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PRESS RELEASE

FNEC CHALLENGES PRENTICE TO SOLVE LONG-TERM ISSUES IN FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

Ottawa, May 28, 2007 – The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is today embarking on a huge communications and public relations campaign designed to make the public aware of the realities of funding for First Nations schools and influence the federal government. Today, the FNEC along with a number of Quebec First Nations Chiefs, are urging the federal government to take another look at funding for First Nations schools, which are at a severe disadvantage when compared to the other schools in the province. “Our schools are attempting to survive with an outdated funding formula that has hardly changed in the last twenty years. This situation is unacceptable and intolerable.” stated the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, Ghislain Picard, at a press conference held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

On the eve of the appearance of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Jim Prentice, before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Quebec First Nations have been expressing their major concerns on funding and reiterating that it does not correspond to real



costs or reflect First Nations needs. “How can we possibly fight against the high dropout rate when we have nothing for sports programs, nothing for vocational training and nothing to buy books with?” continued Chief Picard.

Lise Bastien, Director of the First Nations Education Council, recalled that numerous studies confirm that the funding formula used by the federal government since 1988 is outdated and fails to meet current needs in education. “For years, the government has been telling us that they are revising these programs. This answer is unsatisfactory. Time has come to take action in order to offer essential services in First Nations schools as of September 2007,” she stated.

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The First Nations funding formula was drawn up in 1988. Some of the costs it ignores are:

- Costs connected with the integration of technology in schools.
- Costs connected with running libraries in schools.
- Costs connected to vocational training.
- Costs connected to extracurricular sports and recreation.
- Costs connected to following provincial reforms, which have considerable impact on the curriculum, teaching hours and support measures such as homework assistance, etc.

In addition, funding of First Nations schools has not been indexed since 1996.

Lastly, unlike all the provinces have done, the federal government has never invested to equip First Nations with modern management systems. "Its refusal to provide First Nations with the resources to access quality education means that the Government of Canada is deliberately closing the door on their future," concluded Ghislain Picard.

Should you wish to receive further information, we invite you to visit our Web site, at www.avenir-future.com.

The FNEC is a non-profit organization, which defends First Nations interests in the field of education.

