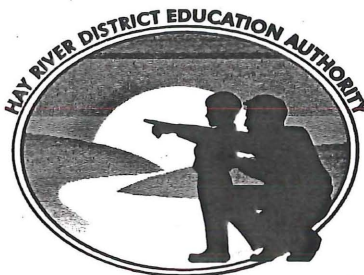




PETITION TO
ALTER THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
OF THE
HAY RIVER EDUCATION DISTRICT

Submitted to:
The Honourable Charles Dent
Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment
Government of the Northwest Territories



Submitted by:
The Hay River District Education Authority
Hay River, NT

October, 2005

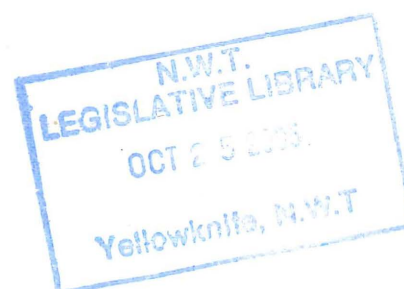


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hay River District Education Authority (DEA) is Petitioning the Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment to grant to the Hay River District Education Authority expanded powers and responsibilities.

The Hay River DEA believes that the community of Hay River has distinct educational needs that can better be met through increased local control. It is believed that the needs of the remaining South Slave communities will also be better met without having to service Hay River.

The Hay River DEA believes that the granting to the Hay River District Education Authority of expanded powers and responsibilities will allow for:

- Improvement in overall student performance;
- More efficient use of resources;
- Quicker and more efficient decision-making;
- A stronger sense of community ownership, leading to more community involvement;
- Programming that better reflects the multicultural mosaic of Hay River;
- Improved community relationships.

The Hay River DEA is committed to:

- reducing the cost of administration within the education system;
- maintaining financial accountability and curriculum standards; and
- offering increased programming, particularly in the area of special needs and multicultural education.

The Hay River DEA firmly believes that the community of Hay River has the vision, energy, skills, and resources required to fulfill the commitments and responsibilities inherent in being an education district with expanded powers and responsibilities.

FORMAL REQUEST

The Hay River District Education Authority hereby Petitions the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment of the Northwest Territories to:

1. Grant to the Hay River District Education Authority expanded powers and responsibilities in accordance with Ministerial authority under Sections 81-86 of the Education Act,

and,

2. Recalculate the annual funding allocations presently given to the South Slave Divisional Education Council by providing the Hay River District Education Authority with their proportional share from the Division and redirecting this funding to the Hay River District Education Authority for administration,

and,

3. Direct the South Slave Divisional Education Council to provide the Hay River District Education Authority with its proportional share of the SSDEC's contingency fund,

and,

4. Provide the Hay River District Education Authority with the direction to establish an administration office,

and,

5. Give the Hay River District Education Authority the authority to hire a Superintendent of Education to manage the education program in Hay River under the direction of the District Education Authority and the Minister as required under the Education Act.

This request is made this 24th day of October, 2005, through Hay River District Education Authority motion #05-101 passed October 5, 2005.

Signed:

David J. MacDonald, Chairperson
Hay River District Education Authority

THE COMMUNITY OF HAY RIVER

There are two characteristics of Hay River that stand out from its history:

- *its cultural diversity (relative to many other northern communities); and*
- *its economic diversity and entrepreneurial ability to respond and adapt to changing economic circumstances.*

Hay River Community Wellness Planning Project, Final Report.
Pg. 29

Hay River is renowned for its community spirit and willingness of people to pull together for a cause.

Hay River Community Profile. Town of Hay River.

The Town of Hay River is presently located on the west bank of the mouth of the Hay River, along the south shore of Great Slave Lake. The community originated on the east bank of the river, at what is now the Old Village of the Hay River Reserve. Over the past 100 years the community has evolved from a seasonal hunting and fishing encampment of Slavey people into a relatively prosperous and dynamic community of 3600 residents.

