

Education Governance Commission



Charting the Way

Final Report of the Education Governance Commission

March 2012

**Prince Edward Island
Education Governance Commission**

P.O. Box 2000, Charlottetown PE
Canada C1A 7N8

**Île-du-Prince-Édouard
Commission sur la gouvernance
dans le domaine de l'éducation**

C.P. 2000, Charlottetown, Î-P-É
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Honourable J. Alan McIsaac
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development
Holman Building
Summerside, PE

Dear Minister McIsaac:

No responsibility is more vital to every Islander, nor indeed to the entire province, than the responsibility of ensuring maximum possible effectiveness in our education system.

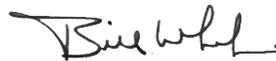
Our schools should provide students with far more than basic knowledge and skill – they should foster creativity, innovation, and a love of learning, and they should prepare students to participate fully in society. Good governance in education is central to enabling our schools to offer each student the means of achieving his or her very best.

To fulfill our mandate, we have drawn extensively on research and the results of our consultations with education partners, key informants, students, and interested members of the Island population. We are grateful to all who met with us, took part in our Community Conversations, and wrote to us. Their ideas and advice provided a wealth of insight and guidance.

Serving as members of this Commission has been highly rewarding, and we sincerely hope that our work will help those involved in the governance and delivery of education, to focus their energy and resources on learning.



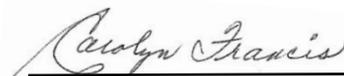
Carrie St. Jean, Co-chair



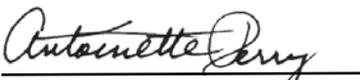
Bill Whelan, Co-chair



Lynn Ellsworth, Member



Carolyn Francis, Member



Antoinette Perry, Member

Acknowledgements

This report reflects the substantial contribution of two exceptional public servants, whose work was of tremendous benefit to the Commission as we carried out our task.

Ms. Janice Pettit, Senior Policy Analyst in the Executive Council Office organized the Commission's website and handled the administrative and logistical challenges associated with our five Community Conversations and three evenings of Public Presentations. Because of Janice's thorough, systematic and positive approach to these responsibilities, we were able to proceed with ease and confidence.

We extend a very special thank you to Ms. Wendy MacDonald, Clerk Assistant of the Executive Council, whose service and dedication as the Commission's lead researcher, was exemplary. Her ability to source, synthesize and analyze research findings is truly remarkable; as a result, the Commission's report is grounded in the most current and most relevant scholarship. Wendy spent countless hours preparing background material, capturing the Commission's discussions, developing large portions of the draft report, and coordinating the many reviews and revisions. Wendy's contribution to the Commission was invaluable.

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Executive Summary

In June 2011, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development appointed a five-member Education Governance Commission to “examine and make recommendations on governance structures, mechanisms, and processes to ensure leadership and accountability for student learning outcomes and for the effective, efficient, responsive operation of Prince Edward Island’s educational system...”

This was a reaction to the paradox of falling student achievement during a time of unprecedented education investment – and a system that was struggling to respond. International assessments had shown weak and deteriorating student achievement at the intermediate and high school levels. High numbers of students had been identified with special educational needs. And concern existed about the preparedness of grade 12 graduates for further study or the labour force.

Previous education reforms in Prince Edward Island and other provinces reflect a long-standing belief that structural measures, particularly consolidation of structures, can result in a more unified, purposeful, effective and efficient education system. While this approach has obvious appeal in its apparent simplicity, structural change is not the complete answer.

To build an education system that develops and fulfills the potential of every student, we need every level of the system and all education partners to share in the responsibility, to exercise leadership, and to account to Islanders for performance of clearly defined, coherent, appropriate roles.

After hearing from hundreds of Islanders and reviewing thousands of pages of research and evidence, the Commission has reached its conclusions. These findings, and the forty-eight recommendations that flow from them, are targeted at issues that are less visible than structures – but that are more important, and more challenging. Each recommendation has been evaluated against a single core question: “Will this improve student learning?”

The key findings, as set out in the recommendations, support new governance approaches that call for:

Renewed Vision, Principles and Goals: The report calls for a renewal of our education system to meet the challenges and rise to the opportunities of the 21st century. This renewal begins with the shared development of a Philosophy of Education, a vision of what we want our students to learn and be, and principles and goals to guide us on the way. It continues by expressing and enabling our shared responsibility for student learning through a new collaborative decision-shaping body, the Minister’s Education Partnership, that brings together on a regular basis the major partners in education to ensure a united approach to achieving our goals.

Revitalized and Reinvigorated School Boards: For many Islanders, the Commission’s work was but a step on the path towards a single English board province-wide. This is not the direction we have taken. The Commission strongly advises against the merger of the two English boards. The research indicates

that such a merger would cost rather than save money, divert system attention away from student learning, and reduce public engagement in, and support for, education.

The Commission offers several recommendations that will refocus our school boards on student learning and will revitalize and reinvigorate our democratically elected school trustees. The report calls for trustees to be elected based on Family of Schools zones, making them agents of engagement with their communities. To increase engagement, especially among youth, the Commission calls for the introduction of student trustees, a lowering of the voting age to 16 for school trustee elections, and innovations to make voting more accessible to all. To highlight the importance of candidacy and voting, the Commission calls for concerted outreach to ensure more contested seats, a mandatory yes-no vote rather than acclamation, and to allow the Minister discretion to appoint a trustee in any zone with less than a 20% voter turnout in two consecutive elections.

Improved Parent Engagement and Inclusion: The Commission concludes that there is even greater scope to include parents more fully as partners in education governance – building on the progress to date of a number of parent, school and district-led initiatives.

The principal is widely recognized as playing the key role in the nature and tone of the relationship with parents and the school community. In view of the growing recognition of the importance of this relationship, the report calls for school-based parent groups to have a formal voice in the process of principal selection and to be represented in the school development planning process.

Enhanced Instructional Practices: We are fortunate to have many strengths to build upon. The investments of the past several years have created a well-resourced system with increased, more highly trained staff, a transformed early learning and kindergarten level, an updated curriculum, expanded student supports, and modernized facilities, buses, and equipment. Rather than a collective preoccupation with buildings and buses, we need everyone to focus on what is happening in the classroom – and to commit to supporting teaching and instructional practice as the core way to improve student learning.

The Commission recommends that effective professional learning time be embedded, ongoing and focused on improving daily classroom instruction. High quality teachers have a greater influence on student learning than any other school-based factor. It is essential that professional learning efforts for teachers be system-wide and clearly aligned with curriculum and assessment.

Principals are spending too much time on administration and too little time on curriculum, instruction, assessment and supervision. Effective schools require instructional leaders. The report calls for School Boards to undertake an assessment of principals' workloads and school-level administrative and operational requirements to prioritize responsibilities and streamline the school management role so that principals and teachers can focus more fully on student learning.

Refocused Curriculum Development and Implementation: Rather than continually generating new curriculum with insufficient attention to its ongoing delivery, the Commission concludes that we need to pause, step back, and create a new curriculum plan that embodies the needs and more integrated approaches of the 21st century. Pending the completion of this plan, the report calls for a halt on new curriculum development. The report also calls for a shift in most curriculum resources and staff from the Department to the district offices and into the classroom to support teachers to more effectively teach the curriculum we have.

Rather than pulling teachers out of the classroom for curriculum in-servicing, taking them away from their students, the report calls for a new model that puts expertise and support in the classroom ‘at the elbow’ wherever possible and that protects instructional time.

Renewed Approach to Special Needs Education: Rather than an approach to special needs education that identifies almost one-third of Island students as needing extra supports or diminished expectations, the Commission concludes we need a system in which all students are expected and supported to learn at a high level. The report calls for an immediate, comprehensive review of the Province’s approach to special needs education, including assessment, identification, methodologies, standards for learning outcomes, and required personnel.

Pending this review, and in keeping with the principle of putting services closest to where they are needed, the complement of operational special needs personnel now at the Department should be transferred to the district offices.

Aligned Strategic Plans and Policies Province-Wide: Rather than the fragmented and inconsistent plans and policies of today, the report calls for a single provincial strategic plan focused on student learning, and district and school level plans that flow from, and are aligned with the goals and targets of the provincial plan.

The Commission concludes that all education partners have a role to play in bringing about more integrated, coherent and consistent policies. The report calls for the Minister’s Education Partnership to carry out a collaborative review and renewal of Department and Boards’ policies to ensure province-wide alignment.

Improved Budgeting, Monitoring and Reporting: Rather than a resource allocation system that prescribes every detail of funding based on an outdated formula, the Commission calls for a new model that provides more flexibility to Boards and schools to allocate resources to meet needs and attain goals – and a monitoring and reporting system to hold them to account for their use of funds to these ends.

To account for the effective use of resources, take stock of progress, and renew our goals and strategies, the Commission calls for annual public reporting at all levels – Minister, Boards, and schools.

We need to strengthen assessment methods and reporting to continuously improve student learning, teaching and communication with parents. The report calls for the development of provincial report card templates to deliver consistent, informative feedback to parents.

The report calls for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to identify the number and type of teachers, instructional leaders, and education support workers necessary to support student learning.

Renewed Legislation and Regulations: To draw together these new directions, we must replace our *School Act* of almost twenty years ago, with a new statute for the new century – a *Prince Edward Island Education Act*. This comprehensive modernization of the *School Act* and Regulations must go beyond piecemeal amendments to fully and coherently express and support the system-wide focus on student learning called for in this report, including a new statement of purpose at the outset, and the use of aspirational, results-oriented language.

These new directions will not be easy. They will entail substantial changes at all levels of the system – changes in focus, in priority, in attitudes, and in practices. But the Commission firmly believes that they are essential.

Our education system shapes the future of every Island student, and our future as a society. We recognize this reality by investing a greater share of our resources in education than any other province in Canada. We can, and must, make the most of these resources. This report provides an integrated plan to achieve that, and to improve student learning in Prince Edward Island.

Summary of Recommendations

1. That the Minister, through a collaborative process with partners, renew the Philosophy of Education, vision, guiding principles, and goals of our K-12 education system, and ensure they are reflected in legislation, regulations, policy, strategic plans, attitudes, behaviour and culture. (Page 10)
2. That a new mechanism for collaborative leadership be established, to be termed the Minister's Education Partnership. (Page 12)
3. That the current number of School Boards and the current district boundaries be retained. (Page 22)
4. That School Districts be governed by elected Boards of Trustees. (Page 24)
5. That the Department, working with the Boards, develop and deliver a comprehensive orientation and ongoing development program for Trustees. (Page 25)
6. That the Minister's Education Partnership initiate a joint outreach campaign with education partners to promote candidacy for School Board elections. (Page 27)
7. That Trustee representation be based on the Family of Schools zones. (Page 28)
8. That each School Board have a maximum of nine Trustees, with a minimum of one Trustee per Family of Schools. (Page 29)
9. That each Board of Trustees include one student Trustee, to be elected annually by fellow students, on a rotating basis among Families of Schools. (Page 30)
10. That the voting age for School Board elections be 16 years. (Page 31)
11. That School Board elections occur in November, with the first election to be held in 2012, and that Trustees take office effective January 1. (Page 32)
12. That School Districts, under the direction and oversight of the Department, be responsible for conducting Trustee elections. (Page 33)
13. That School Board elections allow on-line voting, an extended voting period, and school-based polling stations, to encourage and facilitate voter participation. (Page 33)
14. That a "yes" or "no" vote be required in lieu of acclamation in any zone where only one candidate has offered, to ensure that every candidate is affirmed by his or her zone residents. (Page 33)
15. That the Minister may appoint a Trustee in any zone where turnout is less than 20% of eligible voters for two consecutive elections. (Page 33)
16. That Boards require representation from a school-based parent group in the selection of a principal. (Page 35)

17. That Boards require representation from a school-based parent group in all school development planning. (Page 35)
18. That the Department be responsible for broad strategic planning, research, goal-setting, monitoring, and system oversight. (Page 38)
19. That School Boards be responsible for the delivery of direct education services and programs to K-12 students. (Page 38)
20. That the School Boards undertake an assessment of principals' workloads and school-level administrative and operational requirements to prioritize responsibilities and streamline the school management role so that principals and teachers can focus more fully on student learning. (Page 38)
21. That the Department, guided by the Minister's Education Partnership, and building on the philosophy, vision, principles and goals, develop and renew on a regular basis, a strategic plan to focus Prince Edward Island's education system on student learning, and that Boards and schools align their plans accordingly. (Page 39)
22. That the Minister's Education Partnership carry out a collaborative review and renewal of Department and Board policies leading to province-wide alignment. (Page 41)
23. That the Department develop a long-term, comprehensive, integrated curriculum development and renewal plan. (Page 43)
 - a. Pending completion of this plan, that no new curriculum development be commenced.
 - b. That the Departmental structure for curriculum development be changed from the current scale and model to a small complement of personnel organized along grade levels, i.e. K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12 with responsibility for ensuring a coordinated approach to curriculum development.
 - c. That when the development of new curriculum requires a teacher team, the members of the team participate on a block-of-time basis (e.g. 1-2 months), rather than the current "a day here, a day there" approach.
 - d. That the Department and Boards work collaboratively to develop a new classroom-based, "at-the-elbow" model for curriculum implementation with ongoing in-servicing for teachers.
 - e. That school Districts be responsible for implementation of curriculum.
 - f. That most of the Department's current complement of curriculum-related positions be redeployed to the Districts for integration into the new model.
 - g. That a curriculum mentor model be developed to respond to identified classroom needs and provide curriculum delivery support to teachers.
 - h. That the Department be responsible for monitoring and oversight to ensure this model is implemented as intended.

24. That professional learning be concentrated on improving daily classroom instruction and assessment. (Page 45)
25. That the Minister amend the school calendar to establish regular blocks of time for professional learning without loss of instructional time. (Page 45)
26. That the Department, in collaboration with education partners, develop an Instructional Leadership program for principals. (Page 46)
27. That the Department immediately undertake a comprehensive review of the Province's approach to special needs education, including assessment, identification, methodologies, standards for learning outcomes, and required personnel. (Page 50)
28. That the Departmental role in special needs education consist of leadership and oversight, and that most of its operational personnel be transferred to the district offices. (Page 50)
29. That the Department be responsible for development and oversight of system-level assessment, and that this be carried out by the section of the Department to be responsible for research, planning and evaluation. (Page 52)
30. That the Department make the results of common assessments available at the beginning of each school year, to inform and improve instruction. (Page 52)
31. That the Department oversee an analysis of education workforce needs, and develop a plan to ensure that these needs are addressed. (Page 54)
32. That transparent, consistent policies be put in place province-wide to govern the hiring of teachers and education support staff. (Page 54)
33. That the Department, working with the Boards, design and implement a new budgeting and financial oversight model that enables greater responsiveness to the needs and circumstances of the education system in accordance with the strategic plans. (Page 55)
34. That representatives of both French first language and French second language education be included in negotiation of the Canada-Prince Edward Island Official Languages in Education Agreement, and that the Department inform the Boards on the deployment of funds. (Page 56)
35. That the Department be responsible for direct delivery of early childhood development and kindergarten programs and services. (Page 57)
36. That Government make a priority of protecting taxpayers' investment in education infrastructure assets by increasing capacity and expertise in building management and maintenance at the district level. (Page 60)
37. That the Department, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, establish a process for evidence-based planning, priority-setting, and decision-making on capital investment in schools and buses. (Page 61)

38. That the Districts involve bus drivers in designing bus routes that balance the efficient use of resources with acceptable travel time for students. (Page 61)
39. That Government return responsibility for information technology service and support for education to the Department and the School Districts. (Page 62)
40. That the Department be responsible for developing and implementing a new provincial report, the *Minister's Annual Report on Student Learning*, to be released at the beginning of each school year to education partners and the public at large. (Page 64)
41. That the Department require each School Board to report annually on progress toward its goals and targets as set out in its strategic plan. (Page 64)
42. That the Boards require their schools to report annually on progress toward the goals set out in their school development plans, and that the results be made available to parents. (Page 65)
43. That the Department collaborate in a process that includes parents, to develop provincial report card templates that will deliver consistent, informative feedback to parents on student learning. (Page 65)
44. That the Department and the Boards ensure consistent interpretation and implementation of policy. (Page 66)
45. That Boards require consistent, transparent reporting of revenue generated and disbursed at the school level, and that this information be included in each school's annual report and made available to parents. (Page 67)
46. That the Department work with the Legislative Counsel Office to ensure the necessary amendments to the *School Act* and Regulations are made in time to allow trustee elections to proceed in November 2012 in accordance with the recommendations put forward in this report. (Page 78)
47. That the Department work with the Legislative Counsel Office on a comprehensive renewal of the School Act, to be renamed the Prince Edward Island Education Act, to express and support the system-wide focus on student learning called for in this report. (Page 78)
48. That the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, through their words and actions, demonstrate to the people of Prince Edward Island, their commitment to education as society's most valuable investment in future success and well-being. (Page 79)

1.0 Introduction

Prince Edward Island's school system shapes not only the future of every Island student, but our future as a society. Our schools must be 'havens of hope,' offering equitable opportunities to learn, to develop, and to achieve. Everyone – students, teachers, parents, and the community at large – shares the responsibility of promoting and supporting education and building a culture of learning. In the 21st century, education is a basic right. But it is also a privilege. In Prince Edward Island, we enjoy a highly developed and well-resourced education system. Many elsewhere are not so fortunate.

Education is at the heart of our social and economic progress, and will shape our future in a world increasingly based on human knowledge and skill. Education has a profound impact on the lifelong opportunities, health, and quality of life of every Islander. Children born this year will become adults in 2030, in a world very different from that of today. Our education governance structures and processes – or more simply, who does what and how things are done – are important to the fulfillment of our shared responsibility. These structures and processes were last reviewed in 1994. Since then, our society has brought new and changing expectations, opportunities, and pressures to bear on our education system.

To address these issues, and to better realize these opportunities, Government appointed a five-member Education Governance Commission on June 12, 2011, with a mandate to “examine and make recommendations on governance structures, mechanisms, and processes to ensure leadership and accountability for student learning outcomes and for the effective, efficient, responsive operation of Prince Edward Island's educational system...” The Terms of Reference (Appendix One) call for the Commission to carry out research, develop a discussion paper, and actively engage a wide range of Islanders, seeking their views on education governance. This report draws on the Commission's research, extensive input both from education partners and the public at large, and the diverse experience of the Commissioners to chart the way to a more effective, more equitable education system.

This report opens with a brief explanation of the scope of the work and the methodologies used to gather evidence and to consult the public. It frames issues identified by and presented to the Commission, and identifies the role of governance in these issues. The report calls for a fundamentally important further piece of work – a collaborative process to build a shared vision, affirm values and guiding principles, and set common goals and directions. This work is vital if Prince Edward Island is to succeed in achieving better outcomes for all. The report sets out its findings, analysis and recommendations on the Commission's Terms of Reference – refinements to structures, a major redirection of roles and responsibilities, new and strengthened accountability mechanisms, ways to increase participation and engagement, and to enhance consistency and efficiency. The report concludes by calling on all education partners to affirm and fulfill the value of education to our society.

