



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

February 5, 2018

Honourable Zach Churchill

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

2021 Brunswick Street

P.O. Box 578

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Canada B3J 2S9

Dear Minister Churchill,

SUBJECT: BCSTA response to Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's decision to eliminate English school boards

Dear Minister Churchill,

On behalf of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, and the 60 member boards of education we represent, I wish to share our collective disappointment in recent developments stemming from decisions made by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Your ministry's pending decision to eliminate locally elected school boards, along with the intent of replacing these boards with appointed government representatives, has raised concern across the country. We can certainly appreciate the need for government to be directly involved during times of perceived crisis, but the decision to eliminate all seven of Nova Scotia's English speaking boards goes far beyond what we would consider a reasonable response to any issues faced by the government and the school boards in your province.

It is questionable how this action can be undertaken in the name of promoting student achievement. When local representation is eliminated, thereby severing the connection between communities and their schools, we believe student outcomes will be harmed. We have long advocated that local representation on school boards is part of the foundation that defines our democratic society and that locally elected trustees are best suited to understand the unique relationships and issues faced by their communities.

The initiation of this planned outcome has been difficult to witness, and we consider that the attempts to find suitable alternatives were not dutifully explored by the ministry before this action was undertaken. Trustees are an essential asset to public education as they are conduits between members of the community and the schools they serve, and it has been long documented that this local level of involvement leads to better outcomes for all students. A locally elected board is unique in their role of bridging the gap of understanding between the public and government, so to remove such an integral component from the process will leave community connections to public education significantly lessened.



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Trustees are advocates for students, focused on their needs, and fully dedicated to improving student achievement. Their loss will leave communities, and more importantly, students, without appropriately elected democratic representation.

In summary, we request that you reconsider this pending decision before it causes damage to Nova Scotia's public education system, and we encourage you to meet with members of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association in an effort to find an appropriate alternate solution to any concerns that might exist.

I have witnessed similar sentiment rising across the country, and while it is undoubtedly difficult to change course once legislative processes are started, I am confident you will re-examine the situation given the public response to this pending decision. The rationale that accompanies their collective objection to your ministry's choice to cut school boards and trustees out of public education in Nova Scotia is sound, and I trust you will see to it that student achievement is made a true priority in future decisions on the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G B Swan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "G B" being particularly prominent.

Gordon Swan

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

cc: Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia
BCSTA Member Boards of Education
Hank Middleton, President, Nova Scotia School Boards Association
Floyd Martens, President, Canadian School Boards Association