Permanent settlement of the community began in the 1880's, when a Slavey leader, Shaadle, settled at the old village with his people. At his request, the Anglican Church established a church and mission school that eventually served the entire Western Arctic. A Catholic church was also established in the Old Village during the early 1900s. During its first fifty years as a settlement, life in Hay River revolved around the mission, the fur trade, ongoing hunting and fishing activities, and some seasonal wage employment.

The Settlement of Hay River began to change dramatically with the discovery of gold at Yellowknife. Hay River quickly became a transportation route for goods going into the mines. By 1948, a permanent gravel road reached the shores of Great Slave Lake at Vale Island, on the west bank of the main channel of the Hay River. Aside from the industrial development that came with the road, the road helped open up Great Slave Lake to commercial fishing.

By the 1950s, most newcomers to the area had settled on Vale Island, and Vale Island soon surpassed the Old Village in size. These new settlers included non-Aboriginal people from across Canada and a large contingent of Cree-Metis commercial fishermen from northern Saskatchewan. During this time, a federal day school was established on Vale Island (the mission schools had closed) and children from the Old Village were boated across the river to attend.

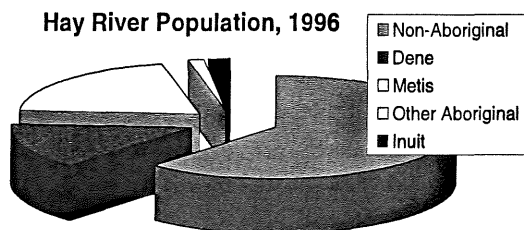
In order to protect their own heritage from the increasing population in the area, the K'atl'odeeche (mouth of the willow-grass river) people who remained on the east bank of the river petitioned for and were granted a federal Indian reserve in 1974: the Hay River Dene Reserve. The two communities were now officially distinct. In the late 1970's, the Government of the Northwest Territories established a primary school on the reserve. A modern new school was built in 1984.

The federal day school on Vale Island eventually reverted to the Government of the NWT, and two more schools -- a second elementary school and a high school -- were built at a southerly townsite during the 1970s.

Over the past twenty years, the Town of Hay River has continued to develop and prosper as it expanded south from Vale Island. At the present time, Hay River has four schools, three of which fall under the authority of the Hay River District Education Authority. A fully-equipped hospital, two banks, a nine-hole golf course, a theatre, a fully developed running track, and many other amenities that make it distinct from most other communities in the territories and in the South Slave Region. Unlike the majority of communities in the NWT, Hay River also has a strong private business sector. This business sector generates over 80% of the employment in the community. As well, there is considerable volunteerism within the community and a large number of community service organizations.

As fishing, transportation, government, and other economic activities have grown, Hay River has evolved into a "magnet community", drawing in people from the North, across Canada, and around the world.

The present demographics of Hay River demonstrate this diversity:



Along with a broad mix of Aboriginal people within the community (with a predominance of Slavey, Chipewyan, and Cree people), there is a large, multicultural, non-Aboriginal population. Within the non-Aboriginal group are significant Francophone and Filipino "communities", along with representatives of many other world cultures.

Compared to other communities in the NWT (and due to its historic development) Hay River's population is relatively well educated and well trained. According to the 1996 Census of Canada, 90% of the adult population has achieved a grade 9 or higher education level. Approximately 16% of the population have technical certification, a college diploma, or university degree.

Not surprisingly, education is a high priority within the community. All three of Hay River's schools (which have a total student population of 783) have active parent committees and considerable parental support and involvement. Aside from the public education system, a cooperative playschool has been running since the early 1980's and now owns its own facility. An Aboriginal Headstart Program operates on the Hay River Reserve with the direct involvement of Hay River parents and children.

Clearly, the Town of Hay River has evolved over the past 100 years into a community with distinctive social and cultural characteristics. Its multicultural base, its entrepreneurial approach to development, and its community spirit have helped create an energetic and self-determining community that, while respecting and learning from its diversity, is confident in its ability to take control of its own destiny.

