

Local News

Settlement Reached: Government to Purchase 32 Schools from RC Church

Apr 19, 2023 | 11:20 AM



A settlement has been reached that will see 32 public schools on the Avalon and Burin peninsulas continue to operate as usual.

There was no guarantee that would be the case until the past couple of weeks as bankruptcy proceedings involving the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's continued.

The Church has been selling off properties to settle sex abuse claims, and the schools, which they still own, could've been sold off too, if government hadn't stepped in to formally acquire them for an estimated \$13 million.

School board lawyer Rob Zdebiak confirmed the schools are now safe for the foreseeable future.

"We're glad it's all resolved and the schools will continue as they've always been," he said. "I think everyone was confident that at the end of the day it would work out for all the students and citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador."

Lawyer Geoff Budden, who represents many of the victims of abuse waiting to receive compensation, acknowledged \$13 million might seem low for 32 individual properties.

But he says there are a few reasons for that.

"We have property here that the Church purchased in pounds, pound sterling, back in the 1860s," Budden told reporters following court proceedings this morning.

"So, the government had a duty to be mindful of the public purse, and we had a duty, as did the episcopal corporation, and the court monitor, to maximum the funds available.

"So that's the number that we arrived at and it's a number that I feel is a reasonable compromise."

Education Minister John Haggie, meanwhile, calls it a significant step which protects education infrastructure and removes any uncertainty.