2.0 Scope and Objectives

The Commission's Terms of Reference focus on governance of the education system, and set out a number of specific topics on which recommendations are sought. The Commission aimed to capture the essence of its task in the question, "Who should do what in the education system, and how should things be done?" While the questions are simple, the answers are not. Governance is but a means to an end, and much of the input, especially from the public at large, tended to focus more on issues, concerns, and aspirations than on governance.

It was apparent that the impact of governance on education outcomes is often not clear to the public, and sometimes not even to those within the system. This issue is compounded by the complexity of current structures and processes, the lack of clarity, overlaps and gaps, and the divergence between formally defined approaches and what is actually happening on the ground. The Commission has approached its work by first setting the end goal – unanimously agreeing that all education governance structures and processes must focus squarely on student learning. To this end, the Commission has tested every recommendation against the question: Will this improve student learning?

To fulfill its task, the Commission defined the broad context of issues and goals raised in its consultations, and then asked what role governance plays in each of these issues. To answer this question and to arrive at its recommendations, the Commission has drawn not only on Prince Edward Island's own history of education governance, but also on national and international evidence and research, and on the views and advice of education partners and the public. To properly address the issues identified, the recommendations in several key learning-related areas call for significant changes in how things are done, as well as who does them.

"Governance is about the allocation of responsibilities within an organization. Good governance provides a framework and a process for the allocation of decision-making powers ... Good governance requires clarity and shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, rules, and reporting."
Ontario Governance Review Committee

The Commission also faced the task of defining the parameters of what is being governed – the reach and the role of the education system. As more and more is demanded of our schools over time, and as pressures increase for schools to serve as a delivery site for other services, the boundaries of the education system are becoming blurred. The Commission has focused its work on the current K-12 system, and recommends more open and inclusive structures and processes within that context.

3.0 Methodology

The Commission began its task by developing a detailed work plan, then reviewed information and received briefings to become familiar with the issues under consideration, including the history of education governance in Prince Edward Island, as well as national and international trends.¹ During September, the Commission and its staff worked to develop a *Discussion Paper* for public information and response. The paper set out a brief history and context, and then provided background information and posed questions on each of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

As well, during early fall, the Commission planned its public engagement process, leading to a launch, in both official languages, on October 27, 2011. At the launch, the Commission released its *Discussion Paper* and its website at www.peieducationgovernance.com, announced its public processes, and invited a number of education partners to meetings. The public engagement process took place throughout November and December, through a variety of channels.

- Written comment was invited, in the respondent's format of choice, including emails, briefs, letters, an online comment form on the website, and the option of downloading the discussion paper in survey format. In all, over forty mailed and online submissions and telephone calls were received.
- Various education partners were invited to meet with the Commission and provide their views and positions on the matters being examined by the Commission. In all, eighteen meetings were held.
- Five Community Conversations were held across Prince Edward Island between November 7 and 30, attended by over 120 members of the public. The meetings featured a short introduction by the Co-chairs, followed by facilitated discussion groups (13 in all) addressing the following questions:
 - Thinking about how the education system is set up and run, what is working well today? In terms of who does what, and how things are done, what are the strengths?
 - Turning now to weaknesses, what are the issues and concerns in terms of how the education system is set up and run?
 - What are your ideas and advice on how things can be done better? What are the solutions?
 - To wrap up, if you were re-designing Prince Edward Island's education system, what is the single most important thing you would do?

The meetings ended with reporting back to the full group by the facilitators. All Community Conversation group discussions were recorded and the handwritten notes were posted directly on the Commission website. All participants were asked to complete an evaluation form, assessing various aspects of the process and identifying strengths and suggestions for improvement. The majority of participants did complete evaluations. While views were generally positive, there were some variations by region, and various opportunities were identified to improve the process. The evaluation is available on the Commission website.

¹ Details on the consultation process are contained in Appendix Two.

- Three evenings of Public Presentations were held in December, one in Summerside and two in Charlottetown. Eighteen individuals and organizations with an interest in education presented their views and advice in a public forum. The presentations were videotaped and posted on the Commission website.
- In December 2011 and January 2012, the Commission met with three groups of high school students, at Kensington Intermediate and Senior High, Charlottetown Rural, and Montague Regional High School.
- Throughout its work, the Commission invited a number of key informants to share advice and insights on consultation processes, on the issues at hand, and on the implications and feasibility of potential recommendations.

The Commission was very pleased with the quality of ideas and advice submitted, which spanned a broad range of issues, and provided interesting models and proposals for consideration. To promote participation, the Commission used both traditional and innovative outreach techniques:

- The discussion paper was widely circulated.
- At the launch on October 27, 2011, the Co-chairs met with a number of media representatives, resulting in coverage by newspapers, television and radio. Subsequent information on the public consultation schedule was released by the media.
- Two rounds of advertisements were run across the province in advance of the Community Conversations.
- The website, in addition to the usual features, included a Twitter feed, the first use of this technique by Government to support a consultation process.
- The consultations were promoted on Government's Facebook page.
- Considerable support was also received from education partners such as the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation, the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, the school districts, and individual schools, who promoted the consultations on their websites and through email.

Public turnout at Community Conversations varied across the province and was low in some regions. Nonetheless, the Commission believes that the public participation, taken together with written submissions and consultations with education partners, was sufficiently broad and diverse to cover the full span of issues at hand.

During December, the Commission began to review and integrate its consultation findings, and planned the work of preparing its report. The Commission met throughout January and February to review its findings and formulate its recommendations, and developed and finalized its report in March 2012.

4.0 Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Opportunities

During the 1970s, Prince Edward Island transformed education into a modern, high quality system with sharply improved equity of access and opportunity across the province. These measures brought about dramatic improvements in educational participation and attainment for Islanders. As the 20th century drew to a close, emphasis on student learning outcomes increased nationally and internationally, leading to the rapid spread of assessment and reporting. These indicated that although Prince Edward Island had made significant gains, it still lagged behind the rest of the country on many measures of student performance.

In the past decade, these findings have been augmented by international assessments, notably the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Conducted every three years, these assess the performance of 15-year-olds in reading, writing, math and science. The Commission's consultations suggested that some resistance continues to PISA and similar external assessments. However, the fact that PISA has expanded from 43 to 75 countries over the decade suggests that it is widely accepted as a valid and useful process; moreover, it is an important measure by which Prince Edward Island and its students are perceived in our global society.

Prince Edward Island's 15-year-olds placed last in Canada on most measures in both the 2000 and 2003 assessments. In response, the Government of the day established the Task Force on Student Achievement and has followed through on most of its recommendations, leading to a much stronger focus on early literacy and numeracy, and the development and implementation of "made-in-PEI" assessments. Government has continued and further developed these measures, and outcomes in the primary grade levels are improving on a number of fronts. The recent enhancement of kindergarten and early childhood development should support further gains over time.

Over the past five years, Prince Edward Island's investment in education has increased more rapidly than that of any other province in Canada. According to Statistics Canada's most recent *Public Education Indicators*,² between 2005-06 and 2009-10:

- Enrolment in Prince Edward Island declined 9%, the second largest drop in Canada. Meanwhile, the number of educators rose 7%, the third highest increase (Full Time Equivalent -FTEs).
- Accordingly, the student-teacher ratio dropped from 15.4 : 1 to 13.1 : 1, the largest improvement in the country, taking Prince Edward Island from seventh to third place among the provinces.
- Capital spending increased dramatically, renewing over two thirds of the bus fleet and upgrading school facilities.

² Statistics Canada, *Summary Public School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2005/06 to 2009/10*, Catalogue no. 81-595-M – No. 095, November 2011

- Total expenditures increased more quickly than those of any other province, exceeded only by Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.
- Expenditures per student increased more quickly than in any other Canadian jurisdiction except the Northwest Territories. By 2009-10, they exceeded New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec, and were only slightly below the levels of Saskatchewan and British Columbia.
- In 2009-10, Prince Edward Island's expenditures on its education system amounted to 4.8% of the province's GDP. The next highest in Canada was New Brunswick at 4.3%, while the national average was 3.6%.

It should be noted that these trends do not include the further impact of adding kindergarten to the public education system, which began in the 2010-11 school year.

These investments should have placed the education system in a strong position. But the results of the most recent PISA assessment, conducted in 2009 and released in December 2010, showed a substantial deterioration in reading outcomes among 15-year-olds, compared to the already low levels earlier in the decade. Scores slipped below the OECD average and fell further behind other Canadian provinces. Of particular concern, the already large proportion of students in the bottom levels increased by two-thirds, and the number of students at the highest levels shrank more than almost any other province.³ This cohort of students has not had the benefit of recent investments in primary literacy and early childhood development. Strong progress in these areas should have an impact on future assessments. However, further data from Statistics Canada's *Public Education Indicators* point to some other areas that also need attention:

- The percentage of children reported as being in special needs programs rose from 23% to a peak of 35% in 2008-09 before dropping back to 31% in 2009-10. The national average was 11%.
- As well, between 2005-06 and 2009-10, Prince Edward Island's graduation rate dropped from 88% to 82%, the largest drop in Canada; meanwhile, the national rate rose from 71% to 78%. Prince Edward Island fell from first place to fifth.⁴

These outcomes, when juxtaposed with investment increases which are the highest in Canada, are baffling to decision-makers. A clear need and opportunity exists to do better, particularly for students at the intermediate and high school levels. This paradox of rising investment and deteriorating outcomes is at the heart of the Commission's call for the system to focus all its resources and energies on improving student learning.

The Commission's research suggests that in a number of important areas, the education system is already doing the right things in the right way. Important evidence-based approaches and measures include:

³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA Study 2009*, Dec 2010 Table B.1.21, p. 76

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Public Education Indicators*, Tables A-9 and A-11. It should be noted that the definition of graduation rates used by Statistics Canada differs from that used by Prince Edward Island. Under the PEI definition, graduation rates are higher than those cited above, and are rising rather than falling.

- The above-noted early childhood development and early literacy measures
- The use of coaching and mentoring of teachers
- The development of a learning-focused strategic plan in the Western School Board and a literacy plan in the Eastern School District
- The collaborative development and ongoing refinement of “made in PEI” common assessments
- The use of such instruments as the *Tell Them From Me* survey to monitor student and parent engagement
- The generally collaborative relationships and respectful dialogue among education partners.

Other promising initiatives requiring further development or refinement include:

- The establishment of a school development planning process
- The development of dozens of Professional Learning Communities across the province
- The initiative to hold the Summit on Learning in June 2010, which drew together over 300 participants representing education partners in a widely praised two-day discussion of student learning for the 21st century
- The recent initiative by the Department and the University of Prince Edward Island to jointly examine preparation and professional learning for teachers and administrators, and the planned expansion of this initiative to a broader collaboration.

As we move forward, these strengths give us much to build on. Governance plays a crucial role – setting the direction, establishing goals and targets, aligning the resources and supports, and changing the culture. Key aspects of the strategic context are set out in the following summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely strong investment since 2007: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lower student-teacher ratios ○ Strongly increased special needs resources ○ Renewed facilities and bus fleet • Highly educated teaching force and strong teacher interest in ongoing learning activities • Historically, close-knit relationships and partnerships compared to most provinces • Transformation of early childhood system and kindergarten • Comparatively high levels of parent engagement • Comparatively cohesive and supportive communities • Well developed curriculum in most subject areas • Increasingly accepted, “made-in-PEI” assessments | <p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of up-to-date, forward-looking province-wide vision and plan focused on student learning • Deteriorating outcomes in some areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very high proportion of students identified as special needs ○ Worsening results in international PISA assessments ○ Declining graduation rates ○ High number of graduates unprepared to progress further • Focus on curriculum ‘front end’ at expense of ongoing maintenance • Top-heavy system with excessive and overly detailed controls of inputs, too little focus on outcomes • Ineffective and inefficient professional development and in-servicing models • Overlap, duplication, conflict and mistrust between levels • Lack of integration with related services |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining enrolment and the resulting need to rationalize system infrastructure and resources, creating governance stresses • Coping with emerging fiscal restraint • Providing equitable learning opportunities across the province • Responding to diverse student interests and needs without creating multi-tier outcomes • Overcoming low aspirations, acceptance of ‘good enough’ • Making data from common assessments more timely and relevant for formative use at the classroom level • Pressures on system leaders, especially principals • Intense recent stresses on system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kindergarten and early childhood changes ○ Relocation of department and resulting turnover and confusion ○ School closure process ○ Breakdown and dissolution of Eastern Board | <p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus the system on student learning • Establish high expectations for outcomes of all students • Set goals, targets and indicators for student learning and report on progress • Shift resources towards the learning and teaching process in the classroom • Apply proven techniques to enhance in-servicing and professional learning • Increase emphasis on early intervention and student success at all levels • Develop a new model to better identify, assess, and address special needs • Use assessment data more effectively to improve student learning both in the classroom and across the system • Create a period of stability and certainty in the system • Align external resources to support student learning |

5.0 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

The Commission heard that there is a clear and urgent need to collaborate in setting a new direction in our Province's education system. Our Philosophy of Education, developed in 1990, has never actively guided the system. Structure and governance issues were last changed in 1994, at which time a major revision of the *School Act* occurred. The Department's most recent strategic plan was released in 2001, and augmented in 2006 by a three-year Student Achievement Action Plan following the Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement. While a new plan is currently in draft, its release is awaiting the outcome of this report. Pending a new provincial plan, boards have developed their own plans. As time has progressed, issues of drift, lack of focus on learning, divergence of goals and strategies, and role confusion have emerged and intensified.

The Commission was not explicitly mandated to develop a renewed philosophy, vision, guiding principles, and goals for the education system. However, the consultations did provide considerable insight on these matters, and indicated that there is a strongly identified need in many quarters for a shared vision, a sense of common purpose, and a clear direction. The *Proceedings of the 2010 Summit on Learning* provide further guidance on what and how our children should learn in this new century.

The overall direction of the vision is clear - **we want our education system to develop and fulfill the potential of every student, to best prepare each of them for their place as a contributing member of a civil society.** This has two implications: significant and continuous improvement in learning outcomes, and greater equity in outcomes, through a levelling up, not a levelling toward the norm. In the words of Michael Fullan, internationally recognized authority on educational reform and advisor to the Premier and Minister of Education in Ontario, "Our commitment is to every student. That means 'raising the bar' to encourage the absolute highest achievement by our students, and 'closing the gap' to ensure we develop strategies to help every student learn, no matter their personal circumstances."⁵

The vision should be guided by the following principles:

- All system resources and energies are aligned to focus on student learning.
- High expectations are set for all students.
- Responsibility and accountability for learning are shared.
- Knowledge and evidence are applied to continuously improve student learning.
- Flexibility and responsiveness are balanced with equity and consistency.

To focus the system, a small number of overarching goals are needed. These should embody outcomes that are both improved and equitable. They should be sufficiently broad to encompass a number of supporting objectives. For example in the health system, the goal of increased years of disability-free life expectancy requires progress and alignment on a broad number of fronts including healthy lifestyles, reduced injury rates, reduced rates of mental illness and addictions or reduced rates of chronic disease.

⁵ Michael Fullan, *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education*, Ontario Ministry of Education, Winter 2008, p. 2
http://www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles_08/EnergizingFull.pdf

While it is premature of the Commission to recommend such overarching goals for the education system, examples might be the current goals on early literacy and numeracy, or a new goal regarding the number of students graduating from high school and prepared for their next steps in life. Once the broad goals are articulated, a provincial strategic plan must be developed to achieve them. Supporting objectives, targets, and indicators must be established, and roles and responsibilities for plan execution must be assigned. The Commission strongly believes that this must occur in a collaborative way. The strategic plan will then form the guiding framework for operational plans at the district level and development plans at the school level.

Recommendation # 1: That the Minister, through a collaborative process with partners, renew the Philosophy of Education, vision, guiding principles, and goals of our K-12 education system, and ensure they are reflected in legislation, regulations, policy, strategic plans, attitudes, behaviour and culture.

A shared renewal of philosophy, vision, direction, and goals is fundamental to the improved governance of Prince Edward Island's education system. However, the Commission recognizes that it cannot await the outcome of these processes; it must move forward with its task. While much work remains to be done, the vision and principles outlined here are sufficiently clear to allow the Commission to 'chart the way' to a new governance structure and approach.

6.0 Governance Structures

The Commission's Terms of Reference place strong emphasis on governance structures. The first element of its detailed mandate calls for the Commission to "make recommendations on the future governance role of school boards in Prince Edward Island, including duties and responsibilities, number of boards, and method of election or appointment." This focus echoes past reform initiatives in Prince Edward Island and other provinces, and reflects a long-standing belief that structural measures, particularly consolidation of structures, can result in a more unified, purposeful, effective and efficient education system.

While this approach has obvious appeal in its apparent simplicity, structural change is not the complete answer. The Commission's work has indicated that the issues in the system have little to do with the number of boards, and that the solutions are far more complex than simply merging boards. Rather, guided by a renewed and shared philosophy, vision, goals and plans, Prince Edward Island's education system needs:

- collaborative leadership
- innovative measures to revitalize school board elections
- redefined roles for the Department and the boards
- accountability for educational outcomes
- redirection of resources from the department and the boards into the classroom
- improved professional learning.

"The [Ontario] government's approach to the education sector should continue to focus on capacity-building, strong classroom instruction and the promotion of sound pedagogy rather than structural reform."

Drummond Report, February 2012

6.1 A New Province-Wide Education Partnership

The *School Act* lays out a clear and comprehensive leadership role for the Minister that is almost entirely focused on student learning. Section 7 of the Act provides that the Minister's duties are to:

- a) define the goals, standards, guidelines, policies and priorities applicable to the provision of education in Prince Edward Island;
- b) research and assess changing needs, trends and approaches in education and develop and implement strategic plans;
- c) provide leadership and coordination in developing curriculum, define curriculum, articulate curriculum standards and assess and evaluate programs at each level from kindergarten to grade 12;
- d) establish expected outcomes and standards of performance and assess the extent to which outcomes are achieved and standards are met;

- e) establish policies for the provision of special education services;
- f) establish rules respecting the granting of credits, provincial certificates and diplomas;
- g) establish the school calendar in accordance with the regulations;
- h) establish an accountability framework for the education system.

The Commission believes that these roles are essential and appropriate, and do not require amendment. Rather, what is needed is for them to be fully and vigorously carried out. A major theme in the Commission's consultations, expressed in all quarters, was the desire for a shared sense of purpose and direction. "We all wanted to work together and be on the same page, but we weren't sure what that was..." "...the most important thing at the end of the day is to work together, have a common plan, all work together for the kids..." These and many other such comments illustrate the desire for leadership expressed by people both within and outside the system.

In Recommendation 1, this report calls for the Minister to lead an ongoing collaborative process to renew the philosophy, vision and principles and to set the goals for Prince Edward Island's education system. To further develop and sustain this shared approach, the Commission has concluded that a new collaborative mechanism is needed at the provincial level. Such a mechanism was widely suggested in consultations, and exists in several other provinces, including Ontario and New Brunswick.