This essential character of Hay River has a direct bearing on the Petition being presented to the Minister of Education through this document.

RATIONALE FOR THE PETITION

Allowing for decisions to be made as close to the classroom as possible is considered a powerful strategy for improving the delivery of educational services.

Site-Based Management and the School Business Administrator.
Association of School Business Officials International. Reston,
Virginia. 1993.

Invariably, central locations do not match local needs; as a result, funds are spent on unnecessary resources in one area while needs in other areas go unmet.

School Based Budgeting. DQS Network. 1995

The establishment and maintenance of culture-based schooling is dependent upon a strong sense of community ownership.

Our Students, Our Future: An Educational Framework. GNWT
Department of Education. 1991

We See a Community.... Where people work together to develop their own vision for learning in the community – and where they continually nurture that vision as they make it a reality. Where they develop the programs and services they need, hire their own staff, keep an eye on results and change things when they need to be changed.

People: Our Focus for the Future; A Strategy to 2010. Education,
Culture, and Employment. September, 1994.

The Hay River District Education Authority believes strongly that increased local control over the education system resulting from this Petition will provide:

1. Short and long-term improvements in student performance;
2. More efficient use of resources;
3. Quicker and more efficient decision-making;
4. A stronger sense of community ownership, leading to more community involvement and networking, and
5. Programming that better reflects the multicultural mosaic of Hay River.

1. Student Performance

The Hay River DEA (and the community as a whole) has been seriously concerned about the cuts to education funding that have occurred over the past few years, especially where these cuts have affected special needs programming. Hay River recognizes that a successful education system must address the needs of all of its students, particularly those whose needs are not being met through regular programming.

The community of Hay River is taking a proactive role in providing special needs programming within the community. The Hay River Playschool sponsors children from families in need. The Parent Action committees at all three schools have regularly sponsored training workshops for staff and parents relating to special needs, reading skills and parenting skills. A significant number of parents in Hay River volunteer in the classroom, performing a wide variety of supportive tasks. Members of the community are actively involved in the Aboriginal Head Start program being sponsored by the Hay River Reserve DEA and band council.

There are many positive programs in operation in the Hay River Schools that indicate the degree of commitment this Town has to education. Starting with the entry-level school, Harry Camsell offers a strong support program to assist students. Early in the spring, a collaborative screening takes place between HC school and the Public Health Unit. During this time, each student eligible to start kindergarten in the upcoming school year undergoes a screening test. The outcomes are noted and the school can then prepare to meet the challenging needs of these new students entering the structured education system.

As a primary school, Harry Camsell K-3's key mission is to develop strong reading and writing skills, as this forms the basis of every student's academic success. The additional resources that would flow to this school as a result and increase of authority for the DEA would enable the following program enhancements:

1. Use one of the Teacher Consultant positions to act as an in-school consultant focused on reading intervention. This person could run an intensive Reading Recovery type of program.
2. Create a Transition Class for students who, after a year of Kindergarten, are still not quite ready to begin Grade One.
3. Restore the French specialist and Music specialist positions.
4. Offer the full-time Kindergarten option at Harry Camsell K-3.

Princess Alexandra is a middle school that has established many initiatives in order to support student learning. Additional resources would allow for:

1. Assign one of the Teacher Consultant positions to PA School to work directly with teachers to develop reading intervention programs for at-risk students. This in-school consultant would also work closely with teachers to improve student numeracy skills.
2. Increase support staff to provide a full-time assistant for each grade level.
3. Restoration of the Librarian position to enable students access to the school library on a regular basis.
4. Increase the allotted time for French. A full-time French program would allow students to receive the recommended instruction time and greatly enhance the quality of this program.

