



News Release

Arson Ruled Out in Joamie School Fire

IQALUIT, Nunavut, May 5, 2004 – A fire investigation report released today by the Nunavut Fire Marshal has ruled out arson as the cause of the Joamie School fire in Iqaluit.

“The report says the most plausible cause of the fire was a damaged, malfunctioning or over-insulated electrical heat trace system, says Fire Marshal Gerald Pickett.

The heat trace system was installed in a plywood utilidor that did not have a fire protection or detection system. Neither was required by the building code, the report says.

Heat trace systems are common in cold climates and do not in of themselves present a fire risk. However, they need to be properly installed and of the proper type.

Investigators were able to quickly rule out arson after confirming the security screen surrounding the bottom of the school had not been breached and that there were no openings. There was also no indication of forcible entry through the school’s windows or doors.

The July 4, 2003 fire destroyed the school. A replacement is being built.

Heat trace systems will not be part of the new school.

“I am confident that our schools are safe,” says Community and Government Services Minister Peter Kilabuk.

All schools and other government buildings were thoroughly inspected after the Joamie fire. The inspections were in addition to those done annually during which fire alarms, sprinklers and fire extinguisher system are checked.

-30-

Contact:

Gerald Pickett
Fire Marshall of Nunavut
(867) 975-5310