30, 2014 Board decision

- June 15, 2014 Proposal to GNWT
- 2014-2015 School Year Implementation Plan
- September 1, 2015 Implementation Date

Authority:

The Facilities Committee is an advisory committee to the Board and has no authority.

Duties and Responsibilities:

The Committee will carry out the following duties and responsibilities:

- Prepare a work plan to meet the required timelines. Work should include, but is not limited to:
 - An analysis of demographic trends, facilities status and other relevant data related to the school being considered for closure;
 - Analysis of information presented at public meetings and a summary of information gathered and presented through community and municipal input;
 - Analysis of educational and fiscal implications of the proposed closure/consolidation.
- Develop an effective communications plan and determine if additional third party expertise is required.
- Develop a variety of options of school grade configurations that best meet the educational interest of YK1 students and programs.
- Prepare for, and facilitate, a town hall meeting of YK1 stakeholders, with a presentation of the options.
- Record the proceedings and feedback from the stakeholders at the town hall meeting.
- Prepare a draft report based on the feedback from the stakeholders, along with any resulting recommendations.
- Make a presentation to the Board.
- Prepare and submit a final report to the Board.
- The members of the Facilities Committee will use the Trustee Code of
- Conduct as a guideline.

Confidentiality:

Deliberations and information received from attendance at a Facilities Committee meeting will be treated as private and confidential information and shall not be published, released or disclosed in any manner to any person other than to trustees of the board, the Superintendent or Director of Corporate Services.

ATTACHMENT TWO

PROJECT TIMELINE AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The table below outlines the activities of the Facilities Committee from February through June 2014.

Date (2014)	Activity
2/11	Facilities Committee created
2/12	Initial Facilities Organizational Meeting
2/26	Facilities Committee Meeting
3/6	Facilities Committee Meeting
3/31	Facilities Committee Meeting
4/15	Meeting with District Staff (held at William MacDonald School) – Direction for Future Programming and Facility Use
4/16	Meeting with the Public (held at William MacDonald School) - Direction for Future Programming and Facility Use
4/24	Facilities Committee Meeting
4/30	Stakeholders Survey Released – Response compilation initiated
5/6	Stakeholders Survey Closed – Response compilation completed
5/7	Facilities Committee Meeting
5/15	Facilities Committee Meeting
5/26	Meeting with the District Staff (held at Mildred Hall School)
5/28	Meeting with the Public (held at Sir John Franklin High School) - Options
5/29	Meeting with the Public (held at Sir John Franklin High School) - Options
6/3	Open House at District Office to Discuss Options
6/5	Final Facilities Committee Meeting

ATTACHMENT THREE

CURRENT SCHOOL ENROLMENTS AND UTILIZATION RATES 2013/2014

School	Grade Offerings	Rated Capacity	Current Enrolment	Est. % Utilization
J. H. Sissons	JK - 5		217	
<i>ECE</i>		341		64
<i>YK 1</i>		330		66
N. J. MacPherson	JK - 5		239	
<i>ECE</i>		374		64
<i>YK 1</i>		352		68
Mildred Hall	JK - 8		235	
<i>ECE</i>		473		50
<i>YK 1</i>		374		63
Range Lake North	JK - 8		309	
<i>ECE</i>		440		70
<i>YK 1</i>		352		88
William McDonald	6-8		169	
<i>ECE</i>		484		35
<i>YK 1</i>		440		38

Note: N.J. MacPherson School capacity and enrolments are listed without the inclusion of the three portable classrooms located on the site. The portable classrooms would increase capacity by about 66 to 69 students.

ATTACHMENT FOUR

PROJECTED STUDENT ENROLMENTS AND UTILIZATION RATES – 2016/2017 Based Upon Current Grade Configurations

School	Grade Offerings	Rated Capacity	Projected Enrolment	Est. % Utilization
J. H. Sissons	JK - 5		300	
<i>ECE</i>		341		88
<i>YK 1</i>		330		91
N. J. MacPherson	JK - 5		284	
<i>ECE</i>		374		76
<i>YK 1</i>		352		81
Mildred Hall	JK - 8		296	
<i>ECE</i>		473		63
<i>YK 1</i>		374		79
Range Lake North	JK - 8		347	
<i>ECE</i>		440		79
<i>YK 1</i>		352		99
William McDonald	6-8		165	
<i>ECE</i>		484		34
<i>YK 1</i>		440		38

Note: N.J. MacPherson School capacity and enrolments are listed without the inclusion of the three portable classrooms located on the site. The portable classrooms would increase capacity by about 66 to 69 students.