Diamond Jenness Secondary School is a grade 8-12 school that has established many initiatives in order to support student learning in an extremely diverse atmosphere. An enhancement of services the DEA would offer include:

1. Teaching support to the senior high level to cut down on overly large class sizes.
2. Increase support staff to provide extended teaching services to all "at risk" students.
3. The assignment of one of the Teacher Consultant positions to enhance school initiatives by working directly with teachers and possibly students.
4. Increased secretarial support for student services to create more support and increased accuracy for student career planning.
5. The possibility of setting up a "Store Front School" to give services to students presently out of school.

All of these initiatives could be made possible if the Hay River District Education Authority was provided with the opportunity to control its financial resources.

2. Efficient Use of Resources

Based on the model proposed in a subsequent section in this Petition, increased services will be provided to Hay River schools without an increase in existing SSDEC funding. Specifically, a superintendent will be available to three schools rather than eight and, importantly, each of the three schools will have the opportunity to hire specialty positions to help support their individual needs. Having special services available to schools on a regular and extended basis is, alone, justification for the changes being proposed in this Petition.

The cost of attending meetings will be reduced significantly. Travel time required by DEC staff to serve the needs of Hay River schools will also be reduced. All of the cost savings associated with these changes will be redirected to programming.

3. Decision-Making

Hay River is an energetic, self-determining community. It values strong leadership and effective and efficient decision-making. The process of decision-making through the South Slave DEC can be slow and time-consuming, to the detriment of schools and programs. Being one community out of five at the SSDEC level means that Hay River's approach is often "out of sync" with the smaller communities.

4. Community Ownership

For the past few years, the Hay River District Education Authority has attempted to gain more control over its education funding allocation, but a significant shift in control has been vetoed on a number of occasions by the South Slave Divisional Education Council. An example of this is:

At a December 1997 SSDEC meeting, the Hay River DEA proposed that each DEA negotiate its own individual agreement regarding the sharing of powers with the SSDEC. Hay River felt that a "one-size fits all" agreement between the DEC and DEAs was not appropriate given the substantial differences in resources and infrastructure among communities. However, a motion to accept a *single* Sharing of Powers agreement was passed by the SSDEC in April, 1998, by a vote of four to one, with Hay River opposed. This motion closed the door to change within the existing structure and has compelled the Hay River DEA to Petition for an alternate governance model.

Education theory clearly states that education programming incorporating a high degree of community and parental involvement is most successful. Involvement increases when there is a sense of ownership -- of direct responsibility and accountability. From a community perspective, it appears that the SSDEC is the primary authority over education in this area and that Hay River's needs --even though Hay River has the majority of students in the region -- are often overshadowed. The Hay River DEA is certain that the level of community involvement in the schools will increase once it is known that all major decisions are being made locally.

In spite of the problems in the existing DEA/DEC relationship, the community of Hay River is actively developing dynamic educational partnerships among agencies in the community. This level of community involvement and the ability to strike and maintain partnerships will increase once more control is granted at the community level.

5. Multicultural Programming

Hay River is a diverse community. Although the traditional culture of the area is Slavey, many other cultural influences, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are in the community at the present time. This diversity must be acknowledged and respected within the education system.

This Petition will allow for two approaches to multicultural education to be taken within the area:

- 1) Cultural enrichment -- whereby students have the opportunity to learn from all of the different cultures that make up the Hay River population.
- 2) Cultural empowerment -- the community will be provided the opportunity to:
 - make more decisions regarding its own programming,
 - control the resources allocated to its own students, and
 - provide cultural programming to Hay River schools.

EDUCATION GOALS FOR HAY RIVER

The Hay River DEA recognizes that a quality education system must be student focussed. To provide an education to students that will allow them to realize their potential requires certain factors: shared vision; innovative approaches; commitment of educators, students and parents; high expectations, and responsible, accountable governance. The Hay River DEA and the Town of Hay River meet and surpass all of these requirements. We are a community of people dedicated to providing our students with the best educational opportunities possible.

