



**YELLOWKNIFE EDUCATION DISTRICT NO. 1
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MINUTES**

September 9, 2025 – 6:00 PM
In-person and online via Google Meet
(in camera 6:30 - 7:00 PM)

Trustees Present: Allan Shortt, Barbara Bell, David Wasylciw, Jason Snaggs,
Michelle Peters, Terry Brookes (online) and Tina Drew

Regrets: none

Administration Present: Shirley Zouboules, Lisa Vass, Graham Arts,
Jordan Martin, Annie Lagomasino, and Pat Thagard

Regrets: Landon Kowalzik

Guests present: Peter Curran, Tomiko Robson

Meeting Chairperson: Barbara Bell

Meeting Minutes by: Pat Thagard

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM. Seven (7) Trustees were present.
Quorum was met.

Motion #: 01/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees move to in camera.

Moved by: Trustee Drew Seconded by: Trustee Shortt **Carried**

Motion #: 02/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees move out of in camera at 6:52 PM, when Trustee Snaggs joined the meeting.

Moved by: Trustee Shortt Seconded by: Trustee Drew **Carried**

Motion #: 03/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees move to in camera.

Moved by: Trustee Shortt Seconded by: Trustee Drew **Carried**

Motion #: 04/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees move out of in camera at 7:02 PM.

Moved by: Trustee Shortt Seconded by: Trustee Drew **Carried**

Board meeting called back to order at 7:05 PM

2. Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we live, work, and learn on Chief Drygeese Territory in the Akaitcho region, the traditional territory of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

3. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

Chairperson Bell welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the two guests present.

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

5. Adoption of Agenda

Motion #: 05/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees adopt the September 9, 2025, Regular Board Meeting agenda, as amended.

Moved by: Trustee Peters Seconded by: Trustee Wasylciw **Carried**

(Friendly amendments: addition of items in 11.3 Education Committee and 11.4 CSBA)

6. Delegations & Presentations - Peter Curran, SJF - Music Programs Across YK1

Peter Curran noted that he has seen the benefits of the inclusion of Arts programming in public education over the years. His observations have given him a broader perspective of music within the district. He talked about the positive effects of the music competition students attended in the spring. He provided some context and then went through his presentation.

He spoke about Susan Shantora and her contribution to music in YK and at SJF. Her dedication is immeasurable. He has spoken to school admin, staff and parents about the YK1 music program. The music program is currently in a precarious position. Arts credits are no longer required for graduation. Funding programs, instrument repair, breaking barriers, and the need for collaboration were some of the items noted.

He went through his hopes for the future of the Arts in YK1. He really believes creating a District-wide Arts Coordinator position would benefit YK1 students. The position would champion the arts and related programs. He reviewed an initial list of items that a person in this position could assist with.

Trustee questions:

What does music at SJF look like?

Mr. Curran noted that this year, for the first time the SJF band is made up of students across grade levels. This results in the combination of a wide range of abilities, which can be challenging for the students and staff. He also spoke about receiving some funding to have choir after school because there is no choral class this year.

What are the issues with having a choral class?

Mr. Curran indicated this is because the music position has been reduced to a 0.5/day position. He also noted that over the years it has shifted, sometimes

going up sometimes down. The SJF music teacher has advocate and work hard to provide music programming.

Trustees noted:

- The arts program at NJM had a positive effect on the school.
- The effect of Fiddles & Sticks closing will have a domino effect on music in YK.
- YK1 needs to encourage and establish the arts in all of our schools. It behooves the Board to explore what a good arts program looks like and what it would take to provide those programs to all levels.
- It was suggested that the Board consider working to implement something district-wide that isn't done off the side of someone's desk.
- Research could be done to outline what a good program would look like and what it would take to implement it.
- Parent concerns voiced at SJF PAC was the lack of music at lower grades.

Chairperson Bell thanked Mr. Curran for his presentation. Mr. Curran and Ms. Robson left the meeting.

Action: Trustees requested a summary of music available throughout the district for the October Board meeting. Review and Approval of Minutes

7. Review and Approval of Minutes

7.1. August 19, 2025 - Organizational Meeting

Motion #: 06/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees approve the August 19, 2025, Organizational Meeting Minutes, as presented.