Recommendation # 2: That a new mechanism for collaborative leadership be established, to be termed the Minister's Education Partnership.

The Minister's Education Partnership (MEP) will bring together the major partners in education in a high-level body, with several important aims:

- to reflect and strengthen the shared responsibility of all partners
- to enable and foster collaboration
- to increase alignment at all levels
- to provide ongoing advice and support to the Minister in his or her leadership role.

In the challenging fiscal era that lies ahead, the Minister's Education Partnership would assist the education system in developing and maintaining a united approach. This is essential if the system is to build public support and confidence, and to sustain and best use its resources.

The Minister's Education Partnership would not be a decision-making body; rather, it would serve as a decision-shaping body, through its advice on priorities, strategic directions, and approaches. It would promote more focus and consistency by facilitating collaboration; by framing and guiding work to align policies and approaches; and by communicating clear, shared messages throughout the organizations represented. The proposed roles of the Minister's Education Partnership are further detailed in Section 8 of this report.

As envisaged by the Commission, the Minister's Education Partnership would include:

- A Chair appointed from the community at large
- The Minister
- The Deputy Minister
- The Board Chairs
- The District Superintendents
- A representative of the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation
- A representative of the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation
- A representative of the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty of Education
- A representative of the students served by the system.

The Commission believes that this model, which assigns the process-oriented role of chair to an appointee from the community, will allow the Minister to take a more active and substantive role in the discussions and work of the group.

It is essential that the Minister's Education Partnership support the Minister in his or her leadership role, rather than evolving into a separate level of governance or an advocacy mechanism. To support the Minister's Education Partnership development as a collaborative body, the following features are suggested:

- All members may propose agenda and work plan items.
- Meetings will be held no more than quarterly, in keeping with the overarching, rather than operational, role of the Partnership.
- There shall be no permanent staff; however, the Partnership may strike working groups to support specific tasks.
- Members will communicate shared messages and directions back to their respective groups after each meeting.

6.2 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

The responsibilities of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are not explicitly stated in the *School Act*, but may be inferred from the duties and powers of the Minister. As noted, these duties largely involve shaping and defining the system, setting its goals and priorities, allocating resources, and exercising oversight. The powers further spell out the Minister's ability to define what is taught and not taught, how it is taught, how learning is assessed, who shall teach, and how people are treated in the education system.

Based on information provided by the Department, its consultations, and comparisons to other jurisdictions, the Commission has concluded that the Department carries out these functions in a way which puts strong emphasis on often very detailed 'front end' controls of inputs such as curriculum, funding and staffing, and teacher certification. This has been augmented in recent years by growth in

the assessment function in selected areas of learning. Generally, however, there is little attention to the ongoing monitoring of how things are being done after initial implementation:

- Significant resources are devoted to curriculum development and initial in-servicing, but subsequent implementation is left to boards with limited monitoring to ensure that curriculum is maintained or delivered as intended.
- Allocation of staff and funding is very detailed, but subsequent monitoring of use of resources focuses only on whether boards have overspent, not on whether monies have been used as intended, and still less on whether value for money is being achieved.
- Detailed controls exist for teacher certification and licensing, but ongoing professional learning is fragmented and ad hoc.
- Special needs resources to the districts have increased rapidly, but as indicated by the Auditor General's report on the Eastern School District,⁶ there is little oversight of whether these resources are being applied in keeping with the Minister's Directive on Special Needs.
- In addition to this front-end focus, the Department has taken on a number of direct service delivery roles, particularly with regard to services to newcomer students and students with special needs.

In combination, these approaches have led to rapid growth in the Department, as outlined in Section 12.2. Since 2006-07, Departmental staffing has grown by 11% year over year – almost twice the government-wide rate. Over this time, the Department's budget (excluding grants to boards) doubled, while grants to boards went up by 30%. Some of this growth was required for new needs such as supports to the sharply increased population of newcomer students. Other growth came from enhancements to services such as the changes to kindergarten and early learning, expansion of various direct supports to students, and new technologies. The value of these investments is not at issue; the question is where they should be placed.

Areas of the Department, concerning financial control, curriculum development and implementation, have also seen strong growth. The Commission has concluded, overall, that the Department's role must shift substantially – from the details to the big picture; from a focus on inputs to a focus on outcomes; from competition to collaboration. This will entail a major reallocation of staff from the Department to the district level; new roles for many who remain at the Department, including strengthened capacity in the areas of research, planning and evaluation; and a significant shift in organizational culture. To support this, the Commission envisages that the Department should move to a simpler, more horizontal structure with fewer layers and a broader leadership team. Specific suggestions on the Department's structure are set out in Section 8.12.

6.3 School Boards

As the Commission began its public consultations, it was quickly apparent that for many in the education system and the public, the key issue before the Commission was whether the two English school boards

⁶ Auditor General, "Special Education – Eastern School District," 2011 Report

should be amalgamated. Indeed, a number of partners suggested that this decision had already been reached and that the Commission had been established merely to affirm this measure.

It is noted here that no such message has ever been conveyed to the Commission, and that the Commission has been able to carry out its work with independence and integrity.

The Commission has concluded that the real issues in the system go far deeper than the number of boards. The Commission concurs with the view of Ben Levin, Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership and Policy and former Deputy Minister of Education in both Manitoba and Ontario, that structural change should not be a priority in education reform. In his recent report for Nova Scotia's education system, governance arrangements, including the number of school boards, is the first item on his list of areas that "should NOT be the focus of system-wide change in Nova Scotia [because] these efforts do not produce benefits that are commensurate to the energy expended..."⁷

No consensus on governance structures emerged from the various groups consulted, although regionally, there was strong support in the Western part of the province for the current structure. Rather, the Commission was presented with a full gamut of suggestions on governance structures, including:

- A. Elimination of school boards and consolidation of all functions in the Department, with public engagement through an advisory mechanism
- B. Major downsizing of the Department and reallocation of most of its functions to the board level
- C. Retention of boards as the delivery system, but:
 - o Merger of all boards into a single provincial unit with a French wing, or
 - o Retention of a separate French board and merger of the two English boards, or
 - o Retention of the status quo three boards.

Overall, none of the alternative structures won as much support as the current model. The Commission has drawn extensively on evidence and analysis as well as its consultations to reach its conclusions.

A. Elimination of School Boards: Advocates of this model generally felt that Prince Edward Island was too small to have multiple layers in its education system, and that consolidation of services within the Department would achieve efficiencies, bring unity of purpose and direction, ensure speed of execution, and improve accountability and consistency. It was acknowledged that there would be some loss of grassroots democracy and a risk of even less public engagement in education. To address these, an advisory mechanism to the Minister was generally seen as essential. Variants of this included a single provincial advisory group, and an advisory structure built around representation by Family of Schools.

⁷ Ben Levin, "Some Things Not to Prioritize," *Steps to Effective and Sustainable Public Education in Nova Scotia*, Nova Scotia Department of Education, April 2011, p. 6

Such a model would be almost unique in North America. Examples include Puerto Rico in the United States, and the Yukon Territory in Canada, where a 2007 report called for a range of shared governance measures to improve engagement of communities and First Nations.⁸ The national approach to on-reserve First Nations education is also a variant of this model, with funding provided by the federal Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and education delivery overseen by individual band councils. Here, a recent report on K-12 on-reserve education identified wide-ranging concerns. Noting, “The education ‘system’ for first nations students on reserve is a far cry from any system that other Canadians would recognize in terms of ... the degree of input, accountability, and democratic governance most Canadians take for granted,” the report called for the establishment of a National Commission on First Nations Education and regional First Nations Education Organizations similar to school boards in provincial systems.⁹

Among provinces, some historical precedent exists in New Brunswick, where the government eliminated school boards in 1996 and replaced them with local parent advisory bodies. This did appear to realize some savings, as costs of system administration dropped in the two subsequent years. In 2001, following a change in government, this approach was partially reversed and a district advisory council structure was established. Under this system, 14 elected boards of 11 to 13 members provide local governance and community input to the school system, using a policy governance model. Their roles include hiring and evaluating the superintendent, establishing and monitoring district plans and policies, monitoring student achievement and school improvement plans, and building community partnerships.¹⁰ Costs of system administration saw little change after 2001, and the proportion of spending on system administration remains at the low end among Canadian provinces.

Internationally, the two-level system – department and schools – is the approach taken in New Zealand and Australia. It is most fully developed in New Zealand, where since the late 1990s the Department of Education directly oversees some 2,000 schools. Each school has its own elected board which is responsible to meet the requirements of a charter negotiated between the school and the Department within the context of national goals and curriculum. The system dramatically decentralizes responsibility while strengthening accountability at the centre. Within government, there are two ministers to reflect the separation of responsibility and accountability: the Minister of Education, who sets the policy direction and frameworks and interacts with the schools, and the Minister responsible for the Education Review Office, which evaluates the performance of individual schools.¹¹ In effect, this structure is a modernized version of what Prince Edward Island had prior to the 1970s, with the additional refinement of the separate evaluation ministry in lieu of school inspectors.

⁸ Education Reform Project, *Final Report*, Yukon Department of Education, December 2007. Pp. 1.7-1.16 http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/ed_reform_report.pdf

⁹ National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve, *Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nations Students*, 2012, pp. 17 and 33-38 <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/national-panel.pdf>

¹⁰ *District Education Councils: Working Together to Improve Education*, <http://www.decnb.ca/>

¹¹ T.R. Williams, School of Policy Studies, Queen’s University, “Education Governance,” Paper prepared for the Panel on the Role of Government, 2003

Such a ‘back-to-the-future’ Department-only model would take the province almost full circle to our historical approach. The Commission suggests that such a model is likely to face a number of issues. Some of these were identified by the Health Governance Advisory Council in its 2009 recommendation to move Prince Edward Island’s health system away from precisely this structure.

Firstly, the full pressures of day-to-day decisions, operational matters, and demands would fall directly on the Minister and Department, distracting from capacity to provide overall leadership and to exercise oversight and accountability. The Commission believes that this is already perhaps the most important issue facing the system under the current structure; to place all responsibility on the Department would compound it substantially. The small size of Prince Edward Island, advanced as a reason for this model, might actually be its undoing. Given Islanders’ expectations of direct access to decision-makers, the Minister is likely to face demands to deal with everything from new gym blinds to assessment wait times to complaints about bus routes to access to special needs supports for individual students. This effect was noted by the Health Governance Advisory Council in its 2009 report: “Under the current structure [of full departmental responsibility for health care delivery], the Department of Health is largely focused on health care operations, leaving few resources to fulfill the Department’s role in policy-making, planning and oversight...”¹² A further concern with this model arises from the fact that leadership changes, especially at the Ministerial level, may occur more frequently than in a school board model, potentially leading to frequent changes in priorities and approaches.

Compounding this danger, operational matters are likely to extend beyond the Department into other areas of government. Some decision-making may be assumed by Treasury Board and even Cabinet, with attendant risks of bureaucratization, politicization, liability, and blurring of lines of responsibility and accountability. Such concerns led Corpus Sanchez International to identify the need for a new governance model as the health system’s ‘most pressing issue,’ and consequently to call for health care delivery to move to a structure at arm’s length from government.¹³

A further consideration, which does not apply in the health system, is the issue of French first language education. If the board level were eliminated, the Department would need to be structured in such a way as to respond to the provisions of Section 23 of the Charter of Rights, and the related jurisprudence. This constitutional provision and jurisprudence, as described in a detailed submission by the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF),¹⁴ accords the province’s French minority a measure of management and control over education, generally expressed in terms of at least one “completely independent Francophone school board.” The brief argues that according to the jurisprudence, a provincial government can only change the number and make-up of boards if this is done in a way that is favourable to the development of the minority community.

¹² Health Governance Advisory Council, *Final Report*, July 2009, p. 10.

¹³ Corpus Sanchez International, *An Integrated Health System Review in PEI: A Call to Action: A Plan for Change*, October 2008, p.5

¹⁴ Commission scolaire de langue française, *School Governance Contributing to Substantive Equality in Education and to the Development of Acadian and Francophone Communities on Prince Edward Island*, Presentation and Submission to the Commission, December 2011.

It is likely, then, that if responsibility for French first language education were to be assumed by the department, a governance structure would be required to provide the French community with a direct voice in their education. As well, two parallel systems would likely be needed within the Department, as is currently the case in New Brunswick, and the French-language wing would need to also assume responsibility for the broader community and cultural development functions now carried by the Commission scolaire de langue française.

Philosophically, the centralization of management responsibility inherent in this approach is grounded in an industrial-era way of thinking, involving standardization of inputs and outputs, economies of scale, and detailed rules and procedures. Prince Edward Island's education system, however, is a knowledge-based sector staffed by professionals, which operates in diverse situations, and must adapt its approaches to respond to widely varying student interests, needs, and capacities. In such a system, an appropriate organizational principle is to define the desired results and then have decisions taken closest to those who will be affected, by the people most familiar with the situation and empowered to act within a defined scope. This is the approach taken by New Zealand; however, the elements of their model – a clear strategic plan, a system to negotiate and administer school charters, an envelope-based funding system, a robust evaluation and accountability system, and strong school-level governance bodies – are not yet in place in Prince Edward Island. Should these preconditions of success eventually be developed, a Department-led, decentralized system with site-based management and governance in lieu of boards may be feasible. To take such an approach today would be premature at best.

Finally, the Commission believes that all education partners and the public at large have a stake in our education system and must share in the responsibility to support the system and to promote improved outcomes. Unless school-level governance bodies are significantly enhanced under a Department-only model, the elimination of boards and the concentration of responsibility for education within Government is likely to undermine this sharing of responsibility among all partners and the public at large, and to further weaken community and public engagement in education.

B. Downsized Role of the Department of Education and an Increased Role for School Boards A second model called for by a number of education partners involved a substantial shift in roles and responsibilities from the Department to the boards, and a concomitant shift of resources from the Department to the district offices. Most commonly, this shift was based on an assignment of planning and accountability functions to the Department and most operational functions to the boards. Some took this approach even further, calling for a major reduction in the role of the Department and a shift not only of all operational functions but also significant planning and curriculum development functions to the board level, within a broadly defined spending envelope. This latter model was advanced in conjunction with a recommendation of a single district structure operating with the guidance of an appointed advisory board.

The Commission concurs with the shift of most service delivery functions to the board level, but strongly believes that the Department must continue to have the role and capacity to provide leadership and

oversight to the education system across the range of responsibilities – planning, research, priority setting, standards, resourcing, curriculum development, and human resources. The shift of delivery responsibilities to the boards is intended to help the Department to focus on its leadership role, and to provide the boards with the full range of resources they need to support student learning in the classroom in an integrated way. The aim is to create a system with a dynamic balance between the two levels. Through greater role clarity, this structure will assist the system in working together in an effective and unified way.

C. Retention of School Boards

Single Board Some education partners called for all three school districts to be combined into a single district, with English and French wings in recognition of the constitutional status of minority education rights. For the reasons outlined above with regard to constitutional protections for French first language education and cultural and community development, a continued role for boards would appear to require at least two boards: a French board and an English board. The question now turns to the appropriate number of English boards.

One French Board and One English Board This structure would continue the Commission scolaire de langue française as a separate entity and would merge the present Western School Board and Eastern School District into a single province-wide district serving just over 20,000 students. This approach is lent further impetus by the decision of the Government of New Brunswick, announced in January 2012, to cut its number of school boards in half, from 14 to seven, in an initiative to save a forecast \$5 million.

In recognition of the perceived momentum of this option, the Commission undertook research to examine the impacts of board consolidation. That research falls into three categories:

- Impacts on student learning
- Impacts on community engagement
- Impacts on costs.

The Canadian research is largely confined to cost impacts, while much of the literature from the United States examines the other factors as well. The research indicates that board consolidation can bring some benefits in both student learning and cost effectiveness, but that these benefits are attainable only when very small boards are consolidated into medium-sized boards. This was certainly the case in Prince Edward Island in the 1970s when over 400 districts were consolidated into five. In the space of a decade, modern schools were built, the curriculum was updated, teacher credentials were upgraded, innovative teaching methods were introduced, and a range of student services and supports was put in place. These measures brought dramatic gains in educational attainment and equity of outcomes through the professionalization of education and the provision of a more level playing field.

Further board consolidation from four boards to two did not, however, bring such gains in the 1990s, and a merger from two boards to one will not do so today. While the literature on school district

consolidation is more limited than that on school consolidation, both point in the same direction: consolidation of schools or districts beyond an optimal, medium size does not have benefits and may result in negative impacts in all three categories of learning, engagement, and costs, especially when imposed.

With regard to student learning, much of the research is from the United States, where circumstances differ in a number of ways. The average size of a school district in the United States is just over 3,000 students and only five states have districts with an average size larger than Prince Edward Island's; hence 'large' and 'small' must be interpreted in this context. As well, socio-economic disparities are greater and more geographically concentrated in the United States. Subject to these cautions, there is no evidence from these studies to suggest that larger district size brings benefits in learning outcomes, and some evidence to show that it can be harmful to disadvantaged students and communities. About half the studies show no correlation between board size and learning outcomes. The remainder show some positive associations for smaller district size or some negative associations between larger district size and learning outcomes, particularly with regard to minority and low-income students, and low-wealth communities.¹⁵

With regard to community engagement in education, consolidation of school districts has been found to have negative effects.¹⁶ These result from the greater remoteness of the board from many of its communities, the greater size and population of trustee zones and the resulting loss of connection, and the reduced responsiveness to local and community needs and concerns. These impacts are compounded when consolidation is imposed, as occurred in Prince Edward Island in 1994. The Commission was struck, in its consultations, by the extent to which people in the western part of the Island identified themselves as being from 'the old Unit 1' or 'the old Unit 2.' The loss of this identity is still mourned, and the region is united in its wish to not suffer a further loss. Through all channels of consultation, the vast majority of the public and education partners throughout the Western part of the province expressed their support for, and trust in, their board, their satisfaction with its functioning, and a desire to retain it. There was widespread concern that further board consolidation would disadvantage Western Prince Edward Island, as the needs and priorities of the more urbanized centre of the province would dominate decision-making and resource allocation.

"Big fish eat little fish."

Comment, Western PEI

With regard to cost impacts, the literature widely confirms that net savings from board consolidation are non-existent, or at best "small and short-lived."¹⁷ Proponents of consolidation tend to focus on direct short-term savings through the elimination of a handful of management and associated

¹⁵ See, e.g. Craig Howley et al, *Consolidation of Schools and Districts: What the Research Says and What it Means*, National Education Policy Centre, University of Colorado, February 2011; Kathryn Rooney et al, *An Exploration of District Consolidation*, Colorado School Finance Project, May 2009, pp. 15-16; Pennsylvania School Boards Association, *Merger/Consolidation of School Districts: Does it save money and improve student achievement?*, April 2009

¹⁶ Howley et al, pp. 7 and 9-10

¹⁷ Williams, p. 11

administrative support positions. While these cuts would generate some savings, such savings would be offset or exceeded, in the short term by transitional costs related to the merger, and in the long term by creeping growth on multiple fronts including middle management and greater specialization. In recognition of these diseconomies of scale, some recent literature in the United States is beginning to advocate board deconsolidation in order to reduce costs. One 2007 study found that the state of Michigan could save twelve times as much money by breaking up oversized districts than by consolidating very small districts – \$363 million compared to \$31 million.¹⁸

This cost creep effect is clear when the level and share of spending on board administration are examined prior to and after the wave of school district mergers across Canada from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. In the majority of provinces, including Prince Edward Island, the cost of board administration and its share of total education spending went up, sometimes sharply, in the two to three years following the mergers. These issues are further examined in Section 12.1.

