

Ministerial Directive on enrollment of Students in French First Language Education Programs

Stakeholder Consultation Report

Submitted by: Tait Communications and Consulting (June 16, 2016)

The online questionnaire for the ministerial directive garnered significant interest. In all, 137 respondents were received. The following report summarizes the key themes and points raised in these respondents, by question.

Tait has reviewed all respondents. What follows is not a quantitative analysis of the written input, but rather a qualitative summary of the various points raised in respondents. This has necessarily required some analysis by Tait, however, we have done our utmost to faithfully and fairly reflect the breadth of views raised in the respondents.

Where possible and pertinent, some quantitative references are made to illustrate how often a specific point was made or to highlight differences between communities or organization of the respondents. Quotes are also included to help illustrate the focus and tone of the respondents. Quotes are presented as written, unedited.

English Online respondents

1. What Community do you live in?

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Hay River | 104 |
| Yellowknife | 6 |
| Other | 3 |
| Total | 113 |

2. Are you representing a group or organization with your response? If so, please identify.

| | |
|--|------------|
| Association Franco culturel de Hay River | 1 |
| Concerned citizen/resident | 2 |
| Education/Teachers | 5 |
| First Nations | 1 |
| Hay River District Education Authority | 3 |
| n/a | 1 |
| No Answer | 35 |
| No | 49 |
| Organization | 2 |
| Parent | 12 |
| SSDEC | 2 |
| Total | 113 |

3. Briefly describe what you see as the purpose of the Ministerial Directive, as well as the main benefits of the Directive.

Purpose:

- To limit enrollment in French first Language schools (41)
- To set parameters/rules for enrollment, in respect of the Charter and of the Minister's role (27)
- The directive is driven by a need to manage funding allocated that are tied to enrollment (3)
- Not familiar with directive (1)

Benefits:

- Provides access to French education in a minority environment (13)
- Ensure integrity of French first language education (2)
- Stated that there was no benefit to the directive (15)
- Facilitates administration of enrollment (3)

Quotes:

"The purpose of the Ministerial Directive severely limits the enrollment at the two French schools. There is no benefit to this directive. I think that this school is a publicly funded school that should be expected to educate my children should I wish to send them there. I can enroll my children at Chief Sunrise (Hay River Reserve/ K'atl'odeeche First Nation) and am not expected to prove their aboriginal heritage. Likewise, I can enroll my children at Harry Camsell and am not asked to prove that my husband and I attended English First Language Schools." Hay River respondent

"I see the purpose of the directive as limiting the enrollment eligibility. I find asking what the "benefits" of the directive are a weird question....it implies that it is only beneficial, when in fact it is perhaps beneficial to the English speaking education boards but detrimental to French speaking school board, so there are obviously two sides to the directive." Hay River respondent

"I don't see the Directive as it is currently worded as being beneficial. The tone, wording and language of the Directive is confrontational and limiting. The perception of the Directive is that it was a tool the GNWT used to limit enrollment at Francophone schools in the NWT because of the court case involving school infrastructure. Upgrading school infrastructure was tied to enrollment numbers. Reducing numbers reduces the potential infrastructure requirements. The Directive is incongruent with other Canadian jurisdictions. A Minister only decision has the potential to have inconsistent policy application and messaging, and could be perceived as lacking transparency. It is understandable that a new Directive may require certain criteria to satisfy a need (either by the GNWT or the Commission Scolaire). I think both organizations should be able to work together to come up with a policy and supporting procedures that meets both needs." Yellowknife respondent

4. What do you feel are the benefits to Rights Holders of having access to French First language schools?

- To preserve or regain the French language and culture (39)
- Ensuring options for language of choice in education (49)
- No benefits (2)

Quotes:

"I think they're so fortunate to have access to Francophone schools. Unfortunately, my husband and I both have strong French ancestry but were not raised in communities with Francophone schools. I hope that the GNWT opens up enrollment so that these schools can survive." Hay River respondent

"It is clearly of immense value for them to be able to attend a French First language school in order to learn French at a first language level. French immersion schools are not the equivalent, as they teach a different curriculum and often have teachers who were the product of French Immersion themselves, and thus for whom French is their second language." Hay River respondent

"I believe CANADIANS should be allowed to attend French Language Schools." Hay River respondent

"They are too numerous to mention here, but a few are: 1. We repair the lost language of French. Not having French schools available in the past meant many French-speaking parents had to forego French education for their children. Consequently, their children lost their language. 2. The future generations of NWT residents can ensure their French is at an academic level which will permit them to qualify for Territorial and Federal jobs requiring French-English bilingualism. 3. If you imagine that English people were faced with this situation and were asked what they thought the benefits were of their children receiving education in English would be, the answers are glaringly apparent." Hay River respondent

"There are many documented benefits of having access to French First language schools. It supports a minority community to maintain their heritage, culture and language within a larger majority setting." Hay River respondent

