

**2012 NSSBA RESOLUTIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE**

Topic	Resolution	Department Response
Resolution #1 – CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION Alignment of School Review and Capital Planning Process	<p>Whereas the decision to review a school or schools for possible closure should be part of a plan designed to meet the longer term needs of the board and Province, and</p> <p>Whereas the existing requirements prescribed by the Department of Education take up to two years to reach a decision on closing a school, while decisions on new school construction and renovations/alterations are now made annually, and</p> <p>Whereas there is no means of assuring that decisions by a board to close a school or schools will be coordinated with the Department of Education's decisions on capital construction , and</p> <p>Whereas local communities would be more likely to accept school closure decisions if such decisions were part of a plan that ensured appropriate new construction and/or renovations or alterations designed to accommodate the affected students.</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that the Department of Education be requested to align the procedures for reviewing schools for possible closure with the capital planning process for new construction and renovations and alterations so that these decisions can be coordinated and integrated into a multi-year plan agreed to by the board and the Department of Education.</p>	<p>The school review process as currently defined in regulation must be completed in the course of a year with boards announcing their intent to review a school by April 1st of one school year and reaching a final decision on closure by the end of March in the next school year. Currently, the intention of government is also to reach decisions on capital construction annually, but in past years submissions were received every two years.</p> <p>The Department is currently reviewing the processes of reviews for possible school closure to provide greater flexibility in the process and as a result, to allow the process to align more closely with the capital planning process.</p> <p>Local communities may be more likely to accept school closure decisions if they are ensured that such decisions were part of a plan that included new construction or renovations to receiving schools. However the current review of a school for possible closure recognizes the autonomy of boards to make decisions about their schools while the capital planning process ensures that the Department is in a position to make decisions about new construction or renovations and repairs from a provincial perspective. Close collaboration among boards and the Department about capital planning is essential, but an integrated multi-year plan between the Department and each board would have to be considered in terms of its impact on each party's ability to make autonomous decisions about complex matters.</p>
Resolution #2 – EDUCATION FINANCE Changing fiscal year to school year	<p>Rationale: School boards in Nova Scotia have a fiscal year that spans the period April 1 to March 31st. This coincides with the Provincial government fiscal year. However, the natural business and planning cycle of school boards follows the school year (the period August 1 to July 31). The issue associated with different year-ends has been reported by the Auditor General with a recommendation that it be reviewed by government. There are a number of issues that would be resolved if the school board fiscal year was changed to coincide with the school year.</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association urge the Department of Education to negotiate with the Department of Finance to change the fiscal year to coincide with the school year.</p>	<p>Any potential change to the fiscal year end must be approved by the Department of Finance and would require legislative change to implement. The Department of Education will discuss the issue with the Department of Finance.</p>

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<p>Resolution #3 – Funding Practices that Support Equity in Student Access to the Public School Program</p>	<p>Preamble: During the 2011-12 school year, the provincial funding formula for public education in Nova Scotia was reviewed via consultation between the Department of Education and school boards. Funding formulas encompass two key elements: the <i>amount</i> of funding dedicated to public education, and the <i>allocation</i> process by which this total amount of money is divided between school boards. The amount of funding and the allocation process may impact school boards across the province differently. These differences may result in inequality in student access to programming and student services from one region to the next. In particular, students living in rural areas and attending smaller, isolated schools may be disadvantaged because the Public School Program cannot generally be delivered as cost effectively in small rural schools with declining student populations as it can in larger urban centres. As provincial funding arrangements are revised, and student enrolment declines, it is essential to maintain equity in access to the Public School Program for all students in Nova Scotia, regardless of the location and/or size of their school.</p> <p>Whereas all children and youth of our Province are entitled to a free and appropriate public education, regardless of where they live;</p> <p>Whereas all children and youth, in rural and urban areas, require equitable access to the programs and services that will enable them to reach their full potential as learners and future leaders of Nova Scotia society;</p> <p>Whereas the key to a successful future for Nova Scotia lies with our children/youth who have attained an education that supports their full citizenship and contribution to society;</p> <p>Whereas the funding of public education is a key determinant of the programs and services that school boards are able to deliver to the students under their jurisdiction;</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association petition the Province of Nova Scotia to ensure that the funding formula for public education, including the amount of funding and the allocation process, ensure equity in student access to the Public School Program for all students in Nova Scotia, regardless of where they live.</p>	<p>The funding model as adjusted for 2012-13 incorporates funding for small and isolated schools and has components to reflect the service delivery costs associated with schools of varying size.</p>