While the long-term impact of board amalgamation on student learning is unknown, the Commission is convinced that the short to medium-term impact would be highly negative. Within the past year, both English boards have increased their focus on student learning and literacy, supported by strategic plans and stable leadership. A forced board merger would disrupt this, consuming personnel at the Department and district offices with the stress, confusion, conflict, and uncertainty of changing leadership, roles, and relationships, and the work of integrating policies, staff and organizational culture. An example of these impacts was cited by the Western School Board in its submission to the Commission – noting that the Board’s work plan in 1995 was almost entirely directed to the task of integrating the former Unit 1 and 2 boards over a year after the merger. A further example of the negative effects of reorganization can be seen in Prince Edward Island’s health system, which underwent five major reorganizations between 1993 and 2005.

Lastly, the Commission notes that the Department has been severely affected by the relocation to Summerside in 2010. This measure has resulted in the turnover of some 70% of the Department’s staff. Currently, numerous personnel are in temporary or acting positions pending the outcome of the Commission’s work. In light of the major changes in Departmental and board roles called for earlier in this report, the Commission advises that maximum priority should be placed on restructuring the Department, building the new capacities that will be needed, restoring stability, and achieving a united and cohesive management team. If significant additional responsibilities and staffing are to be assigned to the boards, this is not the time to compound this challenge by merging boards as well. Such an initiative is a recipe for chaos.

The Commission concludes that the evidence does not support the merger of the two English boards. The assumed benefits are dubious, and, even if attained in the short term, are likely to be offset by

¹⁸ Andrew J. Coulson, *Consolidation, Size and Spending: An Evaluation*, MacKinac Centre for Public Policy, Michigan, 2007, p. 1 <http://www.mackinac.org/archives/2007/s2007-06.pdf>

negative impacts of community disengagement, loss of confidence and support for public education, and diseconomies of scale.

Recommendation # 3: That the current number of School Boards and the current district boundaries be retained.

6.4 Governance of School Districts

Given the recommendation that the current school districts continue to exist, the next question facing the Commission was the governance of these boards. Key questions include how best to engage people with appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to serve as trustees, and how to increase public engagement in school board electoral processes.

Here too, the consultations and research identified several options:

- A. Fully appointed
- B. Elected and appointed
- C. Fully elected

This issue received less attention but greater consensus than the existence and number of boards. There was some support for an appointed, competency-based model, but the majority of those consulted called for retention of elected boards.

A. Fully Appointed Appointment of trustees offers a means of creating a board with selected experience, skills, and competencies. Depending on the selection process and criteria, such a board can also be constructed to be representative of various regions, populations, or other factors. Lines of accountability and authority are clearer, as an appointed board answers to those who created it, not to a public electorate.

These attributes are seen as advantages by some, and as risks by others. The focus on competencies and experience may lead to a board dominated by elites or direct stakeholders, reducing the diversity and objectivity of leadership. Representation may be skewed in some fashion, leaving certain groups or regions with little or no voice. A lack of accountability to the public at large may lead to unresponsiveness.

In Canada, this model is not used for school boards, except in specific zones where no candidate has offered for election. In the United States, well over 90% of boards are elected, and the remainder are appointed. Use of the appointed model is concentrated in a small number of states, with a tendency to switch back and forth in response to intensified public concern about system performance. Research on

this issue does not indicate that either model is superior in terms of effective governance or student achievement.¹⁹

B. Elected and Appointed This model seeks to gain the best of both worlds by featuring a mix of elected and appointed trustees, with elected trustees forming the majority. The elected trustees would represent specific regions of their district, while the appointed trustees would bring the voice of key partners such as parents, teachers, and students to the table. These trustees would be nominated by their various organizations to ensure the integrity of the selection process.

A variant of this model, considered by the Commission, would involve a board on which at least 75% of the trustees are elected. Following the election, the trustees would be required to carry out a competency analysis, identify any gaps, and put out a call for trustee nominations. Community groups such as Home and School, education partners, the business community, and local governments would be invited to submit names for consideration. The board would then recommend names to the Minister for appointment.

While these models are appealing, they also have some potential drawbacks. Appointment of some trustees to represent particular groups may undermine the capacity of the boards to work as one and to take a corporate approach to its deliberations. Appointment of individuals with specific competencies to augment elected members requires integrity in nomination and appointment processes if it is not to be perceived as influenced by external or non-educational considerations. Moreover it may create a ‘two-tier’ dynamic within the group.

C. Fully Elected An electoral process yields trustees who are in office first through their own decision to run, and then by the public’s choice if elected, or implied consent if acclaimed. This dispersed, grassroots process is seen as yielding a board that is more representative of the public at large than an appointed board. Since the public both pays for, and benefits from, education services, this model is seen as essential by many to give the people a voice. In principle, an elected model ensures that governance structures remain open and diverse, and do not become dominated by those close to, or within the system.

For those supporting elections, school boards are more than a service delivery arm of the provincial government, as would be implied by an appointed board. They are one of the core institutions of local democracy, with roots in the earliest years of our society. It is notable that in many areas of public policy, there is growing recognition of the importance of being broadly representative and of hearing diverse points of view, as exemplified by processes such as citizen assemblies. Elected boards bring this potential for a broad external perspective to the education system.

¹⁹ Deborah Land, *Local School Boards Under Review: Their Role and Effectiveness in Relation to Students’ Academic Achievement*, Report # 56, Center for Research on Education of Students Placed at Risk, Johns Hopkins University, 2002

As well, elected boards offer Islanders important opportunities for civic engagement, often leading to further involvement in public life. Both the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Coalition for Women in Government highlighted in their submissions, the accessibility of school board seats to women and the greater representation of women on school boards than on other governing bodies.

In recent years school boards have faced issues such as declining enrolment, rising expectations, aging infrastructure, and responding to increasingly diverse needs. The Commission recognizes that the difficulties experienced by the board of the Eastern School District were a contributing factor in the decision to undertake a review of education governance. Moreover such issues are not unique to Prince

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried.”

Winston Churchill

Edward Island, as other provinces, notably Nova Scotia, have also struggled with the functioning of specific boards from time to time. To link these difficulties to the model of board selection, however, is to imply that board dysfunction is a result of the kinds of representatives yielded by the electoral process. The Commission rejects this interpretation, noting that Prince Edward Island’s school boards have been, and continue to be, comprised of Islanders who may have varying backgrounds and skills, but who are united in their passion for education and their commitment to public service. Trustees devote long hours and much effort to virtually unpaid work that draws more criticism than thanks.

The Commission concludes that Prince Edward Island needs to retain, redefine, and reinvigorate the elected model of board governance, through:

- a clear, compelling and meaningful role for trustees
- innovations to electoral processes to increase engagement, and
- strong promotion of engagement by both potential candidates and voters.

Recommendation # 4: That School Districts be governed by elected Boards of Trustees.

6.5 Trustee Development

Concentrating the attention of school boards on student learning will bring a new focus to the role of trustees. They must become agents of engagement with communities, articulating and promoting the board’s vision for learning and decisions within their Family of Schools, while bringing the schools’ circumstances and needs to the board. To fulfill these responsibilities, they must develop strong relationships with their schools, understand their aspirations, celebrate their successes, and be visible and engaged. Trustees must work together to set district goals and targets for learning, monitor progress toward these goals, and report on that progress to the Minister and the public.

Trustees will be challenged to fulfill these roles and to shift from their historical preoccupation with operational and non-educational matters to a strong and continuing focus on student learning. The public may expect them to continue their historical role, while system staff may have concerns about a larger trustee role in the learning area which has traditionally been largely the domain of professional educators. The Commission believes that there are many Islanders who will be eager to play a part in this new approach. A concentrated outreach and recruitment campaign should be undertaken to engage Islanders who have an interest in student learning.

It is also important to provide orientation and ongoing professional learning to trustees. While this already occurs to some extent, changes will be required to support the recommendations in this report. As the new boards begin their work, strong emphasis on orientation and board development in the early days of board operations will build a more cohesive and resilient organization to meet the various pressures of a changing education system in difficult fiscal times. The Commission's work has identified extensive resources to assist with this work.²⁰

Recommendation # 5: That the Department, working with the Boards, develop and deliver a comprehensive orientation and ongoing development program for Trustees.

²⁰ See, e.g., Nancy Walser, *The Essential School Board Book: Better Governance in the Age of Accountability*, Harvard Education Press, 2009; Ben Levin, *How to Change 5000 Schools: A Practical and Positive Approach to Leading Change at Every Level*, Harvard Education Press, 2010; Michael Barber, *Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders*, Corwin, 2011. As well, handbooks and other resources are available on the websites of school board associations in most other provinces, accessible via <http://cdnsba.org/about-us/membership>. Finally, a national study of effective school board governance is currently underway at Memorial University, and is expected to be completed later in 2012.

7.0 Engagement and Inclusion

Open, participative, inclusive governance structures and processes are essential to reflect and foster the shared responsibility of all partners for student learning. Parent and community engagement are also crucial in supporting student learning. As well, schools have an expanding role in children's lives, both directly and as a delivery site for various other services.

The establishment of the Minister's Education Partnership, called for in Recommendation 2, creates a more inclusive structure that engages key education partners at a system level. This section of the report builds on this recommendation by examining and advising on two important forms of engagement: democratic engagement in the selection of school board trustees, and broader, more inclusive governance processes at the school level.

7.1 Engagement in Trustee Elections

A key, and valid, criticism of the present electoral model of school board trustees concerns the abysmally low level of voter turnout for school board elections. This is a longstanding challenge, not only in Prince Edward Island but in other provinces. For example, in 2009, turnout by school district in Newfoundland and Labrador varied from 1.9% to 12%. In 1993, the *Fogarty Report on the Structure and Governance of the Education System* noted that turnout in the six school board elections from 1983 to 1993 had ranged from 10% to 18%.

Following the amalgamation of the province's four English boards into two in 1994, public engagement declined further. In 1999 and 2002, only eight of 29 trustee zones were contested. In 2002, the low point of voter turnout was reached, with fewer than 2,000 Islanders voting – 2.1 % of eligible voters. Since then, there has been some recovery, with turnout rising to over 3,500 voters or 3.6% of the electorate, and 14 of the 29 seats contested in 2008. The increase in voter turnout can be directly linked to the growth in the number of contested seats, as average votes per zone remained fairly stable at an average of 250 to 300 voters per zone. Voting was highest in zones where three or more people were running for the seat. While this turnout is still extremely low in absolute terms, it is moving in the right direction, and shows that an important key to further progress is to increase the number of zones in which there is an electoral contest.

To achieve this, several things must happen.

The culture must shift from a passive expectation that someone else will step up to the plate, to an active interest in seeing different visions and priorities for education brought forward for public consideration. Competition for trustee seats must be seen as positive and necessary – placing education issues on the public agenda, bringing diverse ideas forward, and putting strong candidates in office. A future trustee role more focused on student learning will encourage this change in attitude.

As well, there must be some investment in promoting more candidacy for office and participation in voting. For the past two electoral cycles, the Home and School Federation has received a grant of \$2,000 to promote voter awareness and turnout. Despite best efforts, this sum does not go very far. By way of comparison, Newfoundland and Labrador devoted \$400,000 to this purpose in 2009. Given the differences in scale, a comparable investment in Prince Edward Island would be \$100,000. While this might seem high, it represents roughly one dollar of every \$8,000 that the education system will spend over a four-year term of office as an investment in engaging and selecting the people who oversee this system. Recognizing that the current tight fiscal climate makes any new initiative difficult, substantial progress could be achieved simply by having all education partners make this area a high priority in their communications. Ongoing messaging about the value of trustee candidacy and voting will have more impact than brief campaigns once every four years. To sustain public engagement, it is also essential to ‘walk the talk,’ through a revitalized, clarified and meaningful role for trustees.

Finally, it must be clear who is responsible for promoting candidacy for school board seats. Currently, this clarity is lacking. Elections PEI carries out the process of school board elections, in accordance with the provisions of the School Board Regulation. In consultations, some felt that Elections PEI should also seek to promote more competition for office; however, this is well outside the mandate set out in the Regulation. Sitting trustees have no incentive to promote competition for their seats; as one trustee observed, the role is already demanding without bringing upon oneself the effort and expense of a contested seat. While many trustees have previously participated in school level parent groups, such groups have no formal role in promoting candidacy. Unlike other provinces, Prince Edward Island does not have a School Board Association, and its related body, the School Trustees Association, has not been active of late.

In 2005 an interesting initiative was implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador. That year, the province undertook to increase participation in the number of candidates running for office and in voter turnout. The School Board Association launched a grassroots initiative led by a locally and nationally recognized education champion, bringing together community leaders and education partners from across the province to recruit candidates to run for office. This was seen as contributing to a strong increase in the number of contested seats from 39% in 2001 to 68% in 2005. In light of this promising outcome and to reflect the stake that all education partners have in a vibrant electoral contest for trustee seats, such an approach should be considered by Prince Edward Island.

Recommendation # 6: That the Minister’s Education Partnership initiate a joint outreach campaign with education partners to promote candidacy for School Board elections.

A further factor in voter turnout is a clear and understandable system of trustee zones. This exists for the Commission scolaire de langue française, which aligns its trustee zones with its school zones. For its English boards, Prince Edward Island’s current system is precisely the opposite – by design, trustee zones are different from the attendance zones of schools and Families of Schools. This is intended to

reflect the principle that school boards are corporate bodies in which all trustees work for the greater good. It was thought that linking trustees to specific school attendance zones would place pressures on them to advocate for their communities and undermine their ability to take a corporate approach.

On the other hand, the public takes the common sense view that there should be a connection between the trustee they vote for and the schools their children attend. They are bewildered by the fact that this is often not the case – contributing to voter confusion and disengagement. Taking their cue from municipal and provincial political systems, Islanders expect their trustee to respond to their concerns, to reflect their needs and priorities to the board, and to advance the interests of their schools.

The reality is, that like other elected officials who represent particular geographic zones, school trustees must balance their corporate responsibility with their role as a voice for their zone. Despite the mismatch of zones to schools, many trustees make an ongoing effort to link with and have a presence in ‘their’ schools. The current system has the worst of both worlds, placing pressures on trustees to be representative, but with a system of zones that impedes this. If the role of trustees is to be purely corporate, then it might be argued that the system of representation should be uncoupled from geography altogether.

The Commission believes, however, that the opposite direction should be taken - that the revitalization of the school board electoral system depends in part on a closer linkage between trustees and their communities.

This can be achieved by a simple change, widely supported not just in the Commission’s consultations but in similar reviews over many years – to align trustee electoral zones to school attendance zones – specifically, to link trustees to Families of Schools. The Commission recognizes that this model will continue to place pressures on trustees to be a voice for their schools, but probably little more so than at present, and at least in a zone system that makes sense to everyone. This risk, moreover, is more than offset by the benefits that are likely to accrue. The Family of Schools model will:

- Maximize coherence and relevance for both the public and for trustees
- Be instantly understandable for the vast majority of parents and the public with no complicated information campaigns required
- Provide a single point of contact for the public and parents of children within the zone
- Promote closer linkages among schools within the zone
- Enhance engagement in education
- Increase voter turnout
- Facilitate innovation in voting processes and locations.

Recommendation # 7: That Trustee representation be based on the Family of Schools zones.

Prince Edward Island’s English Families of Schools vary significantly in size and complexity:

- Kinkora, Morell, Souris and Kensington have fewer than 1,000 students, with enrolment ranging from 450 to 750 students each. These Families are comprised of two or three schools.
- Montague, Westisle, and Bluefield have between 2,000 and 3,000 students each, and include eight or nine schools.
- Three Oaks, Colonel Gray, and Charlottetown Rural serve over 3,000 students each, and also include eight or nine schools.

Similarly, Prince Edward Island’s French schools vary in size, with two schools having an enrolment of over 250 and the remaining four serving fewer than 100 students each. The French board addresses this issue by varying the number of trustees representing each school zone.

The Commission believes that a cap on the number of trustees is needed to promote optimal board functioning, but that there should be flexibility within this maximum. There should be a minimum of one trustee per Family of Schools, yielding six in the east and four in the west, but additional trustees could be added to reflect larger enrolments or greater numbers of schools in some cases. To continue the coherence of the approach, these might be aligned with sub-families of intermediate schools where applicable.

The Commission scolaire, meanwhile, has proposed a change to a system of one elected trustee for each of its six school zones, and three additional trustees to be elected at large. The Commission supports such an innovation, as it offers an opportunity to learn about the implications of a mixed geographic and at-large model.

Recommendation # 8: That each School Board have a maximum of nine Trustees, with a minimum of one Trustee per Family of Schools.

7.2 Youth Engagement

It is widely recognized that voter turnout in all forms of electoral processes is declining worldwide, and that youth disengagement plays a key part in this.²¹ Research undertaken for Elections Canada in 2003²² suggested a number of ways to increase voter participation among young people, including:

- making voting easier and more meaningful for first-time voters
- making politics more relevant to the young
- providing them with the tools they need to understand its relevance to their own lives
- engaging them more directly in the political process.

²¹ Conference Board of Canada, “Voter Turnout,” *How Canada Performs*, September 2009.
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/society/voter-turnout.aspx#map>

²² Jon H. Pammett and Lawrence LeDuc, “Confronting the Problem of Declining Voter Turnout Among Youth, *Electoral Insights*, July 2003. (Cited February 17, 2012)

During its consultations, the Commission met with three diverse groups of high school students, and counts those meetings among its time best spent. The students offered a wide range of perceptive and thoughtful insights into how the system works for them on a day-to-day basis. While many spoke positively of their schools and teachers, they also expressed a range of concerns, including:

- the disruption of learning when the regular classroom teachers are pulled out for activities such as meetings, in-service training or curriculum development
- the lack of access to courses and programs, particularly in rural schools
- inconsistencies in approaches such as exam exemptions
- the tedium of traditional lecture techniques and the repetitiveness of some curricula
- the low academic expectations and the fear that they will not be adequately prepared for the future.

“Classes are not challenging enough and there’s too much repetition.”

Student, Montague

“Thank you for coming to talk to us. No one ever asks us what we think.”

Student, Kensington

They were forthright, but consistently constructive and respectful of each others’ views and of the process.

Youth have a unique perspective and important things to say. They are highly capable of making a valuable contribution to education governance.

The voice of youth needs to be heard on an ongoing basis.

Ontario’s experience demonstrates the value that student trustees can bring to education governance, and offers guidance on how such involvement can be structured. Students are the reason the system exists. Their ongoing presence as voting members on school boards will help the system focus on student learning.