5. **How important do you think it is to maintain a homogeneous environment in French First Language schools? Why or why not? Specifically, we would like to know what the impact would be for Rights Holders if the environment became less homogeneous. What might they lose?**

Very important (7)

Important (26)

Neutral (10)

Not important (32)

There were 75 answers that describe how important it is to maintain a homogeneous environment. Common themes were as follows:

- Importance of speaking French at school
- Opportunity to learn French culture
- Importance that non-Rights Holders should have a certain level of French if accepted to French school
- School board should decide on the mix/ratio
- Canada and the communities in question are not homogenous and Rights Holders are not homogenous, so the school will not be homogenous
- Homogeneity does not align with Canadian and territorial values. Diversity makes a richer and stronger community
- Canada is a bilingual country and French language education should be available to all Canadians

Consequences for Rights Holders/what might be lost:

- French language and culture may be diluted/watered down
- Original intent of French first language schools would be lost
- Quality of education could be affected
- Possibility of impacting learning for French speaking students if non-Rights Holders require more instruction from the teachers

Other points:

- Loss of funding to other schools if Rights Holders go to the French first language school was also mentioned as an impact
- French schools and the school board can manage and maintain homogeneity
- Homogeneity is created in the school environment, not a result of which students are admitted
- Each community will have different reality and needs, the culture created will be different and change over time

Quotes:

"It is somewhat important; however, allowing non-Right holders to attend the school doesn't threaten the homogeneity if the school environment is consistent in enforcing its overlying mission - education in French. In fact, I argue that allowing non Right-holders can reinforce the homogeneity because current students will strengthen their own identity while helping newcomers to adapt. Did I become less Canadian when the government allowed immigrants from other countries who do no speak English or French? No!" Hay River respondent

"I personally believe that the Commission Scolaire and the school administration (all Francophones) are the ones who are best placed to decide the degree of homogeneity necessary to preserve the interests of their rights holding students, rather than a one-size fits all policy imposed by the GNWT. I am not Francophone, but given that it is Francophones who want the right to be able to make these decisions (the Commission went to court over it), I think that pretty much answers this question. The Commission is voted in by rights holders and they are the ones best placed to know what their rights holders might lose and how to protect them, and also to know that the answer to this question may change over time and be different in the different communities. It's also essential to keep in mind that French rights-holders themselves can be very diverse. It is possible to have a section 23 French rights-holder who does not speak a word of French. It is possible to be a section 23 French rights-holder by virtue of one parent, yet identify much more strongly with the linguistic, ethnic and cultural background of your other parent. Meanwhile, you can be fluently bilingual and identify strongly with Francophone culture and not be a section 23 French rights-holder. So you are always going to have issues of diversity to deal with, and it will be different each school year and in each community, and that is why flexibility and nuance are needed. Finally, I would note that Ontario's "Policy Statement on Admissions, Welcoming and Support at Francophone Schools" emphasizes the values of diversity at page 14. As already mentioned, their Francophone schools are able to admit non-rights holders in accordance with what the school has determined best works for their school and their community context." Hay River respondent

"Entry of non French speaking persons into a French first language school has been a common practice at every right holder school across the country. It is very regulated to allow the proper mix of English speaking vs French speaking children and as most entry into the schools are done at kindergarten level, the English speaking children are extremely adaptable at that age and as all the other schools have proven in the past, there is no loss to the French first language students in the school by having them there." Hay River respondent

"It would not become less homogeneous because all students learn French and all that is done in school remains in French. They become part of the French culture and it gives "non-right holders" a chance to either reconnect with parts of their culture or learn a new one. Nothing is lost, all that is gained is openness and that much more understanding of the francophone culture which is an integral part of the Canadian identity." Hay River respondent

"I think it is very important. I think the Government of Canada has supported FFL schools in a way that nurtures the francophone community. It is designed to maintain their culture, be a place where the "minority" child can be given the opportunity to receive their education in an environment they are comfortable with. This I see as the purpose of FFL schooling. French immersion schools are for teaching the language to Anglophones. The difference is the philosophy behind the FFL school. If non right holders are allowed to attend the intent has failed." Yellowknife

"Having a homogeneous environment (as defined above) is essential to maintaining the quality and level of French education. However, there are many internal and external factors that also potentially impact the homogeneity of a francophone school. Allowing some non-Rights Holders will not by itself lessen the quality of the environment. It is important to note that many non-Rights Holders may also be French speaking families (i.e.. immigrant francophone families or immersion-based families). The assumption cannot be made that all non-Rights Holders will be only Anglophones." Hay River

"It's important to have a school that is viable and enriching. Children are like sponges and quickly absorb new languages and adapt well to new cultures and teachings. Homogeneity does not guarantee a successful or growing school, especially in small, northern communities. It is preferable to have a francophone school which allows for diversity than no school at all." Hay River respondent

6. Do you support allowing one or more category of non-Rights Holders to attend French First Language schools? If so, which categories you would like to see considered and why?