ATTACHMENT FIVE

ECE SCHOOL SWAP FACTS – YELLOWKNIFE (APRIL 2014)

ATTACHMENT SIX

SURVEY RESULTS

Future District Programming and Facility Use Questionnaire Background - Summary of Responses

Introduction

The questionnaire was released on April 29 and was held open for a one-week period. It was circulated through schools to all students and it was posted on-line at the District's website. A total of 399 responses were received. The responses included direct answers to the questions asked, as well as a very large number of comments and suggestions related to the questions presented in the questionnaire.

This document provides a general summary of the responses received.

Responses to Questions

Question 1 – In your opinion, what aspects of the educational experience offered by YK 1 are the most important to overall student success? Please select 3 and rank them starting with 1 being the most important followed by 2 and 3.

323 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| • High quality teaching staff | 83.17% |
| • Academic core subjects | 77.39% |
| • Programs such as art, music sports, languages, etc. | 64.07% |
| • Class size | 43.72% |
| • Social development opportunities for students | 24.62% |
| • Special needs programming | 16.33% |
| • High quality facilities | 13.32% |
| • Counseling | 13.07% |
| • Other | 7.79% |

The greatest number of "1" responses were received by *High quality teaching staff* (170) followed by *Academic core subjects* (155) and *Class size* (36) responses. The greatest number of "2" responses were received by the same top two categories – (96 and 91 responses respectively) - followed by *Programs such as art, music, sports, languages, etc.* The greatest number of "3" responses were received by *Programs such as art, music, sports, languages, etc.* (113) followed by *Class size* (65) and *High quality teaching staff* (54).

Question 2 – Currently the District offers choices in grade configuration in its schools. It offers Pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) to grade 8 studies in two schools, Pre-K to 5 studies in two schools and grades 6 to 8 are offered in a middle school. Is it important that these choices be maintained? If so, why?

323 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- Yes 34.37%
- No (31.27% said “no”, while 26% prefer a specific configuration) 57.28%
- Unsure/unclear 8.4%

Comments made included:

- The program delivered is more important than the grade configuration
- Current configuration permits choices by parents and their children
- The District can't do everything for everyone
- Important to maximize efficiencies so as to offer the best possible programs
- Prefer PreK-8 / Prefer PreK to 5 and middle school / Prefer PreK to 6 and 7-12

Question 3 – Currently the District offers choices in grade confirmations in its schools. It offers (Pre-K) to grade 8 studies in two schools, PreK to grade 5 in two schools and grades 6 to 8 in a middle school. Please indicate the primary reason(s) for your choice of school for your child.

361 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- Proximity to your home 36.57%
- The ranges of grades offered at the school 35.46%
- Other 35.18%
- Social experience the school offers for your child 31.30%
- School size 29.64%

188 comments were received. Comments made included:

- The matters listed as important to the choice in schools included:
 - Neighborhood schools or schools close to a parent's work permit parents to feel more involved with their child's education
 - Children staying together over a number of years provides stability
 - Programming is important to parental decisions
- The importance of programming such as Montessori, French immersion, sports learning experiences
- District's reputation for producing high academic performers was also noted as one reason for selecting one of the District's schools

Question 4 – Which of the following programs are important to your child's K-8 education? Please select 3 and rank them starting with 1 being the most important followed by 2 and 3

355 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- Sports 49.30%
- Arts 48.17%
- Music 41.41%
- Technology 36.90%
- French immersion 39.44%

- Intensive French and post intensive French 24.23%
- Home economics 14.65%
- Industrial arts 13.52%
- Other 9.58%
- Montessori

The greatest number of “1” responses were received for French immersion (109) followed by *Intensive and post intensive French* (72) and *Sports* (40) responses. The greatest number of “2” responses were received by *Arts* (66) with both *Sports* and *Music* receiving sixty-one (61) responses. The greatest number of “3” responses were received by *Sports* (62) followed by *Arts* (58) and *Music* (48).

