

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
8TH ASSEMBLY, 60TH SESSION

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Assumption Catholic Church

Tabled Document

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P.O. BOX 1185

HAY RIVER N.W.T.

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January 15th, 1977.

Mr. Donald Stewart,
Territorial Councillor,
HAY RIVER, N.W.T.

Dear Mr. Stewart:

A number of my parishioners have come to me and they are very concerned that the proposed Education Ordinance will do away with religious instruction in a number of schools in the Northwest Territories, and this would include Hay River schools. Specifically Section 61, Clause 2, permits a program of religious instruction only to students belonging to a majority faith or denomination in a school. In effect, many children would be discriminated against because they happen to belong to a minority group.

In all other courses at school the principal arranges a class in the subject if there is enough students who are interested in that particular subject. Why is there a different set of standards when it comes to the teaching of religious knowledge? Canada has always upheld the principle of religious liberty. Why should the schools in the Northwest Territories all of a sudden decide that a majority of all parents should decide what is right with regard to religious instruction in the schools? Why again the double standard?

As you know, Mr. Stewart, Catholics have always believed that religious instruction is an important part of the education of our children. We believe that religious instruction does go towards forming people of our community who will serve it well and who will be happy within it. We do not want the rights to an integral education to be eliminated just because we are a minority group within the Northwest Territories.

On Page 49, #61.(2) we read "Where at least fifty per cent of the parents and guardians of students in a school present the principal with a written request, signed by them, that religious instruction be given in the school, the principal shall organize and schedule a program of religious instruction." We propose an amendment to this article to state: "where at least fifty per cent of the students or parents of students of the same religious denomination present the principal with a request that they can have religious instruction in the school, the principal shall organize and schedule a program of religious instruction."

Thank you.

Yours truly,
Don Kraetch
Father Donald Kraetch (Pastor)

Last draft:

of non-professional workers in parts of the school program that relate to the culture, language or life style of the local people and that are unfamiliar to the professional teachers in the schools of the district.

Religious Education

Lord's
Prayer

60. The local education authority may direct that the school day be commenced with a recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Religious
instruction

61. (1) Subject to the provisions of this section, religious instruction may be given during periods not exceeding one hundred and fifty minutes in any week.

Written
request

(2) Where at least fifty per cent of the parents and guardians of students in a school present the principal with a written request, signed by them, that religious instruction be given in the school, the principal shall organize and schedule a program of religious instruction.

Student
may be
excused

(3) Any student who presents a written request from his parent or guardian that he be excused from a class when religious instruction is given shall be excused from the class.

Where
student
excused

(4) A program of regular school study that is supervised by a teacher shall be provided for all students excused from a class when religious instruction is being given.

Teacher
may be
excused

(5) No teacher shall be required to provide religious instruction.