

Press Statement

Anglophone District Education Councils respond to EECD's announcement on governance reform.

December 9, 2021

New Brunswick's District Education Council Chairs were made aware there would be an announcement around changes to the governance structure earlier this week but as of now we have little to no information on the options and next steps being considered by the Minister. At this time, we are not able to speak to whether councils will support changes.

In our very limited discussions, we have heard a lot about the need for alignment and how changes are needed to facilitate the minister's mandate, New Brunswick District Education Councils will continue throughout this process to advocate for the community. Democracy isn't always the most efficient form of government but as a society we value diversity of voice and believe public education requires local input.

We have concerns about the level of involvement and consultation our exhausted education professionals will be able to commit to reorganizing the education system when they are focused on ongoing safety concerns and COVID's impact on student achievement. The Minister of Education is out of touch if he believes that organizational restructuring is the primary concerns of staff, parents or community members at this time.

Education governance is the oldest form of public democracy in Canada. We know from experience at home and in other provinces that these types of reforms have a significant impact on the system and requires years of settle out. It is worrying to see the Minister of Education continue on his desire to transform the governance structure and to think of placing additional and prolonged stress on the system at this time.

We will have many questions for the Minister as details become available and will be working on behalf of the people in our districts to advocate for real and meaningful consultation. Education is everyone's business; we must ensure all New Brunswickers maintain the right to have their say in education and that both linguistic sectors have the right to a degree of management and control in public education.

What I can say is that as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 4 Anglophone District Education Councils, we are extremely proud of our members, past and present, and the work councils have done to support students and education over the years. Many of us have been involved in education governance since before DECs were established and strongly believe this is a good structure – with room for improvement. We are disappointed that consideration was not given to investing in the current model to address concerns around alignment and accountability rather than starting from scratch at a time when the system needs stability above all else.

Our members do not serve for fortune or fame; councillors put their name forward for the DEC because they want what is best for kids and our community. The Council of Chairs has asked repeatedly to be involved in the work of shaping the new governance structure. We want to ensure any proposed model is in the best interest of students and community and is:

- democratic in nature,
- actually increases local voice and authority,
- and ensures respect and communication between EECD and community representation.

Education is at the heart of our communities and community must be at the heart of education governance.

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Council of District Education Council Chairs

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