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Yes | 59 |
| No | 20 |
| No answer/Other | 34 |

Of the respondents who answered that they supported allowing categories of non-Rights Holders, there was various level of support for the categories as listed below:

| | |
|--|----|
| All categories | 21 |
| No categories/open to everyone | 10 |
| Strict enrollment process | 7 |
| Only if French is already spoken by student | 5 |
| French speaking Immigrants | 5 |
| Grandparents are Rights Holders | 3 |
| Exchange students | 3 |
| An immigrant student who speaks neither French nor English | 2 |
| Past generations | 2 |

Quotes:

"This is not a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. The intention of the FFL program needs to stay at the forefront of any decisions for admission of non-right holders. There may be exceptions and the only way these exceptions should be looked at for non-right holders is if French is actually their first language of choice - spoken and supported culturally within their, and their families, lifestyle choices children /parents/ guardians etc. who are linguistically fluent in French however are not right holders. Hence, the reason they would be interested in attending the FFL school. The premise should be that the decision has already been taken in the family that French is their first language by the time they reach kindergarten. For example, demonstrated attended at FFL pre-schools, French culture programs, engrossed in any French community activities/organizations, etc. If people want French as a 'second' language then this program is not for them, and if students are not already speaking French by kindergarten then they are not already truly a French first language person. There are other programs available to them, ie. French immersion, intensive French, core French, etc." Hay River respondent

"All of those categories, provided that there is a reasonable likelihood that the child is or can become linguistically and culturally integrated within a reasonable time. The Commission is in the best position to determine this on a student-by-student basis." Yellowknife respondent

"I don't believe people should fall into a category because government does not know best, not one size fits all. Our current culture in the NWT is very diverse. Many parents of children here have lost their French for so many reasons. ie no French schools available to attend so no choice. Why should these children pay by not being allowed into a French School even though they do have a French background. There is no other French School in Canada that makes it so difficult to attend school. Is this not a free country? Are we not a bilingual country? So why is our government making things so difficult? Had there been French immersion available here then that's the route we would have gone, but our DEA was too tunnel-visioned to see the benefits of French immersion. Now intensive French has been introduced into PA School." Hay River respondent

"Yes, but I would like to see it go back one more generation to include Great Great Grandparent. I request this because French First Language schools were not available in Western Canada making it impossible for my Mother-in-law to attend a Francophone school despite the fact that her father was born in France." Hay River respondent

"If parents are actively practicing French culture and speaking French language at home, exceptions could be made. I feel strongly that parents should be interviewed in French as well as students when considering entry. The parents need to commit and prove their commitment to ensure the richness of the FFL program." Hay River respondent

7. Are there additional categories that should be allowed admission to French First Language schools? Why?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Yes | 47 |
| No | 21 |
| No answer | 45 |

Of the respondents who answered this question, there was support for additional non-Rights Holders as per the categories below. It was again noted that non-Rights Holders should be considered on a case-by-case basis by the school board.

- Open to everyone, parent should have the right to choose
- Students who have French ancestors (including Metis)
- Students who have parents who attended French immersion or learned French as an adult and have the ability to assist their children with their studies
- Students who attended French daycare and master the language
- Students who have attended French immersion and want to deepen French learning (especially in Hay River)

Quotes:

“Children who are capable of and interested in joining French school at the appropriate level of competence. The Commission is in the best position to determine this on a student-by-student basis.” Yellowknife respondent

“I think that parents who are active members of the Francophone community should be able to make a case to enrol their child. For example, the parents enroll in French Language classes and continue their studies for the duration of their child's elementary years.” Hay River respondent

“As long as they are meeting expectations and language requirements: I fully support all categories particularly in the north where education options are so limited - what a benefit to learn a second language!” Hay River respondent

“No. The French school was opened for rights holders. To accommodate a small amount of people and doesn't need to serve any more than its original purpose. If the French school doesn't have enough students. Why doesn't it operate in a wing of one of the other under-capacity schools.” Hay River respondent

8. Should NWT Aboriginal students that have a grandparent that spoke French but are not Section 23 Rights Holders be a priority for admission to French First Language schools? Why or why not?