Recommendation # 9: That each Board of Trustees include one student Trustee, to be elected annually by fellow students, on a rotating basis among Families of Schools.

To further promote engagement, the Commission advocates an additional innovation - a reduction in the voting age to 16 for school board elections. This offers several potential benefits:

- It would offer a new venue – schools – to promote civic engagement and participation on an issue that matters to youth.
- It would require trustees to reach out directly to youth and learn about their concerns and priorities.

- It offers the potential for greater engagement of parents and families as youth bring home their experiences and ideas.
- It may encourage greater participation by youth in other democratic processes upon adulthood.

Recommendation # 10: That the voting age for School Board elections be 16 years.

7.3 Electoral Processes

The Commission also gave consideration to other measures to promote a more vibrant electoral process. These include trustee eligibility criteria, terms of office, frequency of elections, alignment with other election processes, responsibility for the electoral process, duration of election periods, and provision of a broader range of voting processes.

Trustee Eligibility Currently, the *School Act* sets out only a few criteria for trustee eligibility. Trustees must be over the age of 18, have lived for at least six months in the zone in which they are offering, and may not be employees of that board. As well, for the French board, they must have or be eligible to have a child in the French first language system. Amending the *School Act* to also require such factors as formal educational qualifications, knowledge of educational issues, demonstrated community involvement, or experience in board governance, runs the risks of being exclusionary and of discouraging candidacy. An electoral process gives the public the right to determine whether or not a candidate is suitable for office. As such, the Commission supports continuation of the basic criteria currently in place.

Term of Office In 2008, the length of a trustee's term of office moved from three years to four. No calls were heard to suggest that this term should be changed.

Number of Terms Historically, many trustees have served for lengthy periods and often through acclamation. This may discourage competition for office out of reluctance to compete with a long-serving community member. The option exists of placing a limit on the number of terms that a trustee may serve. Such limits are common on many appointed boards and in the non-profit sector.

The Commission believes, however, that such an approach is not compatible with a democratically elected model, as it impedes the public's right to choose their representatives. There is value in the knowledge and experience of trustees serving more than one term. Furthermore, attrition and enhanced public engagement will bring new members. Accordingly the Commission does not support a limit on the number of terms of office.

Timing of Elections The Commission considered the question of whether voter participation would increase if school board elections were tied in with municipal or provincial elections. The Province has moved to fixed four-year election dates for provincial elections and will shortly have the same process

for municipal elections. This offers the potential to create such an alignment. While it would make these more complex, it would save the effort of a stand-alone school board election, may increase convenience for voters and possibly allow for economies of scale. The logistics of such an approach are seen as manageable, according to the Chief Electoral Officer.

On the other hand, consultations identified drawbacks to this approach. Of most concern was the potential for issues in each campaign to spill over into the other, to the detriment of either or both. As well, there was concern that such an approach might be confusing for voters, involving different election zones and candidates. In addition, almost one-third of Island voters live in unincorporated areas, impeding alignment with municipal elections. In the near term, the next municipal election, in November 2012, also excludes the 'Big Four' cities and towns, home to almost half the population.

While it would be technically feasible at this late date to begin preparing for a May 2012 election, there are drawbacks. Most importantly, there would be insufficient time to build public awareness and promote candidacy. The Commission concludes that November 2012 would be the optimal time to hold the next round of school board elections.

To avert the potential of confusion with municipal elections also scheduled for November 2012, the school board elections should take place on a different date, and in school settings. In future, municipal and provincial elections will occur on different four-year cycles, preventing any overlap.

Recommendation # 11: That School Board elections occur in November, with the first election to be held in 2012, and that Trustees take office effective January 1.

Responsibility for Elections The Commission met with the Province's Chief Electoral Officer to explore innovations to make the electoral process more accessible and engaging. These include extending voting periods, on-line voting, and alignment with scheduled activities that draw the public into the schools.

A study commissioned by Elections Canada following the 2008 federal election suggested considerable public interest in voting innovations, especially with on-line voting. Among the 42% of Canadians who did not vote, half indicated that they would be very likely to vote on-line; among youth non-voters, this proportion increased to 55%.²³

An evaluation of electronic voting commissioned by Elections Canada examined the pros and cons and the experience of several Canadian municipalities as well as European jurisdictions. Methods such as pre-registration with a password were used to ensure integrity; voters were able to vote over a period of several days. While overall results varied, there was a significant increase in advance voting.²⁴

²³ Strategic Counsel, *Survey of Electors Following the 40th General Election*, Elections Canada, March 2009, p. 45

²⁴ Canada-Europe Transatlantic Dialogue, *A Comparative Assessment on Electronic Voting*, Prepared for Elections Canada, 2010, p. 57

In recognition of Elections PEI's concerns about the compatibility of these options with its legislation, and to facilitate greater flexibility and innovation, the Commission concludes that responsibility for school board elections should be reassigned. In many provinces, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario, school board elections are aligned with municipal elections and run by municipal officials. In some provinces, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, school boards operate their own elections with support from their school board association and their Department of Education.

Recommendation # 12: That School Districts, under the direction and oversight of the Department, be responsible for conducting Trustee elections.

Recommendation # 13: That School Board elections allow on-line voting, an extended voting period, and school-based polling stations, to encourage and facilitate voter participation.

Increasing Participation The Commission heard in its consultations that the majority of Islanders support an elected model for their school boards. If they wish to retain this model, the public has a responsibility to make it work by offering as candidates and by voting. To have over half the seats filled by acclamation or appointment, as happened in 2008, and to have very low turnout for the remaining seats, undermines the benefits of the elected model. Action is needed to increase electoral contests and voter turnout. The Commission believes that, through their action or lack of action, Islanders will choose their form of trustee representation.

Recommendation # 14: That a "yes" or "no" vote be required in lieu of acclamation in any zone where only one candidate has offered, to ensure that every candidate is affirmed by his or her zone residents.

Recommendation # 15: That the Minister may appoint a Trustee in any zone where turnout is less than 20% of eligible voters for two consecutive elections.

7.4 Parental Engagement and Inclusion

The necessity of parents' engagement in their children's education is increasingly recognized. During the 1990s, this awareness, coupled with the growing distance between school boards and their communities arising from school board consolidation, generated pressure for more open and inclusive governance. Many jurisdictions, including Prince Edward Island, responded with a formalized and mandated school

governance role for parents and community members – usually advisory, but in some other provinces extending into shared decision-making.

In 1993, the Fogarty Report called for “school-based advisory councils with broad community representation to become an integral part of the governance structure of PEI’s educational system.”²⁵ While this recommendation was accepted and implemented, the new structure was layered over the existing and long-established system of Home and School Associations in many schools. This led to an uneasy and confusing era of parent involvement, in which many schools operated two advisory groups with overlapping membership and roles. This was resolved after several years with the recognition in the *School Act* that a Home and School Association could be considered a school council for purposes of the Act.

In its 2005 report, the Task Force on Student Achievement noted, “All of the available research reinforces the central fact that parental involvement in their children’s learning has a most positive impact ... During consultations, the theme of parental engagement emerged as one of the most supported concepts necessary to improve student achievement.” Accordingly, the Task Force placed high priority on enhancing parent engagement at the school level and building the capacity of parent organizations.²⁶

In response, Government requested the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation lead the development of a province-wide *Parental Engagement Initiative*. The strategy, completed in 2007, defined the concept of parental engagement as occurring at multiple levels. At the level of the student and family, many Island parents were strongly engaged in their child’s education – supporting their child’s learning at home, and communicating with the child’s teacher through parent-teacher interviews and other channels. Participation in school life was also strong, particularly at the elementary level, with regard to attendance at school events such as concerts and fairs, support for fundraising endeavours, and volunteer support in a range of capacities. However, fewer parents participated in formal governance groups such as Home and School, at both the school and provincial levels.

Under the strategy, a survey was then carried out to determine how to encourage and support parental engagement at all levels,²⁷ and funding was provided to a wide range of grassroots projects in schools across the Island. Parental engagement in school-level bodies in the English education system has increased, with Home and School Associations at most schools, primarily at the elementary level, and parental advisory councils at other schools, especially at the senior high school level. Almost every English school has a parent body, and virtually all of these, whether Home and School Association or advisory council, are members of the provincial Home and School Federation. While the model features

²⁵ Albert Fogarty, “Executive Summary,” *Towards Excellence: Review of the Structure and Governance of PEI’s Education System*, 1993, p. 6

²⁶ Task Force on Student Achievement, *Excellence in Education: A Challenge for Prince Edward Island*, December 2005, p. 27

²⁷ Vicki Bryanton, *Parent Engagement Survey PEI*, PEI Home and School Federation, 2008
<http://www.edu.pe.ca/peihsf/initiatives.html>

considerable diversity, the Commission did not hear any concerns or requests for its rationalization into a more consistent structural model.

The Commission did hear, however, that there is scope to include parents more fully as partners in education governance – building on the progress to date in the number of parent bodies, and their broader involvement in a range of projects supporting parental engagement and student learning. The call, in Recommendation 2, for the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation to be represented on the Minister’s Education Partnership responds to this need at the system level.

At the school level, three areas hold particular potential for greater parental involvement. Principal selection and school development planning are discussed below, while financial accountability is addressed in Section 10.5.

The principal is widely recognized as playing the key role in the nature and tone of the relationship with parents and the school community. In view of the growing recognition of the importance of this relationship, the school community, as represented by the school parent body, should have a formal voice in the process of principal selection. The *School Act* currently includes, among the functions of the school advisory council, “to advise, where requested by the school board, with respect to the selection of a principal for the school.” At the district level, the relevant Minister’s Directive on hiring of superintendents does not include a parent representative on its required selection board, but does provide, at the option of the school board, for community representatives to meet with the candidate and provide comment and observations to the selection boards.²⁸

Recommendation # 16: That Boards require representation from a school-based parent group in the selection of a principal.

School development planning that has occurred in the past several years has been focused on three goals, one of which is parental engagement, and has been supported by various sources of information, including *Tell Them From Me* surveys. Despite this, the planning process is internal at many schools and the survey results have generally not been made available to the public.

Recommendation # 17: That Boards require representation from a school-based parent group in all school development planning.

²⁸ Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Minister’s Directive No. 2001-04: Recruitment and Hiring Procedures for Superintendents of Education*, 2001 <http://www.gov.pe.ca/eecd/index.php3?number=1027963>

8.0 Roles and Responsibilities

To concentrate the energies of the education system on student learning, it is not enough to talk about structure. System structure is far from the most important factor in student learning, and in fact educational experts contend that it makes little or no difference.²⁹ Doing the right things in the right way – in whatever structure – is much more critical.

“Of all the work that occurs at every level of our education system, the interaction between teacher and student is the primary determinant of student success. A great teacher can make the difference between a student who achieves at a high level and a student who slips through the cracks ...”³⁰

Student learning depends first and foremost on what happens in the classroom – on the interaction between the teacher’s skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and the readiness and capacity of students to engage in learning. Factors such as facilities, technology and materials can play a supportive role, but cannot substitute for this interaction between the teacher and the student.

“A great teacher makes all the difference.”

Student, Charlottetown Rural

Research both in Canada and abroad points to the improvement of teaching practice as the best and surest way to achieve gains in student learning. This effect can be seen within Prince Edward Island – following recent establishment of early literacy targets and provision of intensive support by literacy coaches and mentors, significant gains have been achieved in early literacy. These classroom-based approaches need to be extended to all students at all grade levels.

The entire system must be aligned to support what happens in the classroom. Major shifts are needed in “who does what, and how things are done.” These include:

- A forward-looking vision and strategic plan for education in Prince Edward Island
- Alignment of policies and practices at all levels in support of the plan
- A shift in emphasis from curriculum development to curriculum delivery
- A change in how curriculum development is carried out
- Changes to the professional learning model
- A comprehensive review of special needs
- Greater attention to the human resource function
- A shift in budgeting and financial management from inputs to results.

The Commission is convinced that greater role clarity and refocusing of priorities will yield not only better results, but also a more cost-effective, efficient system.

²⁹ Levin, *How to Change 5000 Schools*, p. 69.

³⁰ R.C. Wei, A. Andree, & L. Darling-Hammond, *Great Teachers and Great Leaders*, 2009

8.1 Overarching Roles

The *School Act* sets out the major responsibilities of various educational partners today.³¹

- The **Minister** is responsible for the overall leadership of the education system. His or her duties include system planning and adaptation, curriculum development, establishment of goals, standards and outcomes, and assessment. The Minister is given extensive powers to fulfill these duties, and may delegate any of these duties and powers to the **Department**. The Minister's powers may be exercised through Directives, which have the force of law.
- **School boards** are responsible for the delivery of educational services, including instruction, staffing, facilities, transportation, financial management, evaluation of school effectiveness, ensuring school improvement planning, and community relations. Individual **trustees** are responsible to attend meetings, act in good faith, and comply with legislation and regulations. The Act also assigns responsibilities to district **Superintendents** for general leadership of the educational programs and services and the operations of the school board.
- **Principals** are responsible, with regard to student learning, to provide instructional leadership, ensure the curriculum is delivered, evaluate teachers, ensure assessments are conducted, initiate school development planning, and teach if required. They also have a wide range of responsibilities for the management of their school.
- **Teachers'** responsibilities include teaching the prescribed curriculum, encouraging students in the pursuit of learning, keeping up to date on the content and pedagogy of their teaching fields, and attending to the safety and well-being of the students.
- Parents of students in a school may establish a **school advisory council**.
- **Students** are responsible to attend classes, respect others and the code of conduct, and "be diligent in the pursuit of learning." **Parents** have the right to information on their child, and the responsibility to "encourage the student in the pursuit of learning."

The Commission was told by many education partners that the actual functioning of the system has drifted away from this formal allocation of roles and responsibilities. Specific concerns included the lack of overall direction, preoccupation with operational matters at all levels, role overlap and conflict, diffusion of accountability, and mistrust.

³¹ See Education Governance Commission, "Appendix II: The School Act: Excerpts re Roles, Responsibilities, and Powers," *Charting the Way: Discussion Paper*, October 2011, <http://www.peieducationgovernance.com/>

At the heart of the Commission’s recommendations is the call for a strong leadership role by the Minister. To support this, the Department must do less rowing and more steering – and in order to steer in the right direction, it must do more navigating, through:

- research into emerging and best practices
- evaluation of outcomes and application of insights, and
- planning a better route to the desired results.

To support a Departmental focus on these roles, and to reduce overlap and role confusion and conflict, most direct services should move to the district level.

Prominent in the Commission’s consultations was the need to enable principals to focus on instructional leadership. Action is needed on several fronts to reduce or simplify the range and level of procedures and requirements that make little or no contribution to student learning.

Recommendation # 18: That the Department be responsible for broad strategic planning, research, goal-setting, monitoring, and system oversight.

Recommendation # 19: That School Boards be responsible for the delivery of direct education services and programs to K-12 students.

Recommendation # 20: That the School Boards undertake an assessment of principals’ workloads and school-level administrative and operational requirements to prioritize responsibilities and streamline the school management role so that principals and teachers can focus more fully on student learning.

8.2 Strategic Planning and Research

The Commission cannot emphasize too strongly the widespread desire in the system for a shared sense of purpose and direction. The Department must lead this process but all partners must play a role. As set out by Michael Fullan,³² system-wide gains in learning can only be achieved through the willing engagement of all partners. They cannot be decreed, imposed, or attained through measures aimed only at those who are doing the best or the worst. To achieve gains in student learning in every classroom and every school, the system must be led, not driven. Buy-in requires a collaborative process, and the Minister’s Education Partnership has been designed to enable this collaboration.

³² Michael Fullan, *Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform*, Centre for Strategic Education, Seminar Series Paper # 204, Melbourne Australia, April 2011 http://www.michaelfullan.ca/home_articles/SeminarPaper204.pdf

The work of developing a shared philosophy, vision, principles, and goals, as called for in Recommendation 1, should be the first priority of the Department and Minister's Education Partnership in the coming months. It is essential that these then be given expression through the development of a province-wide strategic plan which would frame, guide, and align the development of district operational plans and school development plans, all aimed at enhancing student learning. This plan would bring the coherence and the sense of shared purpose and direction which is widely seen as urgently needed. This strategic plan should be regularly renewed as progress is achieved.

To reach its goals, the entire system must build its capacity to continuously monitor and evaluate how well things are being done, and to identify effective teaching and instructional practices and apply them to improving student learning. The Department should play the lead role in research to develop a more evidence-based approach to the design and delivery of education programs and services in Prince Edward Island, and should serve as an innovation hub, linking Island Boards and schools to the strong and growing research expertise at the University of Prince Edward Island as well as other provinces and jurisdictions. This role will require the Department to expand its research capacity.

Through their participation in the Minister's Education Partnership, districts will be assisted in reviewing their current strategic and operational plans and aligning them with the overall plan's directions and priorities once established. These district plans will then provide a framework for schools to align their school development plans, taking into account their various circumstances, starting points, and needs. The overall aim of these measures should be to achieve alignment at every level of the system around a focus on student learning. Monitoring of alignment and reporting on outcomes are addressed in Section 10, Accountability.

Recommendation # 21: That the Department, guided by the Minister's Education Partnership, and building on the philosophy, vision, principles and goals, develop and renew on a regular basis, a strategic plan to focus Prince Edward Island's education system on student learning, and that Boards and schools align their plans accordingly.

8.3 Policy Development and Renewal

At present, the education system does not have an integrated policy process. Generally, policies are developed within each level and structure in the organization in reaction to issues and needs as they arise. Province-wide policies are mostly expressed through Minister's Directives, a policy instrument unique to the education system. School boards have each developed their own policy manuals over time.

Several observations can be made about the functioning of the policy role:

- Few policies at either the Department or the boards address student learning. The majority are operational or administrative in nature.
- The Minister’s Directives are relatively few in number, and vary in scope from very broad (MD on Special Needs) to very minute (MD on Activation of Amber Lights on School Buses).
- At the board level, there are major inconsistencies in what policies exist, what they say, how they are organized, and how they are implemented:
 - Some policies are unique to a single board, suggesting that policy gaps may exist at the other boards.
 - For those topics covered by some or all of the boards, the policies may differ substantially.
 - Across the boards, the policies are organized in different ways, making it difficult to even compare them. The Eastern School District codes its policies according to a structure developed by the National Education Policy Network; the Western School Board groups its policies into two categories of Governance and Communities for Learning; and the Commission scolaire de langue française uses a structure similar to the Eastern School District.
- Whatever the content of policies, the consultations also strongly suggested that they are not implemented in a consistent fashion from school to school. This was attributed partly to the lack of explanatory guidelines and in-servicing of policies, and partly to the lack of oversight of whether policies are being adhered to, a matter addressed further in Section 10 on Accountability.

These inconsistencies, which were highlighted for the public during the school closure process, played a major role in the resolution by the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation, in 2009, that “the provincial government and local home and school associations study the viability of consolidating the Eastern School District and Western School Board into one English language school board that would operate under a unified set of policies and regulations to ensure consistent and equitable delivery of education programming and services across the province.”³³ In a subsequent discussion paper, the Federation noted, “This difference in board policies by itself is not a reason to move to a single English language school board. But the Federation believes that it presents an opportunity for parents to talk about the operation and governance of our school boards.”³⁴

All education partners have a role to play in bringing about more integrated, coherent and consistent policies. While this work is important, it should follow the renewal of the system’s philosophy, vision, goals, and strategic plan and the modernization of the *School Act* and Regulations.

