

February 13, 2026

The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P.  
 Minister of Indigenous Services  
 The Honourable Rebecca Alty, P.C., M.P.  
 Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations  
 House of Commons  
 Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

**Re: Urgent Funding Request for JK-12 Indigenous Students in Yellowknife Catholic Schools and Yellowknife Education District No. 1**

Dear Ministers Gull-Masty and Alty,

We are writing on behalf of the Boards of Trustees for Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) and Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1). Jointly, we are deeply concerned with the changes to how Jordan's Principle funding has effectively been denied to support students in our schools. While YCS has benefited from multi-year funding to this point, it is faced with profound cuts to staffing and support levels for Indigenous students at the end of this year. This promises to be a repeat of the situation faced in YK1 at the end of last year, when 79 support positions were eliminated.

We each operate as independent school districts. However, the impacts of the funding changes are of such magnitude that we feel compelled to jointly bring this to your attention. The federal decision has resulted in profound shifts in the stability and safety of classrooms in YK1, and illustrates what YCS can expect when those reductions take place at the end of this school year.

**Critical Shortfall: Beyond "Supplemental" Support**

Jordan's Principle funding allowed our districts to address unique inequities faced by Indigenous students in the north. These supports have shown us what's possible when schools are appropriately funded and resourced, and have allowed students the opportunity to be supported much like their counterparts in southern Canada. Our progress in aligning with Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action is currently predicated on reliable access for our families. Without this access, we risk a serious breach of trust with our youth and families, potentially reversing the gains made in the Northwest Territories of supporting our children and families to thrive. When all levels of

government fail to provide reliable access, it directly contradicts the spirit and letter of Call to Action 3.

The withdrawal of Jordan's Principle funding will continue to create a shortfall that neither district can absorb. We face the permanent loss of hundreds of Student Support Assistants (SSAs) and specialized staff who are critical to the creation and maintenance of supportive, inclusive learning environments.

### **The Impact of Funding Withdrawal**

The impact of funding withdrawal has already been clearly demonstrated in YK1, as manifested in the staffing reductions they were forced to implement at the end of last school year. This will be duplicated in YCS and these reductions will be catastrophic. Specifically:

- Hundreds of children will continue to lose critical support. In some cases, these are one-to-one. However, in all instances, they address academic, therapeutic, behavioural, social and safety needs.
- Students who rely on specialized equipment, health services, speech and occupational therapy will lose that access. The impacts of this loss will be life-changing for them.
- Without specialized teachers or SSAs to support classrooms, the learning experiences of all students will suffer. These positions offer key and timely support for learning, but also to intervene and ensure the safety of all staff and students.
- In addition to the pronounced impacts on all students, we expect a corresponding increase in safety incidents, teacher burnout with corresponding higher staff turnover. While Jordan's Principle is meant to specifically support our Indigenous learners, all students and staff benefit when the learning environment is appropriately staffed and resourced.
- The inclusion staff hired through Jordan's Principle provided meaningful employment to Northern residents, many of whom are Indigenous. In addition to being able to provide cultural insights which inform our approaches at school, these positions also previously provided income security in our region. The reductions implemented to date as well as future reductions, will eliminate stability for these Northerners. This will also result in the removal of essential mentors and advocates from our schools.

### **A Call for Emergent Funding and Partnership**

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) made \$14 million available for a period of one year for the whole of the Northwest territories. This is interim funding to bridge the gap created by the federal decisions surrounding Jordan's Principle. Our communities and our Indigenous students deserve the support and opportunities available to those in southern Canada. They deserve the stability of a long-term funding framework, allowing long-term growth and success. In serving the needs of the North, our communities and our Indigenous students, we must receive the substantive equality that can only come from predictable funding models. We can no longer rely upon stop-gaps.

We seek the establishment of a proactive system where school districts are recognized as the essential partners they are in helping Indigenous families. This we accomplish by working with families and

communities to access funds in a manner that aligns with the original goals of Jordan's Principle and its framework.

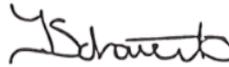
We urgently request a joint meeting with you both to develop a strategic path forward. Our focus is on building a collaborative strategy between the GNWT, school districts and the Federal Government that ensures substantive equality. This will result in the prevention of jurisdictional shifts that create substantial service gaps for children.

We are committed to reconciliation, and believe it is found through the educational journey of our next generation's leaders. We look forward to a meaningful collaboration that ensures every Indigenous child in the NWT grows into a fully-capable person.

Yours sincerely,



Barbra Bell  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Yellowknife Education District No. 1



Tina Schauerte  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Yellowknife Catholic Schools

Cc: The Honourable Caitlin Cleveland  
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment  
Government of the Northwest Territories