

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 65-18(2): EXPANSION OF ÉCOLE ALLAIN ST-CYR

February 22, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Everyone in this House, especially me, will be relieved to know that my questions are in English.

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MR. O'REILLY: In my Member's statement earlier today I talked about the court-mandated expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr. Can the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment confirm whether he has begun discussions with the Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest and the Association des Parents ayants droit de Yellowknife for the expansion of the school?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: The department and the government is committed to meeting its obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Education Act. Steps to implement the NWT Court of Appeal decision are being undertaken. There was a delay in the process, as I believe there was an appeal to the Appeal Court decision. We were just waiting, and then when the Supreme Court had declined to hear the appeal, that's when the department started moving forward and having discussions with Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest on the planned expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr. We're just beginning those discussions.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for his response. When Yellowknife MLAs recently met with the Commission, the representatives of the Commission described the high school program at Ecole Allain St-Cyr as in crisis. Can the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment tell us whether the expansion of the school appears in the capital budget and when construction may actually begin?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I do hear the Member in terms of enrolment. As mentioned earlier in the session, we did give direction to the department on that ministerial directive to get reviewed, so hopefully we can get more students in the French first-language schools.

When I mentioned that we're just in the planning stages, the discussions, the budget for the expansion has not yet been voted on in the Legislative Assembly, mainly because we have to get the planning done, and consideration for that planning done and brought forth in this Assembly. As you know, we just completed our mandate yesterday so once that planning study is done, then we can look at bringing something forward for Members to vote on.

MR. O'REILLY: For some of the construction of the school, the federal government provided up to 80 per cent of the funding. Has the Minister of Education been in contact with Heritage Canada officials about any potential contributions to fund the expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Me personally, I haven't been in contact with the heritage federal minister. The department, however, has been in contact with the federal government on possible contributions to this project. However, no specific commitments have been made. As you know, the budget for the federal government will be coming out next month and we're also

in just a new government, as well, moving forward. Once everything is up to speed we will keep the Members up-to-date on what's going on with this project.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Once again I'd like to thank the Minister for his response and I look forward to working with him on this issue. With new leadership within the Francophone community and within the department, I believe we're working hard towards a better working relationship in resolution of a number of these issues, including the expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr. Can the Minister of Education commit to regularly reporting progress on the expansion of Ecole Allain St-Cyr at each sitting of this House?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: We would be pleased to provide updates to the Member on how things are proceeding with this project as well as with the ministerial directive once we get those all in line and up-to-date and reviewed. With the potential of the work that we're going to be doing moving forward, we will continue to keep all members updated on this project and the work done on the ministerial directive.