- The Minister’s Education Partnership will be responsible for initiating policy review and integration, by striking a working group to examine the directives and policies currently in place,

³³ PEI Home and School Federation, *Resolutions 2009*, Annual General Meeting April 18, 2009

³⁴ PEI Home and School Federation, *English Language School Boards on Prince Edward Island*, 2010, p.2

identify gaps, inconsistencies, and outdated policies, set priorities, and develop a plan for revision, integration, and renewal.

- The role of the Department is to support this work through designated policy capacity.
- The role of boards is to:
 - share in policy leadership through the Minister's Education Partnership
 - identify changing needs and bring forward their community issues re policies
 - review drafts of policies developed by working groups, engage the public, and provide feedback to the work group
 - ratify policies once finalized
 - provide in-servicing and monitor implementation of the policies once developed, to ensure consistency in practice, not just on paper.

Recommendation # 22: That the Minister's Education Partnership carry out a collaborative review and renewal of Department and Board policies leading to province-wide alignment.

8.4 Curriculum Development and Implementation

Curriculum includes an outline of the courses and the content and skills that students will learn at all grade levels. Curriculum guides define:

- what students are expected to know and be able to do at each level
- how the education system can provide opportunities for students to develop this knowledge and these skills and attitudes
- how the system will know when students have achieved this
- resources to support teaching and learning.³⁵

Currently, substantial system resources are devoted to the curriculum function – 41 positions at the Department and a further 44 in the district offices (23 at the Eastern School District excluding department heads, 15 at the Western School Board, and six at the Commission scolaire de langue française.) These positions equate to one curriculum-related position for approximately every 18 classroom teachers in the system.

The Department is responsible for curriculum development and initial in-servicing. Some of its 41 curriculum-related staff are permanent, while others are drawn from the education system and are employed by the Department for a fixed term, usually three years. These staff are organized first by language (24 in English Programs, 17 in French Programs), then by level (elementary or secondary), and then by subject area. The current programs of study include over 300 courses. Priorities and timing of curriculum renewal are guided by a seven-year plan which is in effect until 2014. To develop or update

³⁵ Kathy MacDonald, Director of English Programs, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Presentation*, Stakeholder Meeting November 14, 2011

curriculum in a particular subject area, the Department establishes curriculum committees largely comprised of classroom teachers pulled out on a day-to-day basis. Initial in-servicing is carried out mostly through large group sessions of one or more days to introduce the new curriculum to teachers.

In addition to literacy and numeracy coaching, curriculum staff in the district offices may provide professional development in various areas, facilitate study groups of teachers, respond to requests from external agencies and groups seeking access to schools and students, support co-curricular activities, and provide teacher resources.

The Commission's consultations identified a number of concerns with curriculum development:

- The current plan is not a widely available document, and many consulted were unaware of its existence.
- The current level of curriculum development requires substantial resources and imposes continuing pressure on the system.
- The process is not well coordinated, with teachers at some grade levels struggling to absorb multiple changes at once.
- The subject specialization approach has been criticized as fragmented and not consistent with a move to a student-centred holistic approach or 21st-century cross-curricular approaches such as project-based learning.
- The current model of curriculum implementation is both inefficient and ineffective – pulling teachers out of the classroom does not work as well as classroom-based, “at-the-elbow” coaching and mentoring.
- The maintenance of curriculum is inadequate.
- Some anecdotal information indicates that outdated curriculum may continue to be taught in some classrooms.

The Commission notes that many of these criticisms are identical to those expressed in the *Fogarty Report* in 1993. These issues are not unique to Prince Edward Island; they have also been identified by other provinces. Levin notes,

“Curriculum is often described as a central element for school improvement. My perspective is different: I put teaching and learning practices far ahead of curriculum as a means of improving student outcomes, and believe that the emphasis on curriculum in most places has not been the best priority for limited time, energy, and resources ... curriculum, no matter how good, is often not used or not used fully by teachers and students ... writing new curricula or performance objectives is not a good way to use teachers' time in comparison with improving daily student assessment practices or learning new pedagogical practices.”³⁶

These concerns are at the heart of both student learning and accountability. It is clear that a new approach and structure for curriculum development and implementation is needed to shift emphasis from development to support of curriculum delivery in the classroom.

³⁶ Ben Levin, *How to Change 5,000 Schools*, p. 100

Recommendation # 23: That the Department develop a long-term, comprehensive, integrated curriculum development and renewal plan.

Pending completion of this plan, that no new curriculum development be commenced.

That the Departmental structure for curriculum development be changed from the current scale and model to a small complement of personnel organized along grade levels, i.e. K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12 with responsibility for ensuring a coordinated approach to curriculum development.

That when the development of new curriculum requires a teacher team, the members of the team participate on a block-of-time basis (e.g. 1-2 months), rather than the current 'a day here, a day there' approach.

That the Department and Boards work collaboratively to develop a new classroom-based, 'at-the-elbow' model for curriculum implementation with ongoing in-servicing for teachers.

That school districts be responsible for implementation of curriculum.

That most of the Department's current complement of curriculum-related positions be redeployed to the Districts for integration into the new model.

That a curriculum mentor model be developed to respond to identified classroom needs and provide curriculum delivery support to teachers.

That the Department be responsible for monitoring and oversight to ensure this model is implemented as intended.

8.5 Professional Learning

Professional learning is more important than ever in helping teachers meet the changing demands in our classrooms. It is worth noting that countries experiencing the highest levels of student achievement have teachers who are highly trained, valued by society and who work in school systems where collaboration time is regularly scheduled, and often built into the school day. The "best" school systems are in continuous dialogue about whole system reform. Teachers are moving from individual practice to a collaborative model. The collective capacity of all teachers combined far outweighs individual excellence. These school systems don't want teachers to simply teach; they want them to collaborate for the good of the entire

"... the quality of the profession will be increased when we pay attention to the renewal of all teachers everywhere ..."

Andy Hargreaves

system.³⁷ Their collaboration time is spent working with colleagues, sharing best practices, preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, reading research, observing other classrooms and meeting with students and parents.

With regard to the content of professional learning, strong emphasis should be placed on the maintenance and support of the existing curriculum. Research, as well as the Commissioners' own experience, affirms that the quality of the curriculum is irrelevant if it is not being taught as intended or supported with effective instructional practices.

The Commission heard, in its consultations and particularly in its discussions with students, that the extensive use of substitute teachers to enable teacher in-servicing and other system-generated activities, undermines learning for students and causes anxiety, stress, and weakened performance. These concerns were most acute in rural areas and among students in specialty areas such as French immersion.

As with in-servicing, the use of 'a-day-here-and-a-day-there' pull-out approach to professional learning may be easy to implement, but it is neither good for the students nor effective for teachers. This is a critically important example of where the system needs to put student learning first. Here too, the model needs to move toward greater use of the at-the-elbow coaching and mentoring techniques which have proven successful with early literacy, bringing expertise into the classroom to benefit both teachers and students. Professional learning communities, already a vibrant force across the province, can and should also play a larger role. Their beneficial impact can be further increased through alignment of their activities with plans and goals at the provincial, district or school level.

Where group approaches outside the classroom are appropriate, professional learning should be scheduled when students are not in school.

Effective professional learning time must be embedded, ongoing and focused on improving daily classroom instruction. When professional learning is meaningful, and improves instruction, teachers buy in and fully support its objectives. Professional learning plays a critical role in ensuring teachers' professional practise meets public demands and expectations. The bottom line is improved student learning. Quality teachers have a greater influence on student learning than any other school-based factor. It is essential that professional learning efforts for teachers be system wide and clearly aligned with curriculum and assessment. Good teaching matters. It matters more than anything else we do.

The Commission is advised that work is already underway within the Department to rethink and redesign the system's approach to professional learning. Professional development activity has slowed during this work, and currently is almost halted in support of the Department's fiscal targets for 2011-12. This pause facilitates a review of both the content and process of professional learning to ensure that both support a focus on student learning.

³⁷ Wei, R.C., Andree, A., & Darling-Hammond, L., 2009

The Department, in consultation with education partners, should explore alternative models to enable the allocation of regular time for professional learning. By extending the instructional day or adjusting the school calendar, effective professional learning can be built into the system without compromising students' time in class.

- The school day could be extended to enable scheduling of full-day or half-day blocks of professional learning time during which schools are closed to students.
- Half-day professional learning (for example, every second Wednesday afternoon), is being used by some schools in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and was used at Fortune Consolidated in Prince Edward Island from 2003 to 2006 in a pilot seen as positive and effective by both teachers and parents.
- Full day professional learning (for example, every second Friday) holds the potential for operational savings (e.g. bussing costs), and may lead to better use of instructional time through reduced student absenteeism due to medical appointments, sports activities, etc.
- The longer day could introduce some flexibility, facilitating innovations in subject scheduling. These might include changes to the number of periods in a high school day, or a move from the current rigid and overcrowded intermediate school day schedule to a more integrated approach with larger blocks of time for literacy and numeracy.
- The school calendar could be extended to allow for additional professional learning.

Recommendation # 24: That professional learning for teachers be concentrated on improving daily classroom instruction and assessment.

Recommendation # 25: That the Minister amend the school calendar to establish regular blocks of time for professional learning without loss of instructional time.

Currently, those seeking to become school administrators are required to have at least one course in educational administration, and seven years of teaching experience. It is recognized that most Island education administrators have credentials far beyond these requirements. Despite this, it is questionable whether their training has adequately prepared them for a role that one Island principal described as follows in her submission to the Commission:

“... while principals are expected to serve as instructional leaders, they have very little time to do so because of the demands placed on them outside this realm. Safety procedures, committee meetings, transportation, building maintenance, counselling, registration, meetings with outside agencies, fundraising, meal provider and health service provider are just a few of the responsibilities that are assumed by a principal ... administrators spend countless hours soliciting funds so that students may be well-fed, adequately clothed, and receive a well-rounded education that promotes health and wellness ... in addition to tending to the educational needs of students, administrators check for nits/lice, administer medication, bandage wounds, wipe

away tears, counsel, and generally respond to most needs that arrive at the office ... Dealing with inappropriate behaviours of students is probably the most time-consuming task of all ... I have not touched upon the day-to-day tasks that consume our time to run a safe and successful school: timetables, supervision schedules (halls, lunchrooms, playground, bus), canteen, exam timetables, school-based policy development, newsletter, parent council meetings, budgets, ordering and purchasing resources, etc. ...”

As this steady creep of responsibility has turned our educational leaders into managers, it is telling that their title has shifted from ‘principals’ to ‘administrators’. A clear and urgent call was voiced by principals at all levels for “the time to devote to student learning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and supervision” to enable them to create environments that support learning and development of all students.

The Commission heard from school administrators that consideration is being given to standards and certification around their role, and that they welcome this. Support was expressed for creation of a self-regulating body to oversee this enhanced certification. In addition, a pressing need was seen for more ongoing professional learning for school administrators. Areas of priority included supervision and performance evaluation, budgeting, Trevlac and Student Achieve programs.

The Commission notes that the Department and the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty of Education have begun to work together to examine entry-level teacher training, and that this initiative is intended to expand to a broader collaboration including the Prince Edward Island Teachers’ Federation and boards, and a wider scope of work including expanded and enhanced professional learning for both teachers and administrators.

The school system’s support staff – administrative assistants, maintenance staff and custodians, bus drivers, education assistants and youth service workers – also play a vital role in creating a positive, safe, supportive learning environment for Island students. The Commission heard that their roles also feature mounting demands and growing complexity. Ongoing training and professional learning is needed for education support staff as well, to enable them to better carry out their evolving core roles, and to effectively support the principal and teachers in their work.

Recommendation # 26: That the Department, in collaboration with education partners, develop an Instructional Leadership program for principals.

8.6 Services to Students with Special Educational Needs

While growth has occurred in almost every area and at all levels of the education system over the past five years, nowhere has it been faster than in the area of student services, and particularly in the area of supports to students with special needs.

The Minister's Directive on Special Education, revised in 2001, sets out a broad definition of special educational needs:

“Special Education means programming and/or services designed to accommodate students within the public school system whose educational needs require interventions different from, or in addition to, those which are needed by most students. Assessments of students are the basis for determining appropriate special education programs and services. These programs and services may involve the use of adapted or modified curriculum, materials and facilities, and/or alternative methodologies, and/or additional assistance from student support staff within school settings.

‘Special educational needs’ refers to educational needs of students:

- i. where there is substantive normative agreement – such as blind and partially sighted, deaf and partially hearing, severe and profound mental handicap, multiple handicaps
- ii. who have significant difficulties in learning which do not appear to be attributable to (i) or (iii).
- iii. which are significant and are considered to arise primarily from socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic factors.”

Within the Department, the student services division budget more than tripled from 2005-06 to the current school year, due in part to a massive expansion of teaching supports for newcomer children, the addition of speech-language resources, and the 2008 transfer of responsibility for early childhood from the then Department of Social Services and Seniors. Within the district offices, growth has been fastest in the area of professional staff, including autism supports and psychologists. At the school level, spending on the category of educational assistants and youth service workers has grown faster than any other, up 37% over the four years from 2005-06 to 2009-10, a compound annual growth rate of over 8%.

Paralleling this growth in spending and staffing, Prince Edward Island has experienced dramatic increases in the reported incidence of special needs. According to Statistics Canada's Public Education Indicators, the proportion of Island children identified as having special needs jumped from 13% in 2002-03 to 21% the following year, and then rose to a peak of 35% in 2008-09 before falling back somewhat to 31% in 2009-10. Over the same period, the national rate increased very slightly from 10% to 11%.³⁸

This growth occurred during a period when other evidence suggested favourable and improving trends among Island children. The Early Development Instrument, a measure used in a number of Canadian jurisdictions since the 1990s, has consistently indicated that Island five-year-olds entering the education system score better on measures of cognition, health, and emotional well-being than those in most other regions studied.³⁹ Over the past decade, although challenges remain, Prince Edward Island has

³⁸ Statistics Canada, *Public Education Indicators* 2009 and 2010, Table A-9

³⁹ Sarah Henry, *Community Research in Child Development: Results of the Community Mapping Study on PEI*, Early Childhood Development Association, 2001; Early Childhood Development Association of PEI, *Understanding the Early Years: Closing the*

experienced improvement in employment, income, parental educational attainment, access to early childhood learning, and child and family poverty. In this context, it is not plausible that students' special needs and disabilities are at the level and have increased to the degree that the above rates of special needs reported by Statistics Canada would suggest.

Rather, the Commission concludes, the level and growth of the proportion of students with special needs is first and foremost a governance issue.

While recognizing that this growth in special needs identification has occurred with the best of intentions, the Commission is concerned that its overall effect may be to detract from, rather than advance, student learning. It is notable that the sharp growth in the proportion of students identified with special needs is paralleled by a sharp deterioration in student achievement among 15-year-olds as measured by the PISA. In particular, the proportion of students achieving at the lowest level grew from less than 13% to over 21% during the decade.

The Commission is concerned that the current approach to meeting special needs may detract from student learning in several ways.

International evidence strongly suggests that in the most successful systems, all students learn at high levels. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identified as one of three key factors that contributed to successful reform trajectories among PISA countries over the past decade, "A focus and supporting measures on enabling every student to reach his or her potential, without the options of having students repeat grades or transfer to educational tracks with lower performance requirements."⁴⁰ In Prince Edward Island, in contrast, a large and growing number of students are in adapted, modified, and individual education plans which reduce expectations. When the education system formally lowers its expectations of what a child is capable of achieving, then the family and the child may do the same. Among Island students who graduate from Grade 12, only about two-thirds have the course requirements needed to progress to post-secondary education. If we are to 'close the gap', we must put particular emphasis on 'raising the bar' for those students whose needs are greater, rather than expecting less from them.

Nationally and internationally, there is little evidence to show the beneficial effects of special education placement on students, according to Levin. "There is hardly any evidence as to whether special education placement actually helps reduce achievement gaps, and there is the further concern that once students are placed in special education they almost never re-emerge into 'regular' program status. The highest performing countries tend to have very low rates of special education placement."⁴¹

Circle, *the EDI in PEI, presentation, 2005*; Council for Early Child Development, *The Early Development Instrument, Maps and Presentations*. <http://www.councilecd.ca/?q=edi>

⁴⁰ Andreas Schleicher, Indicators and Analysis Division, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Strong Performers and Successful Reformers: Lessons from PISA," Presentation to the National Governors Association, February 2011, Washington DC

⁴¹ Ben Levin, *Steps to Effective and Sustainable Education in Nova Scotia*, p.12

He further notes that some research has shown small gains, but has not compared these gains to the incremental costs of special education, while other studies have shown some negative impacts. The growing use of paraprofessional education assistants, while valued by both teachers and parents, has not been found to have positive effects on student learning and may have unintended effects such as less interaction with the teacher, dependency on the EA, and stigma.⁴²

All students are affected by the high and rising level of education resources and effort devoted to special needs identification and supports. This area has consumed a disproportionate amount of the new funding and personnel provided to the system in recent years. As well, the complexity of its processes generates a massive amount of work and paper burden for teachers and administrators, distracting from their capacity to focus on learning for all students. Levin observes, "Special education has consumed a growing portion of education budgets ... The entire process of identification in special education is enormously expensive in terms of time while generating little value, especially when assessment cannot be linked to effective programming. In Ontario, reducing paperwork for special education in 2004 and 2005 freed the equivalent of several hundred person-years across the system for more productive activity."⁴³

Even if the current approach is the right thing to do, which is unproven, it is questionable whether it is being done in the right way. The Auditor General's *2011 Report*, which examined special education at the Eastern School District, identified concerns that the accountability framework in the Minister's Directive on Special Education was not operating as required with regard to evaluation and reporting by the Department, monitoring of expenditures, or deployment of staff to schools. As well, the report noted that formulas for allocation of staff were based on 1998 incidence rates, standards for the qualifications, training, and experience of special educational staff had not been established; criteria defining special programming and identification of students with special needs were unclear; and there was no process to ensure that findings of assessments were reflected in student intervention plans.⁴⁴

Education partners affirmed these concerns, and strongly urged greater consistency from district to district and school to school, and a shift from a reactive to a preventive model featuring timely early identification and intervention.⁴⁵ The Commission heard concerns from a number of education partners that the current delivery model exhibits duplication at the Department and district office level and that these personnel often work in isolation from each other.

