



November 6, 2019

490 Woodward Avenue  
Saint John, New Brunswick  
E2K 5N3

Hon. Dominic Cardy  
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development,  
Deputy Minister J. McLaughlin, Assistant Deputy Ministers C. Treadwell and R. Penney  
Department of Education  
P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Dear Minister Cardy, Deputy Minister McLaughlin, Assistant Deputy Ministers Treadwell and Penney:

On Wednesday, October 30, 2019, an ad-hoc committee of ASD-S District Education Council members met to discuss this specific section of the Green Paper:

“Government will explore the best ways to structure the offices and organizations that support principals, teachers, students and parents. This will include a review of the mandate and structure of the department, school districts and DEC’s.”

The District Education Council, by its very definition, is a group of locally elected members responsible for implementing provincial education policy and for establishing the direction and priorities of a school district. Local governance was at the heart of our discussion - all members fully support the following statements:

- We fully support and see the value of an elected body as part of the structure of education governance.
- Non-partisan representation of stakeholders is an integral part of the success of education.
- PSSC committees are a valuable part of the school community and governance structure
- DEC members liaising with PSSC committees of their district are a valuable link with stakeholders.
- The ability to bring a local perspective to the infrastructure planning process (409) enabled true citizen engagement by including parents, PSSCs and community support groups.
- DEC engagement resulted in Ends policies leading the emphasis on global competencies and an excellent District Education Plan which supports Everyone at their Best at the school level with School Improvement Plans.

We also recognize there are several areas that require modernization and updates:

- The primary area for updates is the Policy Governance Model the DEC’s operate under. The Carver Model, circa 1970, significantly limits the effectiveness of the DEC’s, it does not connect the Department, District and DEC and restricts the DEC from having an opportunity to impact change.
- The profile of the DEC is weak; schools, parents and communities and many in EECD cannot define it or even know what it is.
- The DEC is unable to hear concerns regarding any operational matters; this places limits in a number of areas including the lack of a forum for stakeholders to bring forth concerns regarding decisions by the Superintendent.

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- The lack of consultation on EECD policy development. DEC members can bring a local lens to the process policies and provide input on how policies may affect the stakeholders in their school district.
- Communications, cooperation and collaboration between the DEC's, EECD and the Minister's office have room for improvement. In the current term, the DEC as a whole has had no interaction with the Department, Deputy Minister, ADM or the various Ministers of Education.

We would also put forward the following recommendations for consideration:

- Implement a collaborative governance model.
- Ensure supports are in place to enable DEC's to make well-informed decisions. This could take many forms and may include policy support, procedure support, or easy access to legal advice.
- Initiate professional development to prepare new council members to be better trained to manage agenda items.
- Implement the ability to have the Superintendent's decisions discussed at public meetings. This would require boundaries and could ensure stakeholders understand that decisions are well thought out and appropriate.
- Ensure open and transparent governance by debating issues in public session.
- Consider technology is in place to enable greater public access to public meetings. (i.e. recordings or live streaming technologies).
- The tone of collaboration needs to start at the Minister; collaboration amongst all levels of governance will increase the value at all levels.
- Increase opportunities for DEC members to be able to go out and actively engage/participate in education. This may help stakeholders recognize the role and responsibilities of the DEC representative, not only at school sustainability meetings.
- Assign a dedicated EECD staff to support Council members, not from a governance perspective alone, but to offer support as issues arise where assistance can help direct a problem/challenge/dilemma.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide some feedback for your consideration. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and would welcome the opportunity to be involved in collaborating on how best to move local governance forward so all stakeholders in the NB education system win.

Yours in collaboration in education,

District Education Council Members

/cmm