

Wentworth School Sustainability Association



April 27, 2014

Jamie Baillie
MLA Cumberland South and
Leader of Nova Scotia's Official Opposition

Regarding: Legislative Amendments to School Review Process

Dear Mr. Baillie:

The Wentworth School Sustainability Association is supportive of the proposed legislative amendments to the school review process. We are encouraged by the recommendations made by the Fowler Committee and by Minister Casey's acceptance of those recommendations. Government is to be commended for this effort in recognizing the flaws and correcting the inherent unfairness that most communities experienced with the current school review process.

However, we are most discouraged by these amendments if they do not set aside the unjust school closure decisions made in 2013. Setting aside the closure decisions would enable affected schools and communities to be reconsidered under the new improved review process.

As you know, our Wentworth Consolidated Elementary School was subjected to the current school review process last year resulting in an uncertain and questionable closure decision by the Chignecto Central Regional School Board to take effect in June 2015. The previous Minister, Ramona Jennex, and our association, have both requested CCRSB to set aside this decision in anticipation of a less adversarial and more just review process. Not only has the Board refused to do so, they have also failed to recognize the government's admission that the current review process is flawed and unfair.

We believe the most just and effective approach is to have the proposed amendments include provisions to set aside school closure decisions made under the current review process, but not yet implemented. Obviously, schools which have already been closed cannot be reopened, but schools whose closures are pending should be given consideration using the new review process. For government to recognize that the review process was seriously flawed and to ignore these yet-to-be implemented decisions would seem most hypocritical.

The decision made by CCRSB to close our school, which was later modified and made pending to June 2015, was based on information which we believe to be questionable. For instance, we do not believe that the elementary students from Wentworth catchment area can be bussed to the proposed new schools meeting the student transportation guidelines currently held by the Board. The Board has not provided evidence that, using the number of buses now in place, this can be accomplished. It is our belief and concern that several of our elementary students would spend up to three hours each day on long bus rides – this is not acceptable to our community and should not be acceptable to government.

We support and encourage your efforts to bring forward an amendment that would set aside such closure decisions and enable our community and others to participate in a fair school review process. To date, we do not feel that we have been afforded the benefit of an effective, inclusive and open review.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our community and the future of our elementary school.

Sincerely,

Wentworth School Sustainability Association

Andrea Rushton, Secretary
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