Question 5 – In your view, should each school develop “signature” programs that result in it having a particular area of programming expertise (e.g. French immersion, Montessori, technology, arts, sports)?

328 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- Yes 39.06%
- No 45.45%
- Maybe or some signature programs 15.49%

Comments made included:

- The development of signature programming can make the District’s program delivery more effective and efficient
- Signature programs can meet needs of students
- All students should have the benefit of being able to access all programs
- Specialization should not occur at the expense of core programs
- Delivery French and Montessori signature offerings are important but other programs should be delivered at all schools

Question 6, 7 and 8 - The District has five schools providing elementary education. The utilization rate in some schools is relatively low. Because of this, the GNWT has requested that a school facility be transferred to them. Please answer the following three questions (6-8) “yes” or “no” and add any comments that you wish too make.

Would you support eliminating the use of one of the schools if this resulted in:

- 6. Cost savings to the District of 1% to 3% of the District’s overall budget – allowing monies to be used to support continuing programs and services?**

335 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- Yes 57.61%
- No 42.99%

Comments made included:

- Savings seem limited given the school space that might be given up
- Empty school space and poorly utilized space is not needed
- The school is needed – each school is valuable to the community and students it serves
- Restructuring of all of Yellowknife's school space – sharing space between boards - makes more sense
- Only if class sizes are not effected
- Increasing efficiency is important - money is needed to support programs

7. Elimination or significant change to programs currently offered by the District (e.g. French Immersion, Montessori, the middle school experience)?

330 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| • Yes | 30.30% |
| • No | 70.30% |

Comments made included:

- Program choices need to be maintained
- A French immersion school is an important option
- Montessori is an important option / Eliminate Montessori
- Middle school is important / Eliminate middle school
- If enrolments don't support programs then they should be altered/eliminated

8. Changing of grades offered at some schools?

330 responses were received. The responses were as follows:

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| • Yes | 70.91% |
| • No | 30.0 % |

Comments made included:

- Increase the middle school population
- Preference for K-8 grade configuration – k-8 and 9-12 would be best
- Programming is more important than grade configurations
- Develop a consistent model for all schools operated by the District would help to build efficiencies

Question 9 - What changes could be the District make to improve schooling for students?

239 responses were received. Comments made included:

- Consistency in programs and improved class/school discipline is needed

- Strengthen core subject delivery – increase performance expectations / make students more accountable
- Improve balance in school facility usage
- Very pleased with options and opportunities provided by District
- District schools should stop competing for students
- Improve communications between schools and parents
- Consult students on programming needs
- Increase enrichment programming
- Emphasize the importance of high quality educator / administrator skills and abilities within the district
- Keep class sizes small, if at all possible
- Provide more attention / support for students with special needs
- Do what's best for students
- Offer a broad range of programming for students.

Question 10 – Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

146 responses were received. Comments made included:

- Appreciate the opportunity to participate and have a voice – please continue to seek feedback
- Overall satisfaction with the District's educational activities – District has amazing staff and excellent programs
- Students needs must come first – resources for students must be maintained
- It is important to take a long term view – the information from this survey is one aspect, but the Board must also look at facts, such as population trends, social issues and long term results from its schools
- ECE should construct the facilities required by the Commission scolaire
- Maintain French immersion programming /Maintain middle school / expand grades in existing PreK-5 schools
- Doesn't make sense to maintain schools with very low utilization – eliminate a school if this will address the matter
- Eliminate competition between schools
- More Aboriginal content in programming is needed
- Buildings are far less important than what goes on in them
- Teachers must be accountable for school performance

ATTACHMENT SEVEN
ANALYSIS OF FACILITY OPTIONS

To assess the options the following criteria have been selected.

Each option is measured against all criteria:

- Supports educational excellence
- Supports increased program consistency (across the District)
- Limits disruption for students (on students required to change schools)
- Limits disruption for staff
- Reduces operating costs
- Improves operational efficiency
- Improves potential access to capital funding (both minor capital funding and funding for major renovations/construction)
- Limits renovation funding required
- Increases utilization rates (of schools operated by YK 1)
- Reduces overall risk (i.e. risks to the District including those resulting from funding control (operational and capital) by ECE; competitive environment with YSC; generally declining enrolments resulting from population change; etc.)