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Yes | 37 |
| Yes, if French is spoken | 2 |
| Case-by-case | 6 |
| No | 30 |
| No answer/other | 37 |

Quotes:

“To repair the wrongs of residential schools, Native, Metis should have priority.” Hay River respondent

“There should be a priority for anyone with French speaking family. Not specifically aboriginal. It makes the most sense to give students with French speaking family a priority, it would make the transition easier for a number of obvious reasons. We are all Canadians regardless of our heritage. We have freedom of choice across the board. Education should be no different.” Hay River respondent

“Well, how far do you go back? Why stretch it to grand-parent? Why not go back and realize that Metis have French ancestors. This is where a French Immersion school is needed to eliminate all of this and just open it up to those that are interested in learning French and being in a French environment.” Hay River respondent

"Are the French First schools teaching aboriginal languages?" Hay River respondent

"Stop suggesting categories and definitions. Parents choose." Hay River respondent

"This is getting offensive. Should NWT aboriginal students that have a grandparent that spoke English but are not Anglophone Rights Holders be given priority admissions into all NWT English programming/schools? Seriously?" Hay River respondent

9. How do you think the admission of these groups might impact the concept of homogeneity we discussed earlier?

Again, respondents expressed a discomfort with the concept of homogeneity. Opinion varied on this question, main points that were made were as follows:

Positive impact:

- Creates more diversity
- The French culture will be enhanced as culture is always changing and growing
- Enhance and embellish the dynamic of the school

No impact:

- Priority should be to maintain a high level of full French linguistic abilities in reading, comprehension and writing
- School boards across Canada have done it successfully

Negative impact:

- Dilute the French language
- French Heritage would become watered down

Quotes:

"This question is confusing. I thought by homogeneity, you meant that the environment is all in French to facilitate everyone's learning. Now it means that all the kids are Rights-Holders, and speak French fluently before they go to the school. In Hay River, we need to have enough students for the school to be viable. We need to have a reasonable, well-thought out plan by our school board to allow many many different categories of kids and families in order to have the school survive. We need to give our citizens the basic right to choose the language of education for their children in a bilingual country. And we need to trust that the school board has a wealth of experience to monitor and adjust and bring balanced choices for the school, town and Territory." Hay River respondent

"Who cares about the concept!! When you really think about it we are all ONE!" Hay River respondent

"Well, again, Ontario trusts its schools to make this determination, and I believe the impact on French rights-holders will best be protected by giving the Commission scolaire and the individual schools the flexibility to adopt an admissions policy so they can protect their students while also ensuring viability of their schools. I am exceptionally confident that the Commission would not allow the admission of other groups to impact the Francophone culture of their school." Hay River respondent

"Again, homogeneity is a poor choice of term. Terminology aside, if the Commission does a good job of gaging the child's linguistic and cultural readiness (including immediate family factors) there should be no negative impact on the environment. To the contrary, this diversity should be enriching." Hay River respondent

"I am uncomfortable with this concept of homogeneity and I don't see how it supports educational choice or the acceptance of each Canadian as equally able to have access to any funded programming in their reach." Hay River respondent

"It will not as mention above all interaction between students, teachers and staff will be done in French. The French culture will be enhanced as culture is always changing and growing." Hay River respondent

"Nothing bad will happen, they will just learn a new language and that is just a plus for their brain. And it would be a plus for the school to have more diversity. As said earlier, many "heterogeneous" students were allowed in Hay River before and the school was perfect until the government cut it and almost "killed" the school." Hay River respondent

"It will greatly impact the english speaking schools. Our numbers decreased dramatically when everyone was allowed into the french schools. Why are you not thinking of the english speaking schools, we have rights also. We need to be able to offer music, computers, arts which has all gone by the wayside since the french school opened. We need our school to grow also. I feel there is enough french taught at the english speaking schools. Why should english schools be penalized because the french people have such loud voices." Hay River respondent

"Dilute it. Again, having students further removed from their heritage will ask the school to TEACH language and culture, rather than uphold and honor an already established language and cultural tradition." Hay River respondent

"I think we need to look beyond this and embrace the gains that would come of it. It would show a more standard policy amongst all schools, allowing anyone to learn. Of course there are going to be rules and expectations in the school that will be modeled, however by opening up that door for opportunity to learn and try is the first step to success." Hay River respondent

10. Are you concerned that the line between the schools will become blurred if more non-Rights Holders are admitted to French First Language Schools? Why or why not?

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Yes | 39 |
| No | 27 |
| Not concerned | 4 |

More than half of the respondents indicated the lines would be blurred if non-Rights Holders were admitted to the school. However, a significant number of respondents indicated that as long as the school continues to include French culture and a high level of French instruction in the programming the lines will not be blurred. It should be noted that some respondents found the question unclear.

Quotes:

"The "line between the schools?" You are creating and "them" and "us" scenario that does not need to exist." Hay River respondent

"The schools in Hay River have already suffered from the blatant disregard of the French First Language entry requirements. As a result, many non right holders have been admitted into the school and often at the invitation of the french board. That has created an entirely separate stream of children that have a federally funded advantage that the majority of Hay River students have not been given. The loud voices of a few vocal parents led to the creation of what many in the community consider a Federal and Territory funded private school. This has also led to a divide among students that in the past have coexisted in a tight knit community." Hay River respondent

"This is a poorly worded question - not sure what is meant by a blurred line. It does mean a lot of resources at the FFL school will have to be dedicated to teaching French, when that is not the objective of the school." Hay River respondent

"No because I don't believe in lines! I think that this far into our Canadian experience the year 2016 can we really draw these kinds of lines in our multicultural society?" Hay River respondent

"It won't be an open door admissions policy that anyone can attend, there will have to be criteria around admissions the same as they have in other provinces. It should be my right as a parent to have my child educated in one of the official languages." Hay River respondent

11. If non-Rights Holders are admitted to French First Language schools, what impacts to you foresee on other community schools?