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Resolution #4 – EDUCATION GOALS AND PROGRAMS Expanding SchoolsPlus Program	<p>Whereas it is the responsibility of the Department of Education and the school boards to ensure the success of all students;</p> <p>Whereas ensuring a student's success in school requires a broad view and comprehensive plan to support the whole student, including their social and emotional well-being;</p> <p>Whereas educational partners across the province, including the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, have been calling for a comprehensive, inter-agency approach to supporting Nova Scotia children and youth;</p> <p>Whereas SchoolsPlus staff play an essential role in coordinating inter-agency supports to students, work across agencies to build relationships among schools, families and the community, and provide direct service to children and youth in their school settings;</p> <p>Whereas only a limited number of Nova Scotia students and their families currently benefit from the services offered by SchoolsPlus;</p> <p>Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia has stated in their Education Plan, <i>Kids & Learning First</i>, that they will "Bring more services for kids and families into schools by expanding SchoolsPlus";</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association strongly encourage the Department of Education to ensure all families or groups of schools are served by SchoolsPlus no later than 2017–2018.</p>	<p>The province is investing \$2.5 million in SchoolsPlus over the next few years as part of a multi-year plan to further expand SchoolsPlus. External evaluations have identified SchoolsPlus as a good example of what is working well, and that it is benefiting our students, their families, staff at the schools, and service providers. This collaborative model has built bridges between schools, families and communities.</p> <p>School boards were invited in the Spring of 2012 to apply for one of four additional SchoolsPlus hub sites to be established for the 2012-13 school year. In May 2012 the new sites were announced. The successful applications for the new hub sites received \$125,000 to provide leadership and community outreach. This will bring the total to over 95 schools receiving SchoolsPlus support this school year and closer to the province's goal of eventually having SchoolsPlus available in every county.</p> <p>A hub site is a network centre for SchoolsPlus that serves a family of schools. Between now and 2017–2018 we anticipate establishing a total of 28 SchoolsPlus hub sites throughout our eight school boards. We are requesting that boards consider the best configuration of hub sites to make board-wide accessibility to this integrated service delivery model as we engage in further expansion.</p>
Resolution #5 Additional funding for nutritional programs in schools	<p>Preamble: In 2006, Nova Scotia implemented an evidence-based school food and nutrition policy; however, due to the financial strain of balancing operational costs and the costs of serving nutritious food, the policy has not been fully implemented and some school cafeterias are at risk of closing</p> <p>Administrators indicate that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the balance, and in all but the most rural schools, students often choose to patronize nearby food establishments. The focus needs to be on implementing the <i>Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools</i> as they are intended rather than on the financial struggle of making ends meet.</p> <p>Over the past eight years, a number of new policies and programs have been</p>	<p>The Department of Education will consider this request during 2013-2014 budget preparations.</p>

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	<p>developed and supported by the provincial government and by school boards to encourage healthier school practices, and providing financial support would further demonstrate a commitment to creating healthier school communities. Whereas school boards have endeavoured to implement the <i>Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools</i>, and Whereas schools are struggling to operate food services programs within the Policy, and Whereas the economic shortfalls that currently exist have created a barrier to full compliance with the Policy, BE IT RESOLVED that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association strongly encourage the Government of Nova Scotia to provide additional funding to support nutritional breakfast and lunch programs in the schools.</p>	
<p>Resolution #6 Establishment and maintenance of professional learning community practices</p>	<p>Rationale: School boards in Nova Scotia are committed to critically analyze and continuously improve upon the practices, which most effectively and positively impact student engagement and student achievement results in the public school system. Whereas the provincial PLC Study Committee conducted a comprehensive research review and concludes that research clearly establishes that the most powerful link to student achievement gains is a focus on improving teachers' instructional practices; Whereas the PLC Study Committee also concludes that the most effective professional development for teachers is clearly linked to student learning and achievement, closely embedded to classroom practice, collaborative in nature, and is regularly scheduled; Whereas the Minister of Education supports professional learning community practices [<i>Preference Kids and Learning First</i>]; Whereas this requires providing regular, well-defined and protected time for teachers to actively engage in professional learning community practices (within collaborative teams a continuous improvement model with a focus on student learning, using evidence / data, conducting analysis, changing instructional practices);</p>	<p>The Department of Education will continue to work closely with school boards and other key partners to promote the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) in Nova Scotia. A Guiding Coalition of education partners, including representatives from the Department of Education and the province's eight school boards, is working to find ways to support schools in establishing, maintaining, and fostering effective PLCs, and to meet the <i>Kids & Learning First</i> commitment to support the creation of PLCs in every school. The Guiding Coalition is working closely with School Accreditation Coordinators to transition from the School Accreditation process to a Learning Community Approach for School Improvement. The new process will be streamlined to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and administrators. The goal is align ongoing teacher collaboration with school improvement planning in order to improve instructional practices and increase learning and achievement for all students. The Department cannot comment on upcoming negotiations with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU). The Teachers' Provincial Agreement (TPA) between the Minister of Education and the NSTU expired on July 31, 2012. Parties have agreed to keep their discussions confidential until the negotiations have concluded.</p>