Programming and Facility Option	Education Direction		Disruption		Financial Implications				General	
	Supports Educ. Excel.	Supports Increased Program Consistency	Limits Student Disrupt	Limits Staff Disrupt	Reduces Operat. Costs	Improves Operation Efficiency	Improves Potential Access to Capital \$	Limits Reno \$ needs	Increases Utilization Rates	Reduces Overall Risks
Scenario Category One – Operate Five Schools										
Status Quo	Med	Low	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	Low
Expand Middle School (WMS)	Med	Med	Med	Med	Low	Low/Med	Low	High	Low	Low
Scenario Category Two – Operate Four Schools										
Close JHS – Use WMS for French Immersion, etc.	Med	Med	Low	Low	High	High	Med/High	Low/Med	Med/High	High

NOTE: Ratings are subjective. Ratings for each element of the analysis of each option are relative to the ratings for the same element of analysis for other options - as opposed to being relative to an objective standard.

* It is difficult to assess specific ratings for this option until the specifics of each variation is defined.

ATTACHMENT EIGHT

GRADE CONFIGURATION AND FACILITY USE – OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC

Some “Pros” and “Cons”

Option 1	Status Quo – 5 schools + SJF
Pro’s	Con’s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No disruption of current patterns - Permits choices for parents based on grade configurations - Allows for future enrolment growth – if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inefficient program delivery - Unlikely JHS renovations are funded - Internal competition for students - RLN (79%) and JHS (88%) reach relatively high utilization in 2016/2017 - Does not position District for future construction if enrolments increase - Continuing pressure from GNWT - Overall District utilization about 64%

22

Some “Pros” and “Cons”

Option 1	Status Quo – 5 schools + SJF
Pro’s	Con’s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No disruption of current patterns - Permits choices for parents based on grade configurations - Allows for future enrolment growth – if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inefficient program delivery - Unlikely JHS renovations are funded - Internal competition for students - RLN (79%) and JHS (88%) reach relatively high utilization in 2016/2017 - Does not position District for future construction if enrolments increase - Continuing pressure from GNWT - Overall District utilization about 64%

22

Some “Pros” and “Cons”

Option 3	Place French Immersion at WMS 4 schools + SJF
Pro's	Con's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand FI to JK to 8 - Provides room for FI growth - Expands NJM to JK to 8 - Removes requirement to renovate JHS - Increases WMS utilization to over 70% - Annual cost savings of about \$500,000 to the District - Addresses GNWT request - Raises District utilization to over 76% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JK to 8 becomes the only grade configuration option in the District - Some retrofit requirements for NJMS and WMS may be required - RLN utilization remains relatively high - Some student disruption (not during the school year)

ATTACHMENT NINE

SUMMARY OF FACILITIES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Recommendation 1 - The Board consider a number of changes to the District's programs and services, grade configurations and facility use.

Recommendation 2 - All changes should be carefully planned and fully communicated to parents, guardians and stakeholders.

Recommendation 3 - All changes are carried out in a manner that minimizes disruption for students.

Future District Programming

Recommendation 4 - Within the framework of the District's Strategic Priorities the District:

- Ensure that an emphasis on core academic studies remains a priority for all schools in the District;
- Enhance economies of scale in program delivery so as to provide the greatest possible resources for students be identified and considered;
- Recognizing their importance to student development and success, commit to the re-investing any funding "saved" as a result of achieving increased "economies of scale" in the delivery of sports, music and arts programming at each of the District's elementary schools;
- Maintain current approach to French Immersion programming;
- Maintain Montessori program as a programming option;
- Consolidate the Intensive French and Post-intensive French programs; and
- Provide expanded access for grade 6, 7 and 8 students to the specialty classrooms and facilities at William McDonald.

Future Facility Use and Grade Configurations

Recommendation 5 - The Committee believes that the preferred approach would be for the District to operate four elementary schools. As well, Committee members agree that for this approach to be successful certain programming matters must be resolved in advance of any reduction in current school facility usage.

Recommendation 6 – If four schools are operated:

- A French Immersion JK – 5 school is maintained;
- Mildred Hall is operated as a JK – 8 school;
- A middle school is maintained;
- Ecole J. H. Sissons is closed; and
- Renovations required at any of the elementary schools necessary to support the full delivery of programming are completed.