Under the current model, students who fall outside the parameters of 'normal' student behaviours and capacities may be defined as having special needs. Measures are needed to ensure that the system fits the student, rather than the student fitting the system. While there will always be a need and a role for specialized teachers and support personnel, the system needs to look at how it can enhance its

⁴² Levin, *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29

⁴³ Levin, *How to Change 5000 Schools*, pp. 136-7

⁴⁴ Auditor General, "Special Education – Eastern School District," *2011 Report*, April 2011, pp. 15-39

⁴⁵ Public Presentations to the Education Governance Commission: Learning Disabilities Association of PEI, December 5, 2011; Autism Society of PEI, December 7, 2011

programming, scheduling, and pedagogy to more flexibly serve all students. An example of this approach is the High Tech High group of schools in San Diego, California, which serves a diverse body of some 4,500 students. The schools have achieved 100% progression to post-secondary education among their graduates through a holistic model built on connecting school and community; integrating students into one heterogeneous group; and ‘linking hands and minds’ or the technical and the academic.⁴⁶

At a high level, the Minister’s Education Partnership must encourage and support innovations that are shown to support student engagement and learning, including Project-Based Learning (PBL), varied scheduling, team teaching, and integrated rather than siloed approaches to subjects. Effective teaching and learning, leading to greater student success, will help to reduce disengagement and problem behaviours.

Recommendation # 27: That the Department immediately undertake a comprehensive review of the Province’s approach to special needs education, including assessment, identification, methodologies, standards for learning outcomes, and required personnel.

The goal of this initiative should be to ensure that, in the words of the OECD, “every child learns at a high level.”

Pending this review, and in keeping with the principle of putting services closest to where they are needed, the complement of operational special needs personnel now at the Department should be transferred to the district offices. Exceptions to this approach might include early childhood personnel (discussed in Section 8.11), and areas so specialized as to involve only one person. The Department should retain a small unit of staff in leadership and coordination roles – supporting the review called for in Recommendation 27, leading the development of a plan for special education, setting targets and monitoring progress, promoting alignment, and exercising oversight.

Recommendation # 28: That the Departmental role in special needs education consist of leadership and oversight, and that most of its operational personnel be transferred to the district offices.

A further issue concerns the role of children’s service providers from outside the education system. Long-standing concerns exist that these services operate in ‘silos’, in isolation from each other, for many reasons that reflect system needs rather than children’s needs – including confidentiality, separate budgets, and varying departmental mandates, programs, professions, and practices. The overall effect is to create a costly array of fragmented interventions that do not meet children’s needs in a coordinated or holistic way. In short, the whole is less than the sum of the parts.

⁴⁶ Rob Riordan, “High Tech High: Three Integrations,” July 2009; High Tech High website at <http://www.hightechhigh.org/>

These concerns have been widely acknowledged for many years and have led to frequent calls for a more integrated approach, but the above-noted barriers pose significant obstacles to achieving this. Since the spring of 2010, a careful and thorough examination of this area has been carried out by Child and Youth Commissioner, Jeff Clow. The Commission is aware that Mr. Clow is recommending an integrated service model for children and youth at risk, and that a ‘full service school’ pilot project will be suggested to develop and demonstrate this model. The Commission strongly endorses such a measure and urges that it proceed. Should this occur, the Commission notes that:

- Some capacity should be retained in the Department to assist in the design and planning of this pilot. At the implementation stage, the district in question should take the lead.
- To support the success and broader implementation of this model, the pilot should include the design of an inclusive and collaborative school-level governance structure that represents the various departments involved. Should the approach be adopted more broadly throughout the education system, a cross-departmental mechanism will be needed within the provincial government as well.

8.7 Assessment

Assessment of student learning takes place at two levels. First, it provides formative information to the student and the teacher to enable continuous improvement in learning and in teaching practices. Levin asserts that this is “one of the very highest yield strategies” to improve student learning.⁴⁷

As well, assessment provides vital information at the school, district, and provincial levels to:

- assess progress against goals and targets and adjust plans and strategies accordingly
- allow school-level or system-wide issues and opportunities to be identified and addressed
- achieve accountability at all levels when information is shared with education partners.

The Commission’s consultations indicated broad awareness of the importance of assessments at the classroom level, and a move toward more diversified assessment strategies. A strong desire exists to learn more about this area, suggesting that it should be a priority for teachers’ and administrators’ professional learning.

All levels of the system have important roles in assessment for learning. At the Department level, it needs to be a component of system-level curriculum and professional learning planning. At the district level, it needs to be built into all curriculum implementation and support activities. And at the school level, both the principal as instructional leader, and the teacher in the classroom must place priority on carrying out a broad range of assessment practices and applying them to improve practice, results, and parental engagement in their children’s learning.

⁴⁷ Levin, *Steps to Effective and Sustainable Public Education in Nova Scotia*, p. v

Over the past five years, much progress has been made in system-wide assessment. Prince Edward Island's education system is to be commended for largely avoiding the negative, sometimes punitive approaches to large-scale assessment used in other provinces and states over the past two decades. Instead, a number of 'made-in-PEI, made-for-PEI' common assessments have been developed, (Grade 3 math, Grade 3 and Grade 6 reading and writing, Grade 9 math) through a collaborative, professionally led process, and this work is continuing to expand to additional grade levels. Reporting of assessment findings plays an important role in accountability, and is addressed further in Section 10.

This work, which began at the district level, is now carried out by the Department through the Assessment Unit in the Learning and Early Childhood Development branch. It is appropriate that the Department be responsible for development and oversight of system-level assessments; however, in order to ensure an independent scrutiny function, it should be separated from the section of the Department responsible for design and overall implementation of learning programs and services.

Recommendation # 29: That the Department be responsible for development and oversight of system-level assessment, and that this be carried out by the section of the Department to be responsible for research, planning and evaluation.

Although generally, the system is moving in the right direction with regard to assessment, the Commission's consultations did suggest some frustration among administrators with the time lag in availability of information from the common assessments, impeding its use for school-based development. Follow-up on those results is most appropriately carried at the district level with regard to development and in-servicing, and at the school level with regard to the principal's support for continuous improvement of teaching practice.

Recommendation # 30: That the Department make the results of common assessments available at the beginning of each school year, to inform and improve instruction.

8.8 Human Resource Planning and Administration

The area of human resources includes workforce planning, teacher entry level training and ongoing professional learning, standards, certification, registration, collective bargaining, pensions, recruitment, retention, mobility, evaluation, discipline, payroll, and administration of absences, leaves, casual staff and substitute teachers.

Eligibility for entry into the province's teaching workforce is governed by the Certification and Standards Board, as provided for in the School Act Regulations. The Board is an example of a collaborative approach to this key function, being chaired by a director of the Department, supported by the

Registrar, and comprising a number of stakeholders – the Prince Edward Island Teachers’ Federation, each of the school boards, the University of Prince Edward Island, and Holland College. The Commission did not receive any comment in its consultations regarding the structure or operations of the Certification and Standards Board.

Workforce planning – understanding who the province’s administrators, teachers and education support staff are today, identifying areas for their development, and forecasting the level and nature of renewal needs – is vitally important. Despite its importance, it is not clear who is doing this work or whether it is being carried out on an ongoing, system-level basis. The Department’s human resources staff are largely concerned with its own administrative needs and with supporting the process of teacher registration. As a result, the province’s teaching workforce is largely shaped by a bottom-up process of hundreds of individual decisions by aspiring and current teachers and the principals who hire them.

Teachers are at the core of student learning – a fact widely acknowledged in research. Good teaching can achieve a high and equitable level of student learning even in jurisdictions with comparatively low levels of spending. Curriculum, facilities, technology, and services support teaching, but are not substitutes for it. Indeed, good teaching can, and often does, compensate for deficiencies in these other areas. Educational leaders and support staff play vital roles in enabling and advancing student learning. It follows then, that governance of the human resource function is critical to any jurisdiction seeking to improve student learning. Currently, human resource planning in Prince Edward Island’s education system is fragmented and constrained.

Recruitment of teachers and education support staff currently occurs in a highly decentralized and gradual fashion. School administrators play the lead role in teacher hiring, although variations exist among districts and schools in the openness of these processes and inclusion of other education partners such as fellow teachers or district officials. With regard to administrator hiring, practices differ as to the inclusion of parent or community representatives. Variations also exist in the extent to which the district offices support school level hiring through maintenance of a pool of resumes.

Similarly, evaluation, discipline, and retention are largely decentralized to the school level. While these are guided by a number of Minister’s Directives and board policies as well as by collective agreements, the Commission heard that there is substantial variation among districts and among schools within a district. This suggests that attention may be needed both to the content of board policies related to human resource matters, and to the oversight of how these policies are implemented, as well as the management culture surrounding the human resource function.

The University of Prince Edward Island’s Faculty of Education plays a significant role in shaping the province’s teaching force, through both entry-level training for the majority of teachers, and ongoing professional learning. The Faculty of Education is increasingly preparing its graduates for national and international markets; but, it must also respond to the ongoing needs of Prince Edward Island’s education system. The development and delivery of a specialized Bachelor of Education for kindergarten teachers represents a recent example of this responsiveness, and the university’s current review of its

Bachelor of Education programs provides a further opportunity for closer alignment. The recent establishment of a Department-University Education Review Committee and its planned expansion to other education partners is a very positive development.

Recommendation # 31: That the Department oversee an analysis of education workforce needs, and develop a plan to ensure that these needs are addressed.

Recommendation # 32: That transparent, consistent policies be put in place province-wide to govern the hiring of teachers and education support staff.

8.9 Resource Allocation and Budgeting

Resources are allocated to Prince Edward Island’s education system based on a staffing and funding formula developed almost a decade ago. The formula has been updated, but the updates have been neither revealed nor implemented. The original formula continues to be used, with minor refinements that add to its complexity. The formula provides a very detailed allocation of personnel and funds, based on operational and program-related criteria including number of students, grade level configuration, size of school and facilities, and bus routes. These criteria are set out each year in a Minister’s Directive, and allocations to school districts are spelled out in their budget letters.

The boards distribute these resources among schools in a negotiated process that seeks to address the needs of each. Principals then receive a staffing allocation and small discretionary budget that they deploy in varying ways to fit the particular circumstances of the school and the staff complement. This can result in staffing and funding configurations that vary substantially from school to school and that may differ from the formula. According to the Commission’s consultations, accountability for the subsequent use of these resources is almost entirely based on whether the school or district has remained within budget.

*“There’s only one question:
Did they overspend?”*

District official

In education partner meetings, the Commission was presented with a widespread view that this approach is excessively detailed and prescriptive. The need was seen to shift from front-end control to a more decentralized approach that provides districts and schools more discretion to allocate resources where they are most needed. The flexibility provided by such a model, within defined limits, should encourage innovation and prudent use of resources. This in turn, should reduce pressure on the Department and the Minister to deal with countless ad hoc demands, which are the inevitable result of a system that puts them in charge of resource details.

The Department should retain responsibility for overall resource allocation to the system, monitoring and holding the boards accountable for their financial management. Boards should be responsible for needs identification, equitable and responsive allocation of resources, and monitoring and reporting on use of funds and resources. School administrators should be responsible for effective and prudent management of the resources allocated to them.

Recommendation # 33: That the Department, working with the Boards, design and implement a new budgeting and financial oversight model that enables greater responsiveness to the needs and circumstances of the education system in accordance with the strategic plans.

8.10 French Language Education

The governance of French first language education is affected by constitutional rights. The provisions of Section 23 of the Constitution and its related jurisprudence support the governance of minority language education service delivery through an elected school board structure.

Currently, the Department includes a French Programs division within its Learning and Early Childhood Development branch, responsible for both French first language and French second language (i.e. immersion, core, and intensive) programs. Just over 800 students are enrolled in French first language schools, while approximately 4,300 students are enrolled in French immersion programs in the English boards and over 7,000 students are enrolled in core or intensive French. With a complement of 17 staff, the division provides leadership, coordination, and support in the development, implementation and maintenance of curriculum programs, support services, and resources for French language education. The Commission scolaire de langue française has 13 staff, with six staff in the program area, including three literacy mentors.

The Commission's consultations indicated a desire for more open communication, particularly with respect to negotiation and allocation of federal funding and reporting on the use of these funds. Concerns were expressed within both the French and English systems that their area was being under-supported relative to the other. Concerns were also noted with regard to the integration of both minority and second language instruction within one division. Although it was acknowledged that this structure had advantages with regard to efficiencies and collaboration, issues were noted of French second language instruction getting 'left by the wayside' – not belonging to English programs, and holding a weaker mandate than French first language programs within the division. The need was expressed for clear provincial policy and direction respecting French second language education.

Considering the higher cost of minority language education arising from small numbers and lack of economies of scale, and in keeping with national bilingualism goals, French language education is supported by federal funding from Canadian Heritage through the Canada-Prince Edward Island Official

Languages in Education Agreement. The current agreement provides just over \$10 million for the period 2009-2013 for both minority language education and second language education.

Recommendation # 34: That representatives of both French first language and French second language education be included in negotiation of the Canada-Prince Edward Island Official Languages in Education Agreement, and that the Department inform the Boards on the deployment of funds.

In the area of programs and services, the Commission supports a similar approach as proposed for English language education in Recommendation 23— i.e. that emphasis shift from continuous development of new curriculum to stronger support for curriculum delivery in the classroom, and that resources move from the Department to the board level to support this. In the area of French language education, this will entail a separation of the Department’s resources into support for French first language and French second language education and the allocation of those personnel among the boards, as appropriate.

8.11 Kindergarten and Early Childhood Development

In 2008, the Department became responsible for the development and delivery of early childhood programs and services, and was renamed the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Subsequently, those programs and services were transformed, with the move of kindergarten into the public education system as a full-day program, and the establishment of a coherent, accessible system of early childhood programs province-wide. This transformation is in progress: kindergarten teachers are engaged in obtaining education degrees; the provincial early childhood development curriculum is being piloted; previously uncertified early childhood providers have completed entry-level training and are working toward obtaining one-year certificates; and the final Early Years Centres are being added to the system.

This area of the Department is unique as it deals primarily with a community-based service system made up of a large number of non-profit and private providers. The unit also continues to be responsible for the kindergarten program with its early childhood play-based philosophies and pedagogical approaches. Given that the system is in transition, the Commission believes it is appropriate for kindergarten and early childhood personnel to remain at the Department. When kindergarten is fully integrated into the education system, it may be appropriate to transfer responsibility for delivery of programs and services for the kindergarten component to the board level.

In Recommendation 28, the Commission has called for most special needs personnel engaged in direct service delivery to move from the Department to the Boards. Early childhood is an exception.

Recommendation # 35: That the Department be responsible for direct delivery of early childhood development and kindergarten programs and services.

8.12 Proposed New Organization

The foregoing recommendations on roles and responsibilities, taken together, yield the following organizational structures:

- The new Minister's Education Partnership, bringing together the Minister, Deputy Minister, Board Chairs and Superintendents, and representatives of education partner organizations, with a Chair from the community at large.
- A leaner, more horizontal Department with four divisions:
 - *Research, Planning and Evaluation* - responsible for research, strategic planning, system-level assessment, policy, monitoring and evaluation
 - *Learning* - comprising planning and oversight for English and French curricula and programs, student services, and kindergarten and early childhood development
 - *Finance and Operations* - comprising planning and oversight of funding, infrastructure, and transportation
 - *Human Resources* - responsible for workforce and professional learning planning, standards and certification and collective bargaining
- The three boards would take on a clarified and expanded role in direct service delivery.

9.0 Infrastructure

The Commission's consultations clearly demonstrated that matters related to buildings and buses consume an inordinate amount of decision-makers' time and energy at every level, detracting from their ability to focus on student learning. Despite this high level of management attention, issues related to system infrastructure have been frequently in the public eye.

In recent years, these include:

- The process related to closure of eight small schools in the Eastern School District and the as yet unaddressed need to restructure school attendance zones into a more efficient and coherent configuration
- The short-term shutdown of the education system in May 2008 owing to a crisis in school bus safety, and the ensuing replacement of much of the fleet since that time
- The shut-down of several schools due to water infiltration issues in January 2010, the subsequent province-wide process of school inspections, and the identification of problems requiring \$17.5 million in construction and remediation
- Numerous changes in direction and priority with regard to school construction and major renovations, leading to dissatisfaction among schools, communities and boards.
- Clashes between the aspirations of communities and system considerations of equity and affordability, in the planning of new school facilities and major renovations.

The Commission recognizes that it is challenging to operate infrastructure of varying age and condition in a climate of intense public scrutiny and demand. Every new school that is built increases public expectations of catch-up investments.

Given that substantial renewal and upgrading has been achieved and enrolment continues to decline in most parts of the province, the emphasis should now shift to maintaining and making the best use of the current infrastructure.

Although health and safety are essential, and comfortable, attractive environments are highly valued, the critical element in student learning is not the classroom, but what happens in the classroom. Research indicates that investments in the human element – supporting classroom teaching and instructional practice, and providing early intervention – yield far greater returns in student learning than spending on “bricks and mortar”. Accordingly, the Commission's priority in this area is governance that prevents or reduces the need for such a high level of capital investment in the future, and that lets educational leaders at all levels spend less time on matters related to buildings and buses and more time on student learning.

9.1 Facilities

Prince Edward Island's schools have a replacement value in excess of \$660 million and a total floor area of almost four million square feet – nearly double the combined area of all Government-owned buildings including the two major hospitals. Over twenty thousand students and over two thousand staff are in these buildings almost every day for ten months of the year. Proper maintenance is clearly important both to the well-being of our children and education personnel, and to the Island public as the ultimate owner of these major assets.

Currently, school boards own their facilities, and are responsible for managing and maintaining them. They are provided with funding under a formula based on square footage for ongoing maintenance, and based on district-wide student numbers for minor capital repairs and renovations. Funding for capital projects in excess of \$25,000 must be approved by the Minister and is provided separately by the Department. The Minister's Directive on Staffing and Funding does not stipulate the basis on which boards must allocate this funding to schools. The Commission was advised that boards annually gather information from principals on their schools' needs and priorities, carry out discussions, allocate funding accordingly, and follow up to ensure that funds are spent on the approved projects.

Review of the Provincial Auditor's *2011 Report* and consultations with key informants at the board level and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal provided insights, including:

- Infrastructure is aging and buildings are growing more complex, with regard to both newly constructed schools and older buildings retrofitted for energy efficiency and air quality.
- The maintenance workforce at all levels, from front-line to supervisory, needs enhanced training and skills.
- There has been under-investment in:
 - Investigation and timely repair of identified problems, and
 - Replacement or upgrading of building systems at the end of their life cycle.
- More emphasis may have been placed on cosmetic repairs rather than on essential but low-visibility repairs.
- A regular, external, expert annual building inspection process has been lacking.
- The mid-1990s school board mergers cut facilities maintenance supervisory positions at the board level almost in half, reducing capacity for both day-to-day supervision of front line staff, and for expert assessment and remediation of building conditions.
- Responses to evidence and concerns about building conditions have been slow, leading to public and staff demands for major action once crises occur.
- The current division of funding responsibility between boards and the Department may distort incentives to promptly address repairs under the \$25,000 level.
- The system relies on 'human memory and gut feeling,' rather than modern building infrastructure management systems, to plan, monitor, record and account for repairs.

In its education partner consultations, the Commission found general support for boards to retain their responsibilities for ownership, management, and maintenance of school facilities and employment of maintenance personnel.