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Resolution #7 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION Implementation of police records and child abuse registry systems	<p>Whereas many school boards are unable to provide this time due, in part, to budget constraints;</p> <p>Whereas promoting collaborative teamwork has been found to be more effective than the traditional isolated pull out method for teachers' professional development which is currently included in the Nova Scotia Teachers' Provincial Agreement such as attendance at conferences and in-services [Article 60 Professional Development Fund] and the October Union Conference Day [Article 60.34];</p> <p>Whereas there are substantial costs associated with the present practice of traditional methods of teachers' professional development;</p> <p>Whereas the public school system has recently and continues currently to be subject to budget cuts;</p> <p>Whereas the Minister of Education is responsible for the negotiation of the Teachers' Provincial Agreement with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union;</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that in preparation for and during the next round of provincial negotiations between the Minister of Education and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, that time and financial resources currently allocated to Article 60: Professional Development Fund, be redirected to the extent appropriate, to provide much needed time and financial resources to school boards in order to establish and maintain regular, well-defined and protected time for teachers to actively engage in professional learning community practices.</p> <p>Rationale: All responsible organizations require police records checks and child abuse registry checks completed for prospective employees and volunteers who would be working with the vulnerable sector. School boards are committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and the community members accessing schools. Every school board in Nova Scotia has implemented policies requiring satisfactory police records checks and child abuse registry checks for individuals interested in becoming employees or volunteers. This provides some basis to conclude that the prospective employee or volunteer has not demonstrated a risk to students.</p>	<p>Under section 64 of the <i>Education Act</i> all school boards are required to have a policy to protect students from harassment and abuse. All school boards also have criminal record check policies to screen volunteers and employees. These policies function to minimize risk in schools and classrooms and are very similar to policies in other Canadian provinces and territories. In all cases, student safety is maximized not just by screening processes, but practices implemented within schools to ensure appropriate supervision of students at all times.</p> <p>Criminal records information is held federally in the RCMP National Repository of Criminal Records. This information is shared with police service agencies for access by individuals in person or online. The database is currently supported by Canadian Criminal Real Time Identification Services and Canadian Police Information Centre governs federal policy on the different types of records checks.</p>

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	<p>Unfortunately, this is an ineffective system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the results are unreliable the day after they are complete - each responsible organization requires individual satisfactory records - employees and volunteers are deterred from working and/or volunteering due to the unreasonable time and, on occasion, cost associated with acquiring the checks (multiple times for multiple organizations) - school boards (and other responsible organizations) must devote scarce resources to the administrative work associated with managing the records checks processes internally when scarce resources should be directed to the classroom as reasonably possible - the police and Nova Scotia Community Services also expend vast amounts of their time and resources to complete these records. <p>Whereas the government of the Province of Nova Scotia is seeking ways to reduce provincial costs;</p> <p>Whereas school boards, the provincial government and all responsible organizations are interested in fair and effective practices which support safe working and learning environments;</p> <p>Whereas current practices employed by responsible organizations are neither as effective in supporting safety as they could be nor cost effective;</p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association advocate to the government of Nova Scotia to implement a police records check and child abuse registry check system that is central; based on fingerprints; accessed initially by responsible organizations who have been provided consent; and automatically provides electronic updates to those registered responsible organizations where there is a change to an individual's police record and/or child abuse registry who is actively registered with the applicable responsible organization.</p>	<p>The Department is currently conducting a review of school board policies with regard to criminal record and child abuse registry check processes, with a view towards providing guidance for effective screening practice. We look forward to hearing more about your proposed approach when we meet..</p>