Recommendation 7 - If five schools are to be operated the Committee recommends:

- Grades 6, 7 and 8 be transferred from Range Lake North School to William McDonald School, by 2016/2017;
- Intensive French and Post-intensive French Programs are consolidated at William McDonald;
- Mildred Hall is operated as a JK – 8 school;
- A French Immersion school continues in operation;
- N. J. MacPherson and Range Lake North are operated as JK – 5 schools; and
- The Montessori Program is operated at N.J. MacPherson.

Policy and Research Considerations

Recommendation 8 - The Committee recommends that the Board:

- Develop a policy that describes the process and associated procedures that will govern the closure of a school should enrolments and utilization fall below an identified level;
- Research and analyze the location of the homes of students attending elementary schools within the District and determine how students that are located at a distance from their school are traveling to school each day; and
- Establish a mechanism to assess the impact of the addition of Junior Kindergarten to schools offering JK – 5 and JK – 8 programming.

School Swap Facts | Yellowknife

April 2014

Introduction

There has been a lot of talk lately about the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) looking for Yellowknife Education District No. 1's (YK1) and the Commission scolaire francophone's (CSF) agreement to transfer schools between YK1 and CSF in Yellowknife.

There are good reasons the GNWT has been looking into this, and the following are some points for you to consider:

- Fulfilling the court order in Yellowknife would cost the NWT over \$15 million. That's a lot of money that could be spent elsewhere. When you spend \$15 million on one thing, you can't spend it on something else. It's just that simple.
- So the GNWT looked at ways to try and save some money, and still meet the government's obligations under the court order.
- That's just good governance – to manage public money responsibly and act in the broader, long term territorial interest.
- Since the court order was about new school infrastructure, the GNWT looked at what is there now and whether things could be shuffled around to meet everyone's interest without building anything new.
- What was confirmed was YK1's low utilization rate – in fact École William McDonald School is only 35 percent full. Yet the GNWT and Yellowknife taxpayers spend hundreds of thousands of public dollars keeping these empty rooms heated and maintained.
- The GNWT recognizes this could cause some disruption to students, parents and staff. That is why an offer was made to YK1 and CSF to pay for the move and to do everything possible to minimize the disruption for everyone involved.
- The GNWT is still hoping that the YK1 Board of Directors and parents will see that we all need to work together on this. Not because it's the easiest thing to do, but because it's the right thing to do.
- There will be a lot of opinions about this, but let's take a minute and look at some of the facts...

There are three Education Authorities that manage ten schools across Yellowknife.

Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1)	Grades	Yellowknife Public Denominational District (Yellowknife Catholic Schools – YCS)	Grades
École JH Sissons School	K-5	Weledeh Catholic School	K-8
Mildred Hall Elementary School	K-8	École St. Joseph School	K-8
N.J Macpherson School	K-5	École St. Patrick High School	9-12
Range Lake North School	K-8		
École William McDonald School	6-8		
École Sir John Franklin High School	9-12		

Commission scolaire francophone TNO (CSF)	Grades
École Allain St-Cyr	K-12

Why did the Government of the Northwest Territories begin the conversation on the school exchange in Yellowknife?

- In June 2012, the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories (NWT) ordered the GNWT to provide CSF schools in Yellowknife and Hay River with additional instruction space, gymnasium and support spaces.
- The GNWT registered an appeal to this decision.
- The cost of building the required francophone school additions is estimated at \$15 million in Yellowknife and \$13 million in Hay River.
- In September 2013, as a result of continually declining enrolments and comparatively low utilization rates for school facilities in Yellowknife and Hay River, the GNWT began to examine viable options to meet the court ordered space requirements with existing school infrastructure.
- YCS was not included in these exploratory discussions, as the average utilization of their schools is at approximately 80%.
- Without jeopardizing the overall goal to provide high quality education for students, the GNWT approached CSF and YK1 to explore better usage of existing schools to meet some of the facilities aspects of the court order.
- The GNWT has a finite budget for capital projects, and in a time of fiscal restraint thought it prudent to explore possibilities that would not require new construction.

What is school enrolment and utilization?

