

## ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

### QUESTION 231-18(2): FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION OF ECOLE ALAIN ST-CYR

June 15, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker. Today I have some questions for the Minister of Education about his efforts to meet the need for adequate and equitable school facilities for the students of Commission Scolaire Francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. First of all, can the Minister tell us what specific actions his department has taken to acquire federal funding for the expansion of Ecole Alain St-Cyr? What meetings, letters, phone calls, et cetera, have been made to Heritage Canada? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, we did send a letter to Minister Joly in regards to work that needs to be done on all schools throughout the Northwest Territories. We are working with Heritage Canada, putting together an application, actually, for Heritage Canada's complementary funding and education program which supports the construction and expansion of community space and education institutions.

As I mentioned, we did write a letter. I wrote Minister Joly in looking at possible funding supports that are available to minority language education, and later this week officials from both our departments will be sitting down discussing some of the matters moving forward and, hopefully, that we can looking at having a more formal meeting to discuss some of the issues here, in the Northwest Territories, specifically also on the expansion of Ecole Alain St-Cyr. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I do appreciate the response from the Minister, and I did give him a heads-up because I've been requested to sort of follow up on this matter by the Commission. The Commission, itself, has undertaken efforts to persuade federal officials, including the Heritage Canada Minister, to provide additional funds for the expansion of Ecole Alain St-Cyr, but the response from the federal Minister was that CSFTNO needs to go back to GNWT and get them to make the request for additional funding. So we're sort of running around here. But I understand from the Minister that he's starting to pursue this. This is great. And I think it's an issue where top-level leadership could make a difference.

Will the Minister commit to contacting federal Minister of Heritage Joly personally to discuss this issue and press the NWT's case and follow up by seeking a meeting with Minister Joly on his next visit to Ottawa?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Yes, we did send a letter to initially start the discussions. We have been keeping regular meetings with the Federation Franco-Tenoise. Most recently on Friday, we had a really good dialogue. And, as I mentioned, we are putting that application together and making sure that, as a department, we're taking the responsibility to make sure that we can look at the expansion of Ecole Alain St-Cyr.

And, as I mentioned, we have officials from both departments that are going to set up a meeting on Friday, and we'll move it from there to see what our next steps are. And I'm hoping that next time I am in Ottawa that we have a more formal meeting to address not only some of the infrastructure needs within Yellowknife but throughout the whole Northwest Territories, as well.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister, and I'll keep pushing him to directly contact the federal Minister of Heritage. But the sad fact is, Mr. Speaker, that students are actually leaving Ecole Alain St-Cyr, and students are leaving, particularly in high school, to go to other schools, and that's because we've been waiting years for equitable and adequate facilities, such as a gymnasium.

News that planning is underway for a new gym and more classrooms, that a request for proposals will soon be led for the expansion of Ecole Alain St-Cyr, would give these students some hope. Can the Minister tell this House what concrete plans there are to expand the school?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** The department is meeting our obligations for French first language education under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Education Act, and the NWT Court of Appeals decisions. We are currently working on, hopefully, to break ground on a new gymnasium in the summer of 2017. I have also committed to trying to set up a meeting to go into the school to actually meet with the students and the staff, as well. But we are hoping to break ground on a new gymnasium in the summer of 2017.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate, again, the response from the Minister. I'm speaking, I guess, from some personal experience here, too, because both of our children went through Ecole Alain St-Cyr, and they never had a gymnasium or access to some special classrooms. I'm just wondering when the students and their families can expect to actually walk through the doors and have equitable access to the same facilities that other Yellowknife schools have. So when can we expect to have this work actually done?

**HON. ALFRED MOSES:** Based on the availability of contractors here to help build, we are hoping, and our intention is, to have the facilities available for students by September 2018..