Moved by: Trustee Drew Seconded by: Trustee Shortt **Carried**

7.2. August 19, 2025 - Regular Board Meeting

Motion #: 07/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees approve the August 19, 2025, Regular Board Meeting Minutes, as presented.

Moved by: Trustee Snaggs Seconded by: Trustee Drew **Carried**

8. Business Arising from the Minutes

Motion #: 08/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees add 8.1 Action items to the agenda.

Moved by: Trustee Drew Seconded by: Trustee Snaggs **Carried**

8.1. Business Arising

None

8.2. Action Items

Motion #: 09/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees approve the updated action item list as discussed.

Moved by: Trustee Drew Seconded by: Trustee Shortt

Carried

9. Trustee Statements

Per By-Laws: Trustee Statements are individual opinions and are not intended to represent the views of the Board. Trustee statements are not debatable and there will be no opportunity for rebuttal or questions.

9.1 David Wasylciw - Statement on Elected School Board Trustees, attached

10. Unfinished Business

10.1. None

11. New Business

11.1. École William McDonald Middle School Mid-Life Retrofit

The cover page for this item was shared via email and will be included in the file version of the agenda package.

Motion #: 10/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board Chairperson write a letter on behalf of the Board, before Trustees meet with Yellowknife MLAs later this month, to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, highlighting the urgent need for the long delayed mid-life retrofit renovation at École William McDonald Middle School to be added to the next capital budget without any further delays, and that the mid-life retrofit specifically include the replacement of any water pipes causing lead to enter the drinking water, and request that the Minister provide the Board with regular updates regarding the mid-life retrofit's status within the capital budget.

Moved by: Trustee Wasylciw

Seconded by: Trustee Drew

Carried

Trustees noted WMS is 43 years old and long overdue for retrofit. It was also noted that the Board put NJM on the capital plan for a new school. NJM was online for a planning study to build a new school, however, trustees are not sure this was done. Administration indicated there is a capital planning document for all schools. Trustees suggested another letter be drafted to address the need for a planning study for NJM, and that plans should include a phased renovation to accommodate students or a plan to accommodate students during a rebuild.

11.2. Planning Meeting with Yellowknife MLAs

Trustees suggested highlighting the deficit between what YK1 is funded and what the actual expenses are for education staff and bussing. The topic of funding has been added as an agenda item for the September 25th MLA meeting.

Lack of availability of health related services (e.g. speech language) in schools and Jordan's Principle funding were also suggested.

Trustees will take on the presentation of different topics.

Administration has begun drafting an agenda. Trustees suggested

having successes/challenges first, followed by priorities.

Motion #: 11/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees approve the list of three topics, as discussed for the MLA meeting agenda.

Moved by: Trustee Drew

Seconded by: Trustee Snaggs

Carried

11.3. Education Committee

This topic was discussed during the COW meeting yesterday.

The Board would like flexibility in the education meetings program and promoting them to the public. Trustees suggested they would like to see that presenters brought up for staff professional development (PD) are also made available for public presentations.

There were no questions.

Trustee Brookes gave a notice of motion for the October Board meeting regarding budget related items discussed during the COW.

11.4. CSBA

The cover page for this item was shared via email and will be included in the agenda package file. Recommendations are included at the end of the document. It was noted that it is beneficial for the NWT to attend to provide a northern, smaller jurisdiction perspective.

It was suggested to include something about attending CSBA within the YK1 Board policies.

It was suggested that attending CSBA needs to be brought up at the NWT level to ensure there is representation across the NWT. It was noted that there are capacity challenges on NWT Boards. It was suggested that getting support from the NWT Superintendents Association would also be helpful to Superintendents. It was noted that the Superintendents Association needs to formalize things that are already being done.

Trustees also noted there are other items that this kind of organization could advocate for.

Motion #: 12/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees approve the YK1 Board subscription to CSBA, including having a representative, appointed by the Board Chairperson, attend CSBA meetings.

Moved by: Trustee Snaggs

Seconded by: Trustee Drew

Carried

12. Reports

12.1. Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Bell's report is included in the agenda package.

It was noted that a letter in response to the request for suggested changes to the *Academic Year and School Attendance Regulations* needs to be approved by the Board by the end of September.