'Capacity' is the number of students that can be enrolled in a school, 'Enrolment' is the number of students registered and attending school as of September 30th each year and 'Utilization' is a measure of how well space is being used, calculated by dividing current enrolment by capacity.

YELLOWKNIFE			Enrolment		Utilization	
School	Grades	Capacity	2012	2013	2012	2013
<i>Commission scolaire francophone:</i>						
<i>Ecole Allain St-Cyr</i>	<i>K-12</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>80%</i>
<i>Yellowknife Education District No.1:</i>						
JH Sissons	K-5	341	216	217	63%	64%
NJ McPherson	K-5	374	257	239	69%	64%
Mildred Hall	K-8	473	225	235	48%	50%
Range Lake North	K-8	440	335	309	76%	70%
William McDonald	6-8	484	151	169	31%	35%
<i>YK1 K-8 Total</i>	<i>K-8</i>	<i>2112</i>	<i>1184</i>	<i>1169</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>55%</i>
YK1 K-8 & CSF K-12 Total*		2273	1301	1297	57%	57%

* Ecole Sir John Franklin School was not included in assessing YK1, as all K-8 schools feed into this high school for YK1.

* The enrolment of the three Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) is at 1344, with a total capacity of 1657. This yields a utilization rate of 81%; thus, YCS has not been involved in the exploratory school exchange discussions.

HAY RIVER			Enrolment		Utilization	
School	Grades	Capacity	2012	2013	2012	2013
<i>Commission scolaire francophone:</i>						
<i>Ecole Boreale</i>	<i>K-12</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>65%</i>
<i>Hay River District Education Authority:</i>						
Harry Camsell	K-3	374	179	160	48%	43%
Princess Alexandra	4-7	362	141	147	39%	41%
Diamond Jenness	8-12	350	279	234	80%	67%
<i>HRDEA Total</i>	<i>K-12</i>	<i>1086</i>	<i>599</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>50%</i>
Hay River Total		1231	700	635	57%	52%

Summary:

The 2013 enrolment data indicates the following:

For Hay River there are...

- 635 students
- 1231 capacity
- 4 schools
- 3 gyms

52% school utilization

For YK1 and CSF there are...

- 1297 students
- 2273 capacity
- 6 schools
- 5 gyms

57% school utilization

How is capacity calculated?

In the *NWT Schools Capital Standards and Criteria*, established in July 2005, capacity is calculated as General Instructional space divided by 3.5 m². General Instruction space is defined as instructional area for large and small group learning activities not requiring any specialized finishes, equipment, electrical or mechanical services; a “standard” or “typical” classroom.

The majority of NWT schools were designed and constructed prior to the 2005 standards and were based on the standards in place at that time.

Previous to 2005, school standards calculated capacity based on number of classrooms, allowing 22 students per classroom. Generally this includes all classrooms – general instructional, specialty and career and technology suites.

Why were the standards revised in 2005?