It is important to note that respondents from Yellowknife who answered this question answered there would be no major impact to admitting non-Rights Holders. Respondents from Hay River felt there would be a very significant impact. Common themes were as follows:

- Competition for enrollment
- Other schools will lose teachers, resources and possibly even facilities
- Ability to offer specialized programs in the English schools
- Less students enrolled in immersion or intensive French
- Loss of funding to English schools
- Splitting the community
- Competition for resources instead of cooperation
- Having to share resources
- May address overcrowding at the public school
- Opportunity for non-Rights Holders to be more challenged and learn a second language
- Opportunity for families to have a choice

Quotes:

"I don't have enough information to say. But it is hard to imagine that the numbers could be material given the small number of students we are likely considering." Yellowknife respondent

"I don't see a huge impact on other community schools. The class sizes in our English schools are some of the most crowded in Canada so I think the kids in these classes may actually benefit from slightly smaller classes. I don't think it would cause any staffing cuts because the classes are at or slightly beyond the allowable ratio of student to teacher." Hay River respondent

"It's a school not a business. As long as the students are happy and benefit from it we should not worry for schools. Also, a government is suppose to support minority not majority..." Hay River respondent

"Benefits such as opportunities to share resources. For example, a grade 6 class from CSFTNO can visit a HRDEA school during its French class and help with things like reading, writing, and oral skills. Or they can pool financial resources to make some previous impossibilities possible. The CSFTNO schools are able to access Federal money that directly supports our local communities." Hay River respondent

"We will have a community of false right holders because this isn't a French community. I am so sick of people with entitlement issues. The regular school will be so affected in a negative way. We will losing teachers, all our top students and we will be bringing in all the French teachers from the French provinces. So much for moving our aboriginal populations forward!" Hay River respondent

"It will be detrimental. Funding is dependent on enrollment. Community schools have high numbers of special needs and aboriginal children who deserve an enrichment education just as the FFL school's can offer." Hay River respondent

"Competition for numbers instead of working together. Loss of programing because of reduced numbers. The, I, me, mine mentality instead of us ours." Hay River respondent

"Yes this is a huge issue. The problem in our small community stems from this very simple problem. The truth is that parents with capable children who do not have any learning issues, who are at grade level or above, are greatly concerned with the public schools lack of challenge/support for their able child. There is so much energy and support spent on those children with emotional/learning issues that the able kids are left behind. There is no clear curriculum outcomes communicated to parents. Teachers seem to be able to pick out a hat what goes on in the classroom. Communication to parents is a huge problem. The parents with kids who are able want a challenge for their kids in a learning environment that is not disrupted by incredible daily behavioural issues. Our family would like the benefit of learning French and would choose the francophone for that reason. The additional problem with many families leaving public school who might choose the french school is because they simply want their kids not to have the added challenge of learning in a disruptive classroom with peers who are so far

behind that the teacher is preoccupied with them. Inclusive learning does not work. So yes there will be a problem, one that could be solved if the schools provided an academic option for the kids at grade level/who are bright, and a quiet learning environment with instructors who are not stressed and busied with helping those with extra needs. So I am not concerned that the lines will be blurred but I wish the public school here provided some kind of "challenge" streaming. The Intensive French was a response to parents moving their kid's to the francophone school in the past. That is not the answer. They want their kids learning in a focussed environment." Hay River respondent

"Maybe more people will get to have a choice in their children's education. I think many people would not choose to put their kids in francophone school, just because of the political divide and also because it is harder to learn everything in French when you're not French. But the people that are serious about the investment in their children's future and are willing to put the time in to integrate their children should have the choice to do so." Hay River respondent

12. If non-Rights Holders are admitted to French First Language schools, would you support an overall limit to the number of non-Rights Holders admitted? (i.e. a fixed percentage of enrollment)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Yes | 37 |
| No | 34 |
| No answer | 41 |

13. What would be the benefit of having an overall limit?

More than half of respondents did not offer an answer to this question. Of those who did, the following points were made:

- Strong objection to allowing any non-Rights Holders at all
- Limits would support overall integration of children in the school
- Limits would help prioritize and preserve the cultural and linguistic integrity of the school
- Would lessen impacts on other schools (funding issues, competition, etc.)
- Avoid a large increase in the French schools that leads to overcrowding and demands for more space
- Limits should be set and managed by the Francophone school board

Quotes:

"I would not oppose a limit, but believe that it should be the schools who determine what that limit should be, and that limit may even need to be different in the different communities." – Hay River respondent