- 12.1.1 Trustee Reports - none
- 12.2. Standing Committee Reports
 - 12.2.1. Finance & Facilities Committee

No report is included in the agenda package. The Committee has not met yet this year.
 - 12.2.2. Policy & Governance Committee

No report is included in the agenda package. The Committee has not met yet this year.
 - 12.2.3. Public Engagement & Advocacy Committee

No report is included in the agenda package. The Committee has not met yet this year.
 - 12.2.4. Audit Committee

No report is included in the agenda package. The Committee has not met yet this year.
 - 12.2.5. Committee of the Whole (COW)

The COW agenda and June Meeting Minutes are included in the agenda package.

There were no questions.
 - 12.2.6. NWTTA Teacher-Board Committee

There has not been a meeting yet this year. There were no questions.
 - 12.2.7. USW-Board Advisory Committee

There has not been a meeting yet this year. There were no questions.
- 12.3. Ad Hoc Committee Reports
 - 12.3.1. Negotiations Committee

Negotiations with the NWTTA are ongoing. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for October 15 to 17, 2025.
- 12.4. Superintendents Report

The report is included in the agenda package. It was noted that the funding submission for the Interim Support Assistants Initiative was submitted yesterday.

Trustee questions:

Trustees asked if YK1 has applied for the new Interim Support Assistants Initiative funding. Administration responded yes an application has been submitted.

Trustees asked if there is any information available from the Jo Chrona staff PD presentation. Administration has a book that trustees can

borrow, and indicated Jo Chrona has good information on her website as well.

Action: *Trustees asked for average class size information to be provided at the October Board Meeting.*

Trustees asked if there is still an issue with getting Public Health into schools. Administration indicated Public Health does not have the capacity to visit schools.

12.4.1. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Learning Report

The report is included in the agenda package.

Trustee questions:

Trustees noted that the successful presentation by Jo Chrona was a highlight.

Trustees asked how the first day of school went. Administration indicated the schools had a great start.

12.4.2. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources & Learning Report

The report is included in the agenda package.

Trustee questions:

Trustees asked what the difference is between the 2 enrollment reports provided. Administration indicated one represents the students enrolled and the other the actual attendance. Trustees look forward to receiving enrolment numbers in October.

12.4.3. Secretary Treasurer Report

The report was sent via email and will be included in the file version of the agenda package. The Secretary Treasurer went over her report.

Some highlights include: the audit is being finalized; new staff have started and are doing great; Meetings have been held with Arctic Response to set up required Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Committees in each school asap. Administration to discuss compensation that may be available for after-hours work that will be required.

Trustee questions:

Trustees asked if YK1 OHS includes staff in Dettah & Ndilo. Administration responded yes it does, since they are YK1 staff. Administration also noted that site visits are OHS for staff. If issues are found with facilities, the respective Board will have to take corrective action.

12.4.3.1. Director of Operations Report

The report was sent via email and will be added to the file and the online version of the agenda package.

Trustees requested more information about the inspections referenced in the report. Administration clarified that they are code-mandated inspections.

Trustees asked if there a solution in place for the security gate at École It̓'ò. Administration indicated it is still being worked on.

12.5. Trustee Reports

12.5.1. No Trustee Reports submitted.

No questions.

13. Announcements - events calendar attached

Trustees asked if all PAC Chairs know that trustees will not be attending PAC meetings in the future. Trustees were supposed to make the PAC aware at the last meeting they attended. Administration will send a notification to school Principals.

Last year the SJF PAC he was asked if they could still get Board Highlights.

Motion #: 13/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees extend the meeting past 10:00 PM to finish the meeting..

Moved by: Trustee Wasylciw

Seconded by: Trustee Peters

Carried

Administration indicated that the first PAC Chair meeting has been scheduled for October 23, 2025.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

September 26, 2025

Board Meeting

October 14, 2025 12:10 PM

Committee of the Whole Meeting

October 14, 2025 6:30 PM

Executive Session (In camera)

October 14, 2025 7:00 PM

Regular Board Meeting

15. Chairperson's Closing Remarks

Chairperson Bell thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There will be a Board meeting on September 26 at 12:10 PM.

Motion #: 14/09-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees move into in camera.

Moved by: Trustee Drew

Seconded by: Trustee Wasylciw

Defeated

16. Adjournment

Motion #: 15-09/25-26

I move that the Yellowknife Education District No. 1 Board of Trustees adjourn the September 9, 2025, Regular Board Meeting.