We recognize that not all students are on a University track. We have struck a committee to focus on increasing the High School CTS curriculum. Our goal would be to have a Regional Vocational High School that will graduate students who are able and willing to meet the needs of our growing resource sector economy. We recognize the importance of maintaining a comprehensive curriculum at the High School level and we are committed to providing programs beneficial to all students.

The technological age is rapidly changing and we recognize the need to keep our students current within this learning framework. We are committed to innovative learning approaches through such programs as Knowledge Forum, High School Distance Education and tele-learning models. Our students need not be isolated because of geographical location and we are committed to seeing they are not.

We gain strength from the partnerships that are created between the businesses, agencies, volunteers and varying levels of government. We will pursue new partnerships, raise the expectations of our system and increase the learning opportunities for our students. Our goal is to provide students with an education that will help them become productive members of society.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Basic Organizational Model

At the present time, primary authority over education within the South Slave Education Division rests at the Divisional Education Council level. Under the operational model being proposed in this Petition, it is understood that primary decision-making over funding allocated to Hay River schools will be granted to the district level. The Hay River District Education Authority will, in effect, receive its full funding allocation and be able to determine, within the framework of the Education Act and other GNWT legislation, how best to utilize it.

The basic model will be as follows.

Department of Education, Culture, and Employment / GNWT

- Holds overall accountability for funding and programming through the Education Act, the Financial Administration Act, and other relevant acts and policies;
- Provides funding to the Hay River District Education Authority based on a standardized funding formula.

Hay River District Education Authority

- Employs a superintendent;
- Employs a secretary-treasurer;
- Employs three school based consultants;
- Contracts some services such as payroll administration;

Cost of Administration

When the South Slave Divisional Board of Education was created in 1991 under Sections 53.1 and 53.2 of the previous Education Act, six (6) administrative positions were identified: a superintendent, a comptroller, two teacher consultants, and two other staff. As of March of 2005, the SSDEC listed eleven (11) full-time positions.

The Hay River DEA is presuming that the resources presently directed to the South Slave region would be almost evenly split. Hay River presently has approximately 47% of the student population within the region: 783 students out of 1682.

Within this allocated budget, the Hay River DEA is proposing the hiring of a superintendent, maintaining the services of the existing Secretary Treasurer, contracting comptroller services, and hiring three school-based consultants. Travel costs would be minimal. The overall costs of administration would therefore be lower and each of the three schools within the district would receive far greater services from DEA staff.

The Hay River DEA acknowledges that the Department must take a broader view of the financial implications of this Petition, but emphasize that the changes put forward in this Petition, in essence, allows for *increased* services within the *existing* regional funding allocation.

Program Transferability

The Hay River schools will continue to follow the standard curriculum of the Northwest Territories as set out by the Department. This Petition respects the existing curriculum and in no way intends to change or modify it.

Human Resource Issues

Hay River has a well-educated and well-trained labour force. Due to its size and developed infrastructure, Hay River has no problem attracting and maintaining qualified workers.

Access to specialized management training is available in Hay River through the Aurora College Community Learning Center, if required. The Hay River DEA would continue with existing personnel arrangements and would honour existing union agreements.

IMPACT OF PETITION ON THE REMAINING SOUTH SLAVE COMMUNITIES

If this Petition is accepted by the Minister of Education, the communities that would remain in the South Slave Education Division are Ft. Smith, Ft. Resolution, Hay River Reserve and Lutselk'e.

The Hay River DEA believes that these communities, if they were to adopt an administrative approach similar to that as proposed by the Hay River District Education Authority, would be better off from an educational perspective.

- They would continue to have approximately 53% of the existing regional budget;
- They would have the ability to hire regional staff according to their own needs and priorities;
- By eliminating the need to travel to Hay River, more time could be spent by DEC staff on the remaining four communities;
- Each community could have more local control over its own funding allocation;
- Chipewyan would become the primary indigenous culture and language within the division;
- The historic political and cultural alignment within the Akaitcho Territory could be fulfilled.