"None - it's too risky. There may be some years where 0 non right-holders are admitted but others where double the average number are admitted. It's such an unpredictable thing and each case is unique." – Hay River respondent

"No benefit. Follow the ruling from the NWT Supreme court and don't bow to political pressure from a group of parents and a school board that has a difficult time hearing no." Hay River respondent

"Limiting the numbers that would otherwise enroll in the English program. Criteria would have to be developed to be fair and appropriate to determine who gets in or not." Hay River respondent

"An influx of English speaking children would make French first language classes more complicated when children aren't at a functional level for immersive teaching." Hay River respondent

14. Would you support limited admission of students only at the elementary/primary grade level?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Yes | 24 |
| No | 50 |
| No answer | 25 |

15. Do you feel that there is a relationship between enrollment limits and a school's ability to support integration of non-Rights Holders and preserve the linguistic environment of the classroom/school?

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Yes | 25 |
| No | 13 |
| No answer | 75 |

Many respondents either did not address this questions or did not respond directly to the issue. Of those who did respond, there was a mix of views expressed.

- Some reiterated that no non-Rights Holders should be admitted at all
- Some were adamant that limits should be used, citing either the need to manage admissions to preserve the linguistic environment, or to avoid the school attempting to admit too many Rights Holders
- Others felt that the ability to integrate non-Rights Holders was not a matter of numerical limits but rather appropriate assessment of students and families prior to admission and sufficient support within the school.

Quotes:

"No. Ecole Boreale has proven time and time again that those students who are non right holder can and do integrate into the french environment successfully." Hay River respondent

"No I believe through the staff and management kids will maintain French in the school. These questions seem loaded of how not to expand the French program." Hay River respondent

"As long as there are additional aids to assist, as in other schools. Depending on enrollment numbers." Hay River respondent

"No. School culture (in any language) is not dependent on enrollment. It is dependent on how well the education team presents and supports the culture." Hay River respondent

"I believe that this relationship would be dependent on the specific considerations for the children applying for admission each year, and the context of each community, and that is why I believe that the schools/Commission Scolaire are best placed to determine their own admissions." Hay River respondent

"Absolutely there is a big relationship...too many non-right holders will allow too many kids admission into the system and change the way classes are taught such that the non-right holders can learn at level they are able to comprehend." Hay River respondent

"If required, limits would only be useful at the primary level. This is also dependent on the students (and the family's) French language ability. Any non-Rights Holder students wanting to enroll at a higher level should be required to demonstrate their ability to function at the grade level. Therefore, if they are capable, then they should be admitted." Yellowknife respondent

"If you are able to let the students in whose parents are not right holders but who have shown a vested interest in the culture and language, you will have a small group of people who are dedicated to integrating." Hay River respondent

"Not really. I'm not sure if this is true, but I would wonder if limiting the enrollment might cause the school to become more like a private school, at least optically, that only accepts the best and brightest students... it could make the sometimes tense optics become more strained." Hay River Respondent

"Yes, you will not preserve the linguistic environment of FFL if you are including those that are learning the language. Hay River should have a French Immersion school for that purpose, but we don't. However a FFL school is what we have, and it deserves to be run as intended. It is the Federal Government's intention that FFL harbour and protect the minority francophone culture. Our Anglophone schools needs to be supported in provide French language schooling and basic language instruction to Anglophones or those that need to be reconnect with their francophone language." Hay River respondent

"The school is servicing rights holders. It was their right. Others attending is a luxury that the school system can't afford to fund." Hay River respondent

"Definitely yes. Even now, the French community in Hay River has such a small French Community. The Francophone Association is struggling to find members who will be active. There will be more non-rights holders than rights-holders! How is this creating an authentic French environment?" Hay River respondent

16. Are there other things that should be taken into consideration when determining eligibility for admission to French First Language Schools?

Many respondents used this opportunity to reiterate their views and add additional detail to their responses. This section in particular was heavily weighted to views from Hay River respondents. Respondents were passionate and offered lengthy responses. The following points were common to a number of responses:

- There is a significant concern that a change to the directive will recreate a divide within a close-knit community as was experienced in 2008.
- Many respondents felt that if the community could focus on the best interests of the community and families they could find ways to effectively share resources to the benefit of all – this is critical to the cohesion and success of a small community like Hay River
- Many noted that the NWT is the only jurisdiction where this continues to be an issue. In other places school boards have processes in place that seem to work
- In the end, this issue is really about distribution of limited funds for education. Each student is seen as a source of much needed funding for critical programs.
- What is needed is an admission approach that truly focusses on the best interests of students and their educational needs
- There is real fear that if the directive does not change École Boréale will close. This would be a significant loss to Hay River and would make it a less attractive community for many families and impact recruitment and retention of residents
- The solution for many was to place control for admissions in the hands of the CSFTNO as is the case in other jurisdictions

Quotes:

"Two issues identified at the candidate's forum for the last Territorial election were employment outlook and retaining an educated workforce. École Boréale employs 18 people directly and more indirectly. If the ministerial directive is not lifted, the school will close within five years. Those jobs will be lost. That's a bleak employment outlook. We need bilingual people in the NWT! Does the North want to keep hiring its bilingual people from Eastern Canada (who usually leave after a year or two) or train its own citizens?"

