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Press release

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The AEFNB urges the Government to grant the equality budget envelope to Acadian and Francophone communities in the province

(AEFNB News Service–Fredericton) – At a Press Conference held as part of its 45th Annual General Meeting, the *Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick* (AEFNB) announced, to a room filled with its members, partners, and stakeholders in education, that it intended to undertake legal action to require the Government of New Brunswick to allocate the funds contained in the equality envelope to the Francophone school system.

“For several years, the Government has had in its hands the report of a panel of experts (Collette, Cormier and Rousselle, 2010) on the funding of French-language schools. In the report, the historical and systematic gaps between our school system and that of the majority are outlined very clearly. On top of that, economist Pierre-Marcel Desjardins calculated the investment required to close the gap. The figures are published in his 2012 report, which states that “this report is not the end point, but rather a step in the ongoing process begun with the LeBlanc Commission” (p. 3, translation). We have tried many times to work in cooperation with the Government to encourage it to implement the funding program, but we haven't been successful. To us, it seems obvious that the Government has no intention of fulfilling its constitutional obligations. We believe it is essential that we take the necessary measures right now to defend our rights and to put an end to the irreparable harm our community continues to experience”, explained Philippe Cyr, President of the AEFNB.

It was only after making countless unsuccessful attempts to reach a settlement with the Government that the AEFNB's Board of Directors decided to hire Mr. Ronald F. Caza, a lawyer with the Caza Saikaley firm, to take the legal recourse necessary to obtain the envelope, which amounts to \$11.5 million in annual funding.

"The really unique thing about this situation is that the documents we are filing were not prepared by lawyers, but rather by experts in the field. The papers include the report by the panel of experts, which was co-signed by the current Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Evidence has existed and been available for many years, and cannot be denied by the Government. The Government's decision to make cuts across the board can't justify its decision to avoid complying with something that is a legal responsibility: providing an education of equal quality to the Francophone minority of the province. Minister Rousselle, who is an expert in constitutional law, is very familiar with the constitutional obligation that his Government is refusing to respect", added Mr. Caza.

"If the Government does not want to assume its leadership role, we must turn to the court, which has a responsibility to protect minority rights. It's really too bad that we have to take legal measures to have our rights respected. We're really disappointed to see that the Gallant government doesn't seem to have much of an interest in fulfilling its constitutional obligations", continued the AEFNB president, Philippe Cyr.

In proceeding with legal action, the AEFNB has the unconditional support of a multitude of Acadian and Francophone organizations working in the province. As a result, AEFNB is a united front which is highly motivated and committed as it enters this battle which should lead to equitable funding of the Francophone school system.

The mission of the AEFNB is to foster advances in French-language education, to represent the interests of the teaching profession, and to promote the French language and Francophone culture. It represents approximately 3,000 teachers working in public schools from kindergarten to grade 12, including supply teachers.

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