



Meeting with Minister of Education Minutes Feb 23, 2018

TIME/Location: 6:00pm/SSRSB head office, Bridgewater

ATTENDANCE: SAC chair representatives from local schools (ie. Bridgewater, Petite, Pentz, Bayview, Newcombville, etc), Minister of Education & Early Childhood Intervention- Zach Churchill, Superintendent Scott Milner, MLA Hugh MacKay, MP Bernadette Jordan

Meeting:

The meeting was considered an informal, round table open forum to discuss the current recommendation from the Glaze Report to: abolish the 7 elected school boards across the province and function with a “new vision” for local governance.

Throughout the evening discussion, it seemed a bit difficult to define how this would happen. They will: a) eliminate the elected boards, and b) unsure exactly what it will look like after that.

They have proposed a “Provincial Advisory Council”, to be made up of the former superintendents (now to be known as Regional Executive Directors-RED) of the 7 representative areas plus representatives from the African American and Mi’kmaq community. The RED’s are to gather their information and recommendations “directly” from local communities through their local SAC’s. The local SAC’s are to voice any complaints, concerns, or issues to the RED’s. Currently they are unsure how this may be done. They have suggested, SAC’s will have:

1. regular quarterly progress updates with the Superintendent (now the Regional Executive Director)
2. Annual meetings with the Minister of Education
3. And local SAC’s are to gather their information from parents, communities, principal, students to have their say

Many SAC chairpeople in the room had direct questions of how this will be able to happen:

1. How are we to directly communicate our school needs to the superintendent?,
2. how are we “untrained” volunteer SAC members able to define the needs that need addressing and systematically go up against other schools in our area & province to “fight” for those needs, or have our needs heard and addressed?
3. how will rural Nova Scotians voice be heard in a centralized system such as this
4. what training will be available to SAC’s to provide SAC’s with the necessary tools/information to make these decisions and communicate effectively?
5. Some schools may not have many people interested in becoming a member of the SAC or expertise in governance, how will those schools have their voices heard?
6. How will they now address help for inclusive education and representation from all cultures?

They didn’t have many answers. Some suggestions they had, were to:

1. possibly have a “regional voice”, a collective regional SAC so that some schools who may not have a lot of participation in local SAC, still have representation. They said it would be “nice to help one another”
2. They felt having a “direct line” with regional leadership would be beneficial, as with a direct line of communication to the (RED) and just dealing with one person (RED) would make decisions happen quicker

3. They said the professional support normally provided to the local SAC's will still be in place ie. Office staff at local school board office will still be there and able to help, they may have designated H.R. personnel to support SAC, and felt it would be beneficial for school board staff to attend SAC meetings
4. Any issues with inclusion could be directly reported to the (RED) and office staff will look to support these issues, but also try and address it on a provincial scale. And they want to have Mi'kmaq and African American representatives in senior management positions and expanded in SAC's to provide a heightened voice for these groups.

They felt "all of this" in place, will allow a rural education strategy to inform the funding model, so they can "distribute funds equitably not equally", and be a "needs based" system. They'd like to have a 5 year capitol long term planning process to take away fear surrounding ie. school closure (no word on how this will be addressed in the future, currently on hold), and how to address future investment planning for each school. They will be providing local SAC's a small pocket of funds to be used as the SAC's deem fit ie. sports equipment, inviting guest speakers to talk with the school population, above and beyond what is already funded individually to the school.

They did say the SAC's would have no decision making authority, but would be there more for :

- Insight
- Advice
- Input

They felt this direct line of communication with SAC/communities/parents/teachers/principal with regional leadership (RED) will increase their understanding of local issues and will help with decision making.

ADJOURNED:

7:15 pm