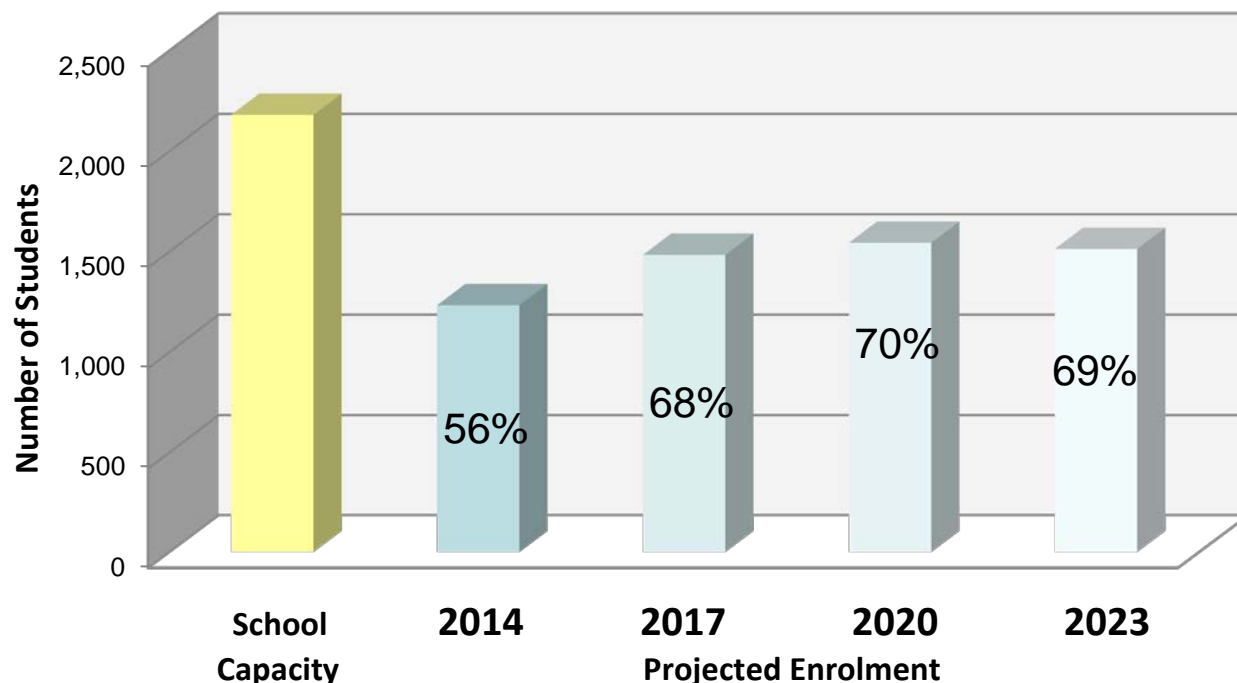
The standards were revised to allow for flexibility by providing less specific space requirements. The principles that guide the 2005 standards remain similar, with infrastructure requirements based on demonstrated need (enrolment) and allow for a uniform quality of service across the NWT.

Is capacity ever revised?

The capacity of a school is assessed and revised during a major building renovation or replacement.

What will happen over the next 10 years for YK1?

YK1 School Projected Utilization



1. 2013 Utilization for YK1 Schools K-8 is relatively low (at approximately 55%).
2. The existing school infrastructure of YK1 is excessive of their current and future needs. Year 2020 reflects a peak in the future enrolment projections. Enrolment projections are updated annually.
3. Projected enrolments are calculated using an enrolment forecasting model. Factors taken into consideration for this model are the average of prior year actual enrolments, birth rates and survival rates. The data for the birth and survival rates are obtained from NWT Bureau of Stats. Forecasting is done for each community using the most current information.
4. The Department recognizes that schools operate best at 80-85% utilization and generally plans for additional space when the utilization reaches 85%.

What does the overall projected utilization look like for YK1 if...

JH Sissons removed			Projected Utilization			
	Grades	Capacity	2014	2017	2020	2023
YK1 K-8 Total	K-8	1840	67%	81%	84%	83%
Including Ecole Allain St-Cyr building		2001	62%	74%	77%	76%

William McDonald removed			Projected Utilization			
	Grades	Capacity	2014	2017	2020	2023
YK1 K-8 Total	K-8	1697	72%	87%	91%	90%
Including Ecole Allain St-Cyr building		1858	66%	80%	83%	82%

Operations and Maintenance for YK1 schools

- Regardless of who owns the building, the GNWT pays approximately 82.5% of all estimated operating and maintenance (O&M) costs for all Yellowknife schools, *even if they are not fully utilized*.
- YK1 owns all of its school buildings except for École Sir John Franklin.
- The GNWT owns École Allain St-Cyr and École Sir John Franklin.

	GNWT Contribution (2013-14)
YK1	<i>82.5% of estimated O&M</i>
JH Sissons	\$ 319,831
Mildred Hall	\$ 464,629
Range Lake	\$ 298,897
NJ McPherson	\$ 225,495
William McDonald	\$ 303,529
Sir John Franklin	\$ 765,543
	\$ 2,377,924

Next Steps

- Regardless of the Court of Appeal outcome, the GNWT and education authorities should strive to use school infrastructure more efficiently and responsibly.
- Beginning in April, YK1 will be holding public meetings to discuss school use in Yellowknife.
- The GNWT is very supportive of this discussion and looks forward to attending and sharing information to help people make informed decisions.

For any further information, questions or concerns please contact:

Gabriela Eggenhofer, Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at **(867) 920-6240**.