"It depends on the age of the child. Assessments for older children would be required to help with transitions, and proper integration into the learning environment." Hay River respondent

"Section 26 states it and if you are creating rights holders, that is a ridiculous situation which has occurred across the country with the exception of Quebec. We are not furthering the love of the French language, we are in fact, creating haves and have nots. The language programs in small public schools are in jeopardy and if there is a desire to learn French and the French culture, there are different ways to achieve that. If you allow a parent committee or school board to invite students to attend their school, you can rest assured, the invitation will go to friends or students they know are well supported by their families, have an ability to learn, and will essentially be an asset. It will not be a blanket invitation for the first 5 children to enrol. French First Language schools should be exactly that for rights holders only." Hay River respondent

"I come from a French family and I am very insulted that I have to prove that I am french speaking to have my child attend the French school. I was never very good at speaking French even though my parents spoke to us at home. I lived in a community that English was the main language. I am glad that my daughter was able to learn french because I let her down by not speaking french. That is my shame. I am very proud of Hay River, Ecole Boreale and the Government of the Northwest Territories for having the vision of both official languages available. We just need to let the people in the community choose where they want their children to be educated." Hay River respondent

"I feel that Hay River is a very small community, which is very different then Yellowknife and other places in Canada. I am not saying that there should be no non right holders admitted, but rather saying that the department needs to look at certain students on a case by case bases, or let the school boards work on this together. I of course feel that there are cases that warrant the eligibility to be enrolled in Ecole Boreale, but I would hate to see it opened up too much and end up back where we were before the directive; parents against parents, kids against kids, schools against schools. Its a terrible feeling that EVERYONE feels in a small community." Hay River respondent

"I think we need to consider why we are choosing to accept people from a certain number of generations back based on the availability of Francophone education at that time and in that geographical region of Canada. For example, my child's Great Great Grandfather was from France. He was also regularly ridiculed for his French language in Western Canada and as a result did not encourage his children speak French." Hay River respondent

"Hay River only has so many French rights holders. Most of them come to work at the school, or come because of the school, or were made rights holders when the rules were lax and their older kids got in. If gnwt is going to stick with a strictly right holder entry, Ecole Boreale will die. There are just not enough pure French people to keep it running. Everyone's graduating and there are no new kids allowed in to replace them. If the French school dies, there go all our French people with it. Why stick around and pollute their kids with a public English school? They want to preserve their culture, fair enough. So they need their school, and we need them. Our town is too small to lose an entire group of people." Hay River respondent

"Parental support. Clearly communicated expectations that are in writing almost like a contract for a parent to sign. We have had to sign this kind of contract at other schools in the south - that we will sit with our children and oversee their daily homework. That way administration has a leg to stand on if things are not going accordingly. Remove students who are not meeting these expectations. I fully support that." Hay River respondent

"Yes. I think all questions should be reviewed in another context: Would the same questions be asked to an anglophone community? Would the same questions be asked to an Aboriginal community? Does answering the above change the questions, responses or the perception of the questions and responses? Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this process." Hay River respondent

"I believe that the best possible solution is that all the schools in Hay River fall under their own school board. This would allow the use of the resources in the community, and the residents of the community to make the best decisions for our community. Currently the English school is running an intensive French program, if we were all in the same school board we could possibly run that program through the French school allowing the resources to be shared, therefore allowing for money to be spent in other much needed areas, such as classroom aides. If we had one school board, we could share the infrastructure much easier and make the best use of the facilities, would in the long run cost us less money on capital spending and that money could go into programs and staffing, where it is desperately needed. Basically if Hay River had one school board it would be more cost effective but mostly we would do what is best for our community. Having a French First language school in our community is beneficial in so many ways, it benefits the kids, the French language and culture. It also benefits our community as making it an attractive place to live when trying to recruit people to our community. It has given our community a new and very active group of volunteers that are engaged and involved in the community. It gives new immigrants choice, therefore making Hay River a more attractive place to settle in. The GNWT needs to grow the NWT, by allowing enrollment in the French First language program by non right holders it keeps the school viable, keeps people coming to Hay River and keeps the population going up instead of down." Hay River respondent

