

BMS BES Sustainability Study
Public Meeting #2
April 9th, 2015

Mr. McTimoney, Mr. Noel, members of the Anglophone West School District (ASD-W) District Education Council (DEC), Ladies and Gentlemen and fellow Monquarters,

My name is Terri Kinney and I am speaking on behalf of the Bath Lions Club.

The members of the Bath Lions Club acknowledge the fiscal restraints and financial responsibilities currently being implemented by the Gallant government in the province of New Brunswick. We also understand the mandate of the Anglophone West School District (ASD-W) District Educational Council (DEC) to investigate a schools sustainability and its possible closure, under the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (EECD) Policy 409, Multi-Year School Infrastructure Planning policy. What we would like you to consider is the "impact on the local community" (item 6.4.4 Policy 409) which includes the Village of Bath and surrounding areas, should you decide to close either Bath Elementary School (BES) or Bath Middle School (BMS).

Lions International is a global community of 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs in over 207 countries. The Bath Lions Club is one of these clubs who share a common belief, "community is what we make it". Schools are the heart of every community who has one, especially in rural areas. When a school is lost without being replaced by a new or updated school, the community soon deteriorates with the exodus of families and businesses, creating a ghost town of memories, decaying physical structures and discouragement of those who remain.

This was evident in Bath approximately 8 years ago when our community was devastated by the loss of the Bath hospital. Businesses closed, families moved away and local community members became disheartened. There is now rejuvenated community optimism with the new, soon to open, long term care facility. This initiative has sparked much needed enthusiasm in our area. However the energy will be quelled by the loss of either school unless replaced with a modernized "New Born to Grade 8" facility. During your deliberations the DEC must consider how demoralizing a school closure would be to the Village of Bath and local communities. You need to remind yourselves of the importance of providing our families with a facility that optimizes academic excellence, instills community pride and keeps all our students here in Bath.

It is well known that schools in small rural areas are "the hub" of the community. Specifically, BMS and BES house, minor basketball programs, adult volleyball and basketball, community suppers, seniors evenings, church youth evenings, families movie nights, drama productions, concerts, community fund raisers, parenting courses, nutrition courses, and is a general gathering point for individuals and families in our area. These opportunities created through the use of our schools instill individual and community pride. Accomplishments such as winning championships, academic fairs or raising funds for the needy will be lost. Watching our children display their talents in school activities and community events will be gone when the schools are gone.

Considering this, the Lions support a strong and revitalized “New Born to Grade 8” school in our community. This system is currently integrated in BMS and BES. “The Step Ahead Learning Center” provides day care, pre-school & after school care and outreach programs. They partner with the department of EECD “Family and Early Childhood West”, (which is housed in BMS) to provide support for parents of preschool children. Outside agencies “Talk With Me” provide audiology testing and “Public Health” administer the 3.5 assessments at BMS. In addition strong education practices are established in BES and BMS for the benefit of our students who receive a quality educational experience. This learning is supported by the ASD-W district leads in Guidance, Resource and Methods, and Autism who are housed at BMS.

As a campus, BMS and BES along with their partners, have provided our students, parents and community with a variety of services in one central location. The DEC should applaud this foresight and use it as a model for the future use of schools with sustainability concerns. They should acknowledge that the combination of services from a variety of agencies, housed in a central location to support families, make sense. This model can be expanded to include health care, social development, and similar private and government agencies to fill underutilize schools. An argument could be made to maintain the status quo of our schools and proceed with a pilot to determine what could be possible with this mindset.

The connection between school and community has a special meaning for the Bath Lions Club. Chartered 37 years ago, the founding president of the club was Lion Eldon Holmstead who at the time was principal of Bath Elementary School. In the early years of the club, meetings were held at the Bath Elementary School until the club moved to its current location which also was a former elementary school. The reason I mentioned this is to acknowledge that the Bath Lions Club was initiated by an educational leader in this community and have acknowledged and financially supported quality education in our community schools.

The Lions support schools. They understand how they are essential to the educational, social and personal development of their students, whom eventually become leaders globally and in their own community. For over 100 years through Lions Club International, Lions have assisted needy communities all over the world providing safe drinking water, proper eye sight and humanitarian aid. We are welcomed and respected by many, for our commitment to people, groups and communities through our motto “We Serve”. It is important to note that the students at BMS and BES understand the meaning of “we serve”. Students have raised an enormous amount of money locally and globally for Cystic Fibrosis, Terry Fox, Relay for Life, Breast Cancer Research, Free the Children and local unfortunate families affected by medical concerns, or fire. These children, led by their teachers, are part of a giving community.

Students from BMS have led the way demonstrating service to others both locally and globally. Last year these students raised over \$18,000.00 to build a school in Nicaragua. They continue to support Los Campos, Nicaragua by promising to raise an additional \$3,000.00 for the village this school year through “Free the Children’s”, “Adopt-a- Village” program. Also, this year, BMS students donated over 630 pounds of food to the Woodstock Food Bank, a local agency BMS students have supported for years. Once again, the DEC should applaud these students and show their gratitude by creating a vibrant “New Born to Grade 8 school”. Our students shouldn’t be raising funds for a school in an under privileged country and then rally to save their own school.

The Bath Lions Club has acknowledged this youth activism by donating over \$3,500.00 towards “WE Day” celebrations and global initiatives at BMS. We also support student perseverance, hard work and dedication through personal accomplishments by donating \$4,500.00 over the last three years towards the Carleton North Feeder System Turn Around Awards. Additional donations to schools in the Carleton North area over the last 15 years have been \$11,000.00 to the BES play ground, \$10,000.00 to BES technology equipment, \$10,000.00 the elementary school libraries, \$15,000.00 to CNHS Band and Choir and over \$20,000.00 in scholarships to CNHS. Along with these donations the Bath Lions Club make annual donations to Christmas dinners, tournaments and sport teams. As a club we know what attending BMS and BES does for our children. They create meaningful learning experiences to make our students well rounded community minded citizens and leaders. Acknowledging this, the Bath Lions Club will continue to financially and morally support our schools.

In Conclusion, The Bath Lions Club is asking the District Education Council to reflect on section 5.3 of the Department of EECD policy 409 which states “the department of EECD recognizes schools are integral to the promotion and preservation of the local culture and community, **especially in rural areas**”. We agree with the department, that rural areas are an integral part of our province and their culture needs to be safe guarded. Locally, our community hosts the provinces primary economies of agriculture and forestry. These industries are based on a strong work ethic, perseverance, and commitment to quality which are the same virtues established in our schools. It is a culture that is worth sharing and growing not eroding.

The Bath school campus containing BMS, BES, Step Ahead Learning Center, Family, and Early Childhood West, ASD-W district leads and multiple support services from visiting outside agencies is as unique as this community’s culture. This vision of “community service and service to the community” is unlike any in the province. It’s a model that is worth further investigation and should be given time to be explored by maintaining the status quo or at the minimum creating a modern “New Born to Grade 8” school. We are asking you to seriously consider what is offered in our academic community before disassembling it with the elimination of a school without creating a newer, more vibrant facility for future generations.