The Commission heard considerable support for additional facility management expertise. The Commission believes this is one area in which investment in new capacity will both save money through better management and maintenance of facilities and prevention of costly repairs, and improve student learning by allowing principals to focus on their core role as instructional leaders.

Recommendation # 36: That Government make a priority of protecting taxpayers' investment in education infrastructure assets by increasing capacity and expertise in building management and maintenance at the district level.

Boards are responsible for overall education system planning and for recommendations to the Minister with regard to closures, attendance zoning, location of new buildings, and major repairs, renovations, additions, and new construction. Under Section 129 of the *School Act*, the Minister, after consultation with boards, makes recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for capital additions or construction.

According to the *Five-Year Capital Plan*, spending on school construction and renovation will continue for the next several years, peaking at \$18 million in 2014-15 before dropping off to \$5 million two years later.⁴⁸ This spending will be largely directed to construction projects for which the plans are already complete or in progress. Better maintenance should reduce future needs for unexpected and costly major repairs, enabling more consistent implementation of current plans and priorities. These factors – reduced planning activity, declining capital spending, and fewer unscheduled repairs – should reduce costs.

There will be a continuing need, however, for renovations to meet changing demographics and learner needs, to renew building systems, to incorporate new technologies for both learning and building operations, and to 'level up' the quality of some facilities to increase equity across the system.

9.2 Transportation

Boards are responsible for transportation planning and service delivery, school bus safety, and driver training. Since 2006, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has been responsible for school bus inspections and maintenance. Bus purchases are determined as part of the capital budget process and must be recommended by the Minister.

⁴⁸ Honourable Wesley Sheridan, *2012-2013 Capital Budget and Five Year Capital Plan*, Department of Finance, Energy, and Municipal Affairs, November 2011, p. 8

The Commission’s consultations indicated support for this allocation of responsibility. The renewal of the bus fleet has addressed long-standing concerns about safety and operating costs, contributing to overall satisfaction. Spending on transportation operations and salaries has seen low growth and its proportion of total board expenditures has dropped. The potential may exist for further savings through more efficient bus routes, although this is dependent in part on the rationalization of school attendance zones.

Recommendation 37: That the Department, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, establish a process for evidence-based planning, priority-setting, and decision-making on capital investment in schools and buses.

Recommendation # 38: That the Districts involve bus drivers in designing bus routes that balance the efficient use of resources with acceptable travel time for students.

9.3 Information Technology

While information technology (IT) infrastructure is owned by the education system (boards own most of the equipment and the Department owns some servers), responsibility for management and maintenance of IT systems lies with Information Technology Shared Services (ITSS) in the Department of Finance, Energy, and Municipal Affairs. This model has been in place since the Program Renewal restructuring measures of 2005-06.

This topic generated more agreement than any other matter examined by the Commission, as education partners in all quarters expressed severe dissatisfaction with the current situation. It was perceived that the education system is a lower priority than other areas supported by ITSS, contributing to concerns that the current model falls short of meeting needs related to access, maintenance, equity, upgrading, long-range planning, training, and application of technology to support student learning.

It was noted that this model is unique in Canada and leaves the districts with “virtually no authority or control in (IT) matters related to their core function, which is instruction and its support.” Further concerns were noted that the use of IT in the education setting should be “open, creative, innovative, entrepreneurial, exploratory, and collaborative...Now that education runs along the same network as the rest of government, the need for sameness and control has conspired to hamper innovation within education since Information Communication Technology (ICT) must become more restrictive to protect other ICT

“Simple tools like Windows Explorer ... are deemed to be too risky to allow.”

IT specialist, board

assets.”⁴⁹ Strong support existed for information technology responsibilities and capacity to be returned to the education system.

The Commission heard that a more integrated approach to IT planning and renewal would not only better support learning, but would also save money in such areas as costly wiring soon to be obsolete, and equipment sitting idle for lack of training or complementary hardware. A clear need was identified to better integrate capital investments in equipment, innovations in technology-supported teaching, and training supports for users. With regard to this latter point, the Commission notes that a recent collaborative review of teacher workload called for the current model of ‘site technology contacts’ to be replaced by technology teacher leaders and technicians, and that a comprehensive technology training plan be developed with an immediate increase in training.⁵⁰

Recommendation # 39: That Government return responsibility for information technology service and support for education to the Department and the School Districts.

Within the education system, the information technology role may be configured as follows:

- The Department should play the lead role in:
 - technical system design, with this function situated in the Finance and Operations division
 - designing the application of technology to support student learning, with this role carried out in the Learning Division.
- The districts should play the lead role in:
 - teacher in-servicing
 - technical maintenance and user support.

⁴⁹ S. Cain, Submission to the Commission.

⁵⁰ Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation, *Report*, December 2011. Pp. 18, 24-25

10.0 Accountability

Across Canada and internationally, education systems have seen growing demands from the public and from governments for greater accountability in achieving a high level of learning among all students. In response, most jurisdictions have pursued accountability through a mix of increased central direction, and strengthened evaluation and assessment mechanisms.

Governance theory indicates that accountability is founded on several elements – some of which have already been addressed in earlier sections of this report:

- Clear goals, objectives, desired outcomes, and targets (Section 5)
- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities (Sections 8 and 9)
- Fair, appropriate, and rigorous approaches to monitoring, assessment, and evaluation
- Effective, open reporting processes and mechanisms.

Accordingly, the Commission concludes that the education system needs a renewed, integrated and comprehensive accountability framework in order to know how we are doing, to share that information, and to apply it to improving student learning. Such a framework is needed to ‘close the loop’ on many of the recommendations in this report.

10.1 Strategic Plan

Recommendation 1 calls for the collaborative development of a renewed philosophy, vision, principles and goals for education in Prince Edward Island. Recommendation 21 calls for these to be given expression through development of a provincial strategic plan, and alignment of district and school plans with this provincial plan. Progress against the plans’ goals and targets must be monitored and used to regularly renew the plans. The information gathered through monitoring must be shared with education partners and with the public through annual reporting, as recommended in the following sections.

10.2 Student Learning

Accountability for student learning can and should be system-wide, and shared among all education partners from the Minister to the students in the classroom. International and national assessments such as the OECD PISA assessment and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) provide our education system and all Islanders with important comparative insights into student learning, as well as opportunities to track progress over time. The Department represents Prince Edward Island in these assessments and assists in disseminating their findings.

As well, as described in Section 8.7, the Department plays the lead role in the design and delivery of provincial common assessments. This process is valuable in tracking progress and identifying opportunities for improvement of content or delivery of curriculum.

The Commission sees a need for an annual provincial learning assessment report. This would differ from, and is intended to complement, the Department's current Annual Report, which largely describes activities rather than results. It will report on student learning, based on the goals, targets and indicators in the strategic plans, as well as selected additional key external measures such as PISA results. It should be written in plain language and be released at the beginning of the school year. An example of such an approach is Nova Scotia's Department of Education *Accountability Report*, released annually since 2000 and providing information on just over twenty indicators.⁵¹

Recommendation # 40: That the Department be responsible for developing and implementing a new provincial report, the Minister's Annual Report on Student Learning, to be released at the beginning of each school year to education partners and the public at large.

Under the *School Act*, boards are responsible to "monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of schools." School development planning, which has been put in place over the past several years, is an important step toward enabling this function, and provincial common assessments and the *Tell Them From Me* surveys provide valuable insights. There is no consistent reporting at either the district or the school level, of progress on school development goals or the findings of parent and student engagement surveys.

Recommendation # 41: That the Department require each School Board to report annually on progress toward its goals and targets as set out in its strategic plan.

At the school level, the principal plays a central role in accountability for student learning. Under the *School Act*, the principal's responsibilities include providing educational leadership in the school, ensuring that instruction is consistent with the curriculum, supervising and evaluating teachers, fostering collaboration, ensuring appropriate assessment and reporting on student progress, and leading the process of school development planning. The principal also is the key point of connection between the school and the community, fundamentally influencing the level and nature of community and parent engagement in the school. The Commission reiterates its belief that freeing up principals to concentrate on these roles is one of the most important things that Prince Edward Island can do to enhance student learning.

⁵¹ Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Annual Accountability Report 2010-11*, 2011
<http://www.ednet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/businessplan/accountability-report-2010-2011.pdf>

Currently schools communicate with districts, parents, and communities to a varying degree and in a number of formal and informal ways including newsletters, Home and School meetings, notices, and school ceremonies such as concerts or graduations. The Commission believes that enhanced and more consistent reporting processes will strengthen accountability at the school level and increase public awareness of, and support for, student learning.

Recommendation # 42: That the Boards require their schools to report annually on progress toward the goals set out in their school development plans, and that the results be made available to parents.

At the level of the individual student, various mechanisms provide accountability. These include classroom assessment practices, parent-teacher interviews and other interactions, and report cards. The introduction and expansion of the Student Achieve software system has significantly improved the availability, timeliness, and depth of information available to parents to help them support their children's learning.

Report cards have long been an important instrument for accountability for student learning. They hold the potential to bring greater equity and consistency province-wide, and to enhance communication with students and parents. While some work has been done over the years to bring greater consistency to report cards, and progress has been made, especially at the elementary level, significant variations remain within schools, among schools, and among districts. Further effort is required to develop provincial report cards at each grade grouping (K, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12) that reflect the provincial curriculum and that are easily understood by parents. Research evidence indicates that a move to outcomes-based reporting is more helpful to both learners and parents in terms of providing information that can be used to improve student learning.

Recommendation # 43: That the Department collaborate in a process that includes parents, to develop provincial report card templates that will deliver consistent, informative feedback to parents on student learning.

10.3 Services to Students with Special Educational Needs

The provision of student services and especially services to students with special educational needs is consuming disproportionate resources, and evidence is lacking on the benefits of the current model. Moreover, the findings of the Auditor General's *2011 Report* call into question the extent to which the model, whatever its merits, is being implemented as intended.

The Commission was advised that work is underway to address the issues identified by the Provincial Auditor. This work, together with the comprehensive review of the province’s special education model and the transfer of most direct service delivery functions to the district level, as called for in Recommendations 27 and 28, should address these issues through greater role clarity and unity of purpose.

10.4 Regulations, Directives, and Policies

The current structure of regulations, Ministers’ Directives, and district policies has already been discussed in Section 8.3, and concerns about these instruments have been addressed through Recommendation 22’s call for a collaborative process of policy review and renewal.

The Commission notes that its consultations also indicated a widely held view that there is substantial inconsistency of implementation at the school level even where there is a directive or district level policy. This was attributed in part to the fact that Minister’s Directives are no longer supported by guidelines to assist in interpretation. Nor do there appear to be systematic processes to monitor policy implementation for adherence and consistency.

Recommendation # 44: That the Department and the Boards ensure consistent interpretation and implementation of policy.

10.5 Financial Planning and Management

The coming years pose challenges for the education system with regard to declining enrolment, population shifts, changing needs, technology costs and aging physical plant, all in the context of overall fiscal constraint. If the system is to maintain public support for investment in education, it must strengthen its capacity to ensure that funds are expended for the purposes for which they have been allocated, and that they are having the intended positive impacts on student learning.

In its consultations, the Commission heard that the actual utilization of funds by boards and schools may vary from their initial purpose. This arises in part from the need to apply today’s realities to a resource allocation based on an increasingly outdated formula. It is enabled by a financial accountability process in which the only measure is staying within budget. Recommendation 33 addresses these issues through its call for a new funding and financial accountability model.

The school level also offers scope for increased financial accountability. The current approach provides school administrators with relatively limited discretionary funds, which must be spread across a wide range of needs. In response, fundraising is a constant reality for most schools, both directly and through their parents’ groups – often distracting from, rather than contributing to, student learning. Currently, no formal joint priority setting or information sharing occurs between schools and parents.

Communication and reporting, and the transparency of financial management and accounting for funds raised at the school level, vary widely. More openness and consistency will contribute to greater trust, spirit of partnership, and parental engagement.

Recommendation # 45: That Boards require consistent, transparent reporting of revenue generated and disbursed at the school level, and that this information be included in each school's annual report and made available to parents.

11.0 Equity and Consistency

Compared to other provinces, Prince Edward Island's education system already features a relatively high level of consistency. Funding has been provincially-based since the early 1970s, eliminating the wide variations arising from reliance on local property taxation. Curriculum is developed provincially. Teachers and education support staff work under province-wide collective agreements with consistent classifications, pay scales, and working conditions. Regulations and Minister's Directives provide for province-wide consistency in many key areas. Other provinces have only recently moved to this level of consistency, and some still have major variations arising from continued reliance on local taxation, district responsibility for collective agreements, or multiple parallel board systems based on religion and language.

Nonetheless, the previous sections of this report have made it clear that concerns continue to exist about equity and consistency, with regard both to formal programs and policies and to their implementation in practice. Local boards have long been seen as a key link in education governance to bring flexibility by adapting provincial rules to local circumstances, needs, and expectations. While this flexibility and responsiveness has historically been viewed as positive, public priorities appear to be shifting towards a demand for greater consistency system-wide, particularly with regard to access to opportunity, students' health and safety, and how students and parents are treated. This view was especially clear among the students consulted, who voiced deep concern that variations in programs and teaching practices were disadvantaging them relative to students in other high schools.

On the other hand, some, particularly those within the education system or representing specific student needs, noted "Equality doesn't mean equity" – i.e. treating everyone the same does not result in a fair outcome. This feedback placed emphasis on equality of results, and hence called for varied rather than a "one-size-fits-all" means of achieving those results.

Many of the recommendations in this report seek to strike a balance between these demands for consistency on the one hand, and responsiveness and equity on the other. The following are noted as being of particular importance:

- A renewed philosophy, vision, principles and goals (Recommendation 1), supported by aligned plans at all levels (Recommendation 21), will have a powerful impact on unity of purpose and direction.
- The Minister's Education Partnership (Recommendation 2) requires collaboration and communication among all education partners.
- The review of Ministerial Directives and Policies (Recommendation 22) will lead to greater consistency of policy content, while measures to ensure consistent interpretation and implementation of policy (Recommendation 44) will lead to greater consistency of practices.
- The shift of resources from curriculum development to curriculum delivery (Recommendation 23) will result in more effective and consistent delivery of curriculum throughout the system.

- The move of most special needs delivery responsibilities to the board level (Recommendation 28) will reduce role overlap, confusion, and conflict among levels.
- The comprehensive review of services to students with special needs (Recommendation 27) aims to bring about greater consistency as well as greater equity, both among different categories of need and between students with and without special needs.
- The development of a new staffing and funding model (Recommendation 33) will lead to improved equity in resource allocation, while the enhanced accountability for use of funds at the school level (Recommendation 45) will achieve greater consistency in resource utilization.

Taken together, these measures will go far to address the concerns of education partners, bringing substantially greater equity and consistency to education in Prince Edward Island.

12.0 Efficiency

12.1 Board Consolidation – The Business Case

When efficiencies are being sought by public sector decision-makers, consolidation of structures is often top of mind. This stems from the belief that both cost savings and unity of direction would be achieved by putting everything in one organization under one leader. Cost savings are assumed to flow from the elimination of duplicate management and administrative support positions, and a broader distribution of overhead costs.

While this may be valid up to a point, the evidence from other jurisdictions clearly indicates that the benefits are short-lived. Past an optimal point, bigger is not better; in fact, bigger is usually more expensive and less effective. Some research literature on this point has already been cited in Section 6.3; here, additional evidence is noted.

- A meta-analysis of research in the United States concluded that “a century of consolidation has already produced most of the efficiencies obtainable [and] in the largest jurisdictions ... some consolidation has produced diseconomies of scale that reduce efficiency ... contemporary research does not support claims about the widespread benefits of consolidation.” “...very large districts (those enrolling 15,000 or more students) are quite likely to be fiscally inefficient.”⁵²
- A widely cited study based on a cost-function analysis found that consolidating two 300-student districts saved 24% of costs after taking transition costs into account; consolidating two 900-student districts saved a net of 10%; and consolidating two 1,500-student districts saved a net of 4%.⁵³ A broader overview of this and other economic cost function and production function studies indicated, “Sizable potential cost savings may exist by moving from very small districts (500 or less pupils), both in instructional and administrative costs...per pupil costs may continue to decline slightly until an enrolment of roughly 6,000, when diseconomies of scale start to set in...the basic story seems to be that moderation in district and school size may provide the most efficient combination.”⁵⁴
- An Indiana study supported a board consolidation approach for only the smallest districts (the 20 with fewer than 750 students) and called for efficiencies to be attained primarily through sharing of some services among boards, which was considered to lower costs, enhance the level

⁵² Craig Howley et al, *Consolidation of Schools and Districts: What the Research Says and What it Means*, National Education Policy Centre, pp. 1 and 14 <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/consolidation-schools-districts>

⁵³ William Duncombe and John Yinger, *Does School District Consolidation Cut Costs?*, Centre for Policy Research, Syracuse University, 2005

⁵⁴ Matthew Andrews et al, “Revisiting economies of size in American education: are we any closer to a consensus?” *Economics of Education Review* 21 (2002), p. 255 and 256

and equity of services to students, and reduce duplication while maintaining local autonomy.⁵⁵ An Idaho study affirmed this approach, finding that the greatest potential for efficiencies through shared services were purchasing, student transportation, and professional development.⁵⁶

Although Canadian research is less extensive, it points in a similar direction.

In 1998, Ontario downsized from 129 school districts to 72. As part of this initiative, seven school boards in the Toronto area were merged into Canada's largest school district, serving over 250,000 students or one-seventh of the Ontario total. In 2002, Lawrence Rosen was appointed to conduct an expert external assessment of the board's financial affairs, in light of its major deficits, its overspending since amalgamation, and its decision not to submit a budget to Government for the 2002-03 school year. The reviewer found that over three-quarters of the \$900 million in transition funding spent to that point had not been directed to the classroom, but rather had been expended on areas such as central administration, school administration, and operations. With regard to administrative savings, the report noted that administrative savings had been forecast at \$20 million over two years, but concluded that only some \$5 million of these savings were realizable.

Demonstrating that implementation does not always proceed as expected, the report cited significant delays in planning and implementation of changes, with the following reasons:

- the need to provide employees with proper notice
- the need to post the availability of any newly created jobs
- the need to interview candidates to fill new jobs
- the time needed to complete the process by which employees may exercise "bumping rights" that exist in collective agreements
- the time needed to put severance packages together
- the need for employees to consider severance packages and options
- the difficulty of making structural changes once the school year begins; and
- the time needed to finalize descriptions and roles for the combination of all redefined positions.⁵⁷

A similar picture emerges in Manitoba, where in 2001 the number of school districts was reduced from 54 to 37, with forecast savings of \$10 million. Studies by the Frontier Institute of Public Policy (FIPP) found that these had failed to materialize, and that only \$500,000 in administrative savings or 2.6% of total spending in the merged districts had been achieved. This had been offset by spending increases of \$27 million in the twelve newly created districts, largely due to harmonization of wages and working conditions. FIPP noted that in districts with more than 1,000 students, there was very little relationship

⁵⁵ Jonathan A. Plucker, *Assessing the Policy Environment for School Corporation Collaboration, Cooperation and Consolidation in Indiana*, Education Policy Brief, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, 2007.