In effect, splitting the office (and the scope of work of each of the new offices), would be more cost effective and allow for a more equitable sharing and usage of resources within the region. It must be noted that, with 899 and 783 students respectively, each of the new education divisions will still be larger than some of the education divisions already in existence in the Northwest Territories.

The proposed change would not affect purchasing from an "economy of scale" perspective because most purchasing is already done at the school level. Purchase of computers and other capital items would still be done through standing-offer agreements worked out by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

A formal summary of the consultation steps taken and the results obtained are included. The consultation process we followed included:

- Preparation of a Business Plan (see attached) according to Ministerial direction;
- Presentation of the Business Plan to both of Hay River's MLAs and a Town Council Representative;
- Presentation of the Business Plan to the Hay River Chamber of Commerce;
- Presentation of the Business Plan to the Town Council of Hay River;
- Signatures of fifty adult residents (see attached);
- Obtaining a Letter of Support from the Town of Hay River and the Hay River Chamber of Commerce, and
- Preparation and submission of this final Petition.

Community Consultation Results

- Preparation of a Business Plan:

In following Ministerial direction, the Hay River District Education Authority contracted the services of Tolley Consulting and Accounting Plus Ltd. to develop a Business Plan for the establishment of a District Education Authority with expanded powers and responsibilities.

- Consultation with Hay River's MLAs and Town Council Representative:

Hay River's MLAs and a Town Council Representative were presented with a draft version of the District Education Authority's Business Plan. This presentation was delivered by Tolley Consulting and Accounting Plus Ltd. which resulted in a question and answer session. The Business Plan was fully supported by all in attendance.

- Consultation with Hay River's Chamber of Commerce:

The Chairperson of the Hay River District Education Authority introduced the Business Plan to the members of the Chamber of Commerce which resulted in a motion of support (Letter of support attached).

- Consultation with the Mayor and Town Council:

Presentations were made to the Mayor and Town Councillors on October 3rd and 17th, 2005. A motion of support was passed at the Regular Meeting of Town Council on October 17th, 2005 (Letter of support attached).

- Signature of fifty adult residents:

The signatures of fifty adult residents were obtained, supporting the DEA's initiative to establish a District Education Authority with expanded powers and responsibilities. Most of the signatures represent various Community organizations and businesses in Hay River.

Summary of Consultation

The Hay River District Education Authority has in the process of consultation sought to contact those groups that would be affected by the proposed change. As shown in previous and current consultation processes, the community of Hay River has shown continued and overwhelming support for independent, local and accountable decision-making in education matters as envisaged in this Petition.

e Town of Hay River
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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 19, 2005

The Honorable Charles Dent
Minister of Education, Culture & Employment
Government of the NWT
Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Dear Honorable Dent:

The Town of Hay River recognizes the Hay River District Education Authority as the duly elected authority entrusted with the educational needs of the community. The Town believes that education is a vital part of this community and the future development of Hay River.

The Town supports the HRDEA's beliefs that Hay River's funding for education should be controlled locally as to ensure the specific education needs of Hay River are met and improved upon where possible.

The Council of The Town of Hay River passed the following motion at the Regular Meeting of Council, October 17, 2005.

The Council of the Town of Hay River supports the Hay River's DEA's business plan to improve our community education system as long as there is no tax increase to the citizens of Hay River.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ehman
Town of Hay River

cc Ms Jane Groenewegen – MLA Hay River South
Mr. Paul Delorey – MLA Hay River North
Mr. David MacDonald, Chairperson – HRDEA

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October 12, 2005

Hon. Charles Dent, MLA Frame Lake
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

RE: Letter of Support for Hay River DEA Petition

To Mr. Dent,

The Hay River Chamber of Commerce is pleased to support the Hay River District Education Council (DEA) in its petition for "Expanded Powers under the Education Act". By way of Motion **05-09-30-3G**, passed September 30, 2005, the Hay River Chamber of Commerce unanimously endorsed the Hay River DEA with its petition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesli Fisher".

Lesli Fisher
Hay River Chamber of Commerce President