



**Nova Scotia
School Boards Association
Association des conseils
scolaires de la Nouvelle-Écosse**

395 - 3 Spectacle Lake Drive / 3, rue Spectacle Lake, Unité 395
Dartmouth, NS B3B 1W8 / Dartmouth, N.-É. B3B 1W8
Telephone / Téléphone: (902) 491-2888
Fax / Télécopieur: (902) 429-7405
www.nssba.ca

Report to CSBA

Funding

The provincial government remains committed to the BACK TO BALANCE initiative with the objective of reaching a balanced budget by the fiscal year 2013/2014.

To accomplish that target means programs such as public education must accept a portion of the burden, which for 2011/2012 resulted in a reduction of 4% when combined with the requirement to absorb inflationary increases. The provincial message to support the funding reduction was to share a graph which shows that student population is declining and the expenditure line is increasing. While this is a fact, there was no effort to clarify for the general public the reality that the diversity in classrooms today demands additional specialized resources. The approach by the government was effective as most people in the province recognize that the province is in dire financial straits.

The Department of Education decided to also provide specific direction to boards to reduce the number of consultants in each board, which means there has been a drastic reduction in program specialists for math, science, mentors, curriculum support workers, etc. This action was popular with the general public as the positions were perceived to be part of board administration, so this action was cutting the fat to save the classroom. The provincial plan announced with the funding for this fiscal year also implied there would be more funding reductions in the next 2 years. Our member boards and the association have identified funding as the number one issue for the next two years as the provincial government actions represent an EROSION OF THE NOVA SCOTIA PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.

The education partners met and decided to collaborate with a request to the premier to be given an opportunity to address the government caucus relative to the impacts of funding cuts. Most importantly to make it clear the next round of cuts will go much deeper and impact the classroom.

The communication has been sent with an explanation that we also intend to meet with the opposition caucuses, however, we thought it best to meet with the government caucus first. We can only hope that common sense and concern for the future will effect a change in their present course.

Visioning Committee

As reported earlier, we had formed a committee to define the education requirements for the 21st century in partnership with the Department of Education.

The committee represents all of the education partners, and we retained Penny Milton to facilitate /advise the process .The process was moving forward for a number of months until the DOE decided to retain Dr. Ben Levin to conduct a review of the school system to identify areas where the province should focus attention to make improvements and also, we believe, to identify opportunities for cost savings. The association and boards welcomed the decision and looked forward to the recommendations.

However, at this point, the DOE started to make noises about having the Vision committee provide an evaluation of the report's findings and consider a public consultation of the subject before setting priorities for the next three years .The committee members were concerned about the Levin report findings overpowering the original intent of conducting a public consultation to define the educational requirements for the 21st century. The majority of the committee membership defined the Levin report as a means for a short term plan while the key focus of the group was to develop a vision for the public education system for the next 20 years and beyond. At this point we had expected that the DOE was to provide funding for the process as originally discussed and agreed in concept .The DOE has since taken the position that the process from their perspective is on hold until the centre of government gives direction. In the meantime, we have consulted with our member boards and education partners, and have decided to move forward under the auspices of NSSBA should the province decide to backtrack from the original purpose. We are meeting on October 17 with the premier and minister to hear their position on the issue.

The Levin Report

The Levin Report has been completed which highlights five key areas of focus that would support public education in Nova Scotia being:

1. Reducing failure throughout the Nova Scotia education system
2. Improving daily teaching, learning, and assessment practices
3. Allowing more things to 'count' as learning for the purposes of earning school credentials.
4. Building public support and engagement
5. Making better use of existing facilities and resources

The government has advised that their response to the report will be shared with the public in the fall. NSSBA, along with individual boards, took the opportunity to provide feedback to the reports' recommendations.

Cyber Bullying Task Force

The task force has been formed and given terms of reference. It is a collaborative approach involving government departments, community partners, parent and student representatives and others. The task force will be two-tiered. One tier, a larger working group, will gather and process information related to education, assessment, intervention and policy. The second tier will consist of a smaller advisory group who will use the information gathered to consider recommendations. The chair of the group is a prominent lawyer and professor in Nova Scotia

who is well respected. The NSSBA is represented on the task force by our 2nd Vice President - Jamie Stevens .The task force is to table their report by year's end.

Communications Director

Akiko Lovett has been appointed to this position and will join the organization on October 17.

Given the challenges we are facing with the province, we will need her expertise to attain our mission of creating greater understanding and awareness of the public education system.

Other Information

The CACE conference was held in Halifax on the first weekend in October. Also, we have participated with our colleagues in Newfoundland /Labrador in the planning of the Atlantic Conference scheduled for Gander on November 17-19. .