Moved by: Trustee Snaggs

Seconded by: Trustee Shortt

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 PM

Trustee Statement on Elected School Board Trustees

David Wasylciw

September 9, 2025

I want to speak today about something that's been happening across Canada that should concern all of us - the attack on elected school boards and the democratic voice they represent in our education system.

Right now in Ontario, their Education Minister is openly considering eliminating elected trustees altogether. Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Quebec have already done it. Prince Edward Island recently reversed an earlier decision to remove Trustees. However, since summer Ontario has taken over five school boards by appointing Supervisors setting aside the communities' locally elected representatives.

This isn't just about education policy - it's about democracy itself.

For over 200 years, Canadian communities have elected school board trustees. This tradition goes back to the early 1800s in Nova Scotia Ontario – long before Canada even existed as a country. Here in Yellowknife, YK1 was founded in 1939, long before we had a city municipal and a Government of the Northwest Territories. In fact, the first school board election was the first democratic act in Yellowknife. Our community understood something important - the people closest to students and families are best positioned to make decisions about their education.

Think about that. Back then, Yellowknife was small, remote community without the many layers of bureaucracy we see now. When it came time to establish a school for their children, the population of Yellowknife organized themselves and did it. They held meetings at Vic Ingraham's hotel, they raised funds, they elected trustees, and they built a school system knowing it's value.

If you looked at the excellent 85th Anniversary Historical Walk that was on the fences outside the old school building this spring, it relayed this origin story. On another, it highlighted an important reminder of the value of schools in the community. It turns out that until the construction of the Yellowknife Public School in 1947, our school didn't have running water. With this new school, it meant that students could use running water for the washroom and even shower since running water wasn't often available at home. To me, this especially highlighted that schools have always been more than just a place of learning, but a place that communities come together.

As an elected trustee here in Yellowknife, it's easy to see this value. We know our community's needs, our challenges, our priorities. We understand what it means to deliver education in the North, with our unique diversity and perspectives.

When trustees are elected, we're accountable to students, parents, families, guardians, and taxpayers in our community. When governments take away local democratic voice what remains lacks that community accountability.

In a recent interview, Education researcher Joel Westheimer put it perfectly - this is about "centralizing authority in order to sideline communities, parents and students." When governments say they're doing this for financial reasons or better management, they're really saying they don't trust local communities to govern themselves. Each time that the GNWT takes over another piece of decision making this is what's happening here.

Think about what's at risk. School boards are one of the most accessible forms of democratic participation we have. They're where citizens learn to engage in governance, where community voices get heard, where local priorities get translated into action. When elected trustees are eliminated, we don't just lose educational oversight - we lose a crucial piece of our democratic

infrastructure.

While the role of elected trustees has changed with the establishment of the GNWT and the Department of Education and the hiring of senior staff to help run our organization, there is still a vital role. What remains - that local voice, that community accountability, that democratic connection - is precious and worth defending.

What's happening elsewhere in Canada isn't necessarily an inevitable change here, but we do need to be aware and should serve as a reminder to focus on the aspects of the job that only we can do - like community voice. It's easy to forget this in the day-to-day business of any board, but if we don't continually examine ourselves and what we're doing we could end up like the provinces that have lost their representation.

There is lots to be learned from what's happening elsewhere. Namely, that to maintain our role, we need to do more than just continue with the status quo. We have the advantage that community voices bring and make a difference. We have to challenge ourselves to find ways to engage and make sure that our community's voice is heard in our decisions.

Governance reform is a real and important issue, even in the NWT, and as the Education Act Modernization moves forward, one of the big topics is going to be education governance and what the intersection of boards, the GNWT and Indigenous Governments looks like. While this is a long process that's just getting started, it will shape the future decades of education in the NWT. Like everywhere, there are times when reforms and modernization are needed. Our role today is a delicate balance, acting as a corporate board is very different from grassroots representation. This is part of the struggle everywhere, finding that balance.

We need to make sure we are maximizing our potential, that we are not just doing what we do because we have always done it. We need to make sure we are asking questions and providing oversight that our community wants and needs. We need to make sure we are doing more than just talking to our community but listening to them and bringing their voices forward.

It's only by doing that and demonstrating the value of local democracy that the role of Trustee will carry-on. We need to do this before we lose the opportunity forever.

Thank you.

Chairperson Bell

Secretary Treasurer Vass