"I do believe that viability of the school itself is a valid consideration, since it also impacts significantly on French First Language holders if their school has too few students per class to give them a meaningful educational experience. Triple or even quadruple grades together can NOT offer an equivalent educational experience to French First Language holders, despite the fact that they are entitled to an equivalent educational experience as the Supreme Court has repeatedly made clear. This is why admissions policies may have to be flexible and, as in Ontario, vary per community in accordance with the realities of that community. Such flexibility can only be achieved if control over admissions rests with the Commission. After all, school viability is clearly a legitimate consideration in this debate: one of the questions on this survey asked about the impact on the other schools in the community if non-rights holders are admitted, and the survey also asks about the impact on the Francophone schools if rights holders are admitted. Therefore the impact on the Francophone schools if non-rights holders are NOT admitted as per the current ministerial directive should surely be a consideration. The economic impact on the community of Hay River if the admissions policy is not changed should also be a factor. The reality is that a school with only a few children in each year will gradually become unviable in this community. Again, considerations may be different in Yellowknife, which highlights the need for flexibility in admissions policy. Hay River has already lost considerable jobs from NTCL, etc. Losing the full-time teaching jobs at Ecole Boreale would NOT see them replaced at the other school, since the numbers would not be enough to set up a second class for each grade at the other school. Most of these teachers also have spouses and children in Hay River, which is yet additional population we would lose if the school closes. Finally, I also believe that it is essential to consider how any admissions policy will be justified in treating rights holders in different languages differently, given that section 23 applies equally to both languages and to the rights-holders and schools of both languages. This entire debate has always focused on the rights of the Commission scolaire vs. the rights of the government to control admissions, and the possible impacts on the schools. These are all important issues, however, nobody has really discussed the issue of rights of parents to educational choice in this jurisdiction. In Quebec by contrast, there is a history in of non-rights holding parents suing on behalf of their rights to school choice. (Incidentally, these were all Francophone parents who were suing because they did not have the choice of English schools for their children.) The Supreme Court of Canada has determined that the Quebec limitations were justified on the basis of the necessity to preserve French as the minority language in Canada. Therefore, it is clear that the government can restrict parents' rights to school choice if it can be shown that this was the goal. An important factor however is that the Supreme Court of Canada noted in its decisions that, given the Quebec government was Francophone, it could be assured that they had validly determined what was necessary to protect their language. In the NWT, a similar analogy would suggest that the Comission scolaire would be the one who should decide what admissions policy is needed to protect French, as the government here is not Francophone. An additional factor in the NWT, moreover, in that Quebec imposed the same limits to choice on both English and French rights holders. As the current NWT admissions policy does not and it does not appear likely that there is any intention of treating English and French rights holders equally in the NWT (nor desirable, as I certainly would not want to see Francophone parents have their rights to school choice taken away too), this means that any admissions policy must be able to justify what would otherwise be a violation of parents' equality rights under section 15 of the Charter. There can certainly be valid policy reasons for treating the rights-holders differently, but as per section 1 of the Charter, any violation of Charter equality rights must be justified on the basis of clearly stated and societally important goals. Therefore, any admissions policy must ensure that it can be justified on such a basis. It would seem to me fairly evident that in order to demonstrate that the goal of preserving French is the justification for what would otherwise be a Charter violation, the admissions policy being used to achieve this goal should be one that is determined by Francophones - the Comission scolaire for example - rather than the GNWT." Hay River respondent

"The bottom-line is that the government needs to give control back to the French School Board. This all came about because of needing a school gym and a high school. The French school is an integral part of our community...we lose this school, then we lose a whole lot more families in our town. Not only are the teachers teaching our children, they are also coaching our children in many sports including hockey, soccer, etc. You may try to compare the YK and HR French schools, but there is no comparison. YK has five times the population of Hay River, therefore, more francophone families to draw from. You may want to consider the reasons that parents many years ago pushed for a French School and that was because of the narrow-mindedness of the DEA not wanting a French Immersion program. Well, now what has come into effect over the last couple years, intensive French in PA School. This is because so many families have now seen the value and benefit of children learning French. Our school is not only about just learning French, it is also about being immersed in the culture. The government really contradicts itself. Part of ECE Mandate: Strengthen culture and heritage in the NWT by implementing a renewed Aboriginal Language and Culture-based Education Directive in order to strengthen the role of schools in supporting Aboriginal language development and incorporate culture in programming, work with the Government of Canada towards a strengthened multi-year Canada-Northwest Territories Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages, develop an action plan for the Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework, and work with stakeholders to update the 2010 NWT Aboriginal Languages Plan: A Shared Responsibility So now the government wants to take away the right of parents to put their children in a French School even though the mandate states otherwise. The government is really doing a dis-service to themselves as well as Hay River if they continue on this ridiculous route of control out of fear." Hay River respondent

"An admissions policy that puts the best interests of children first. Students who will enrich the French schools -- and will benefit from being in the schools -- should be welcomed into the schools. That means the Commission should screen the child/family for linguistic and cultural capacity and interest in integrating well. An admissions policy that makes the NWT a welcome environment for people who want French education for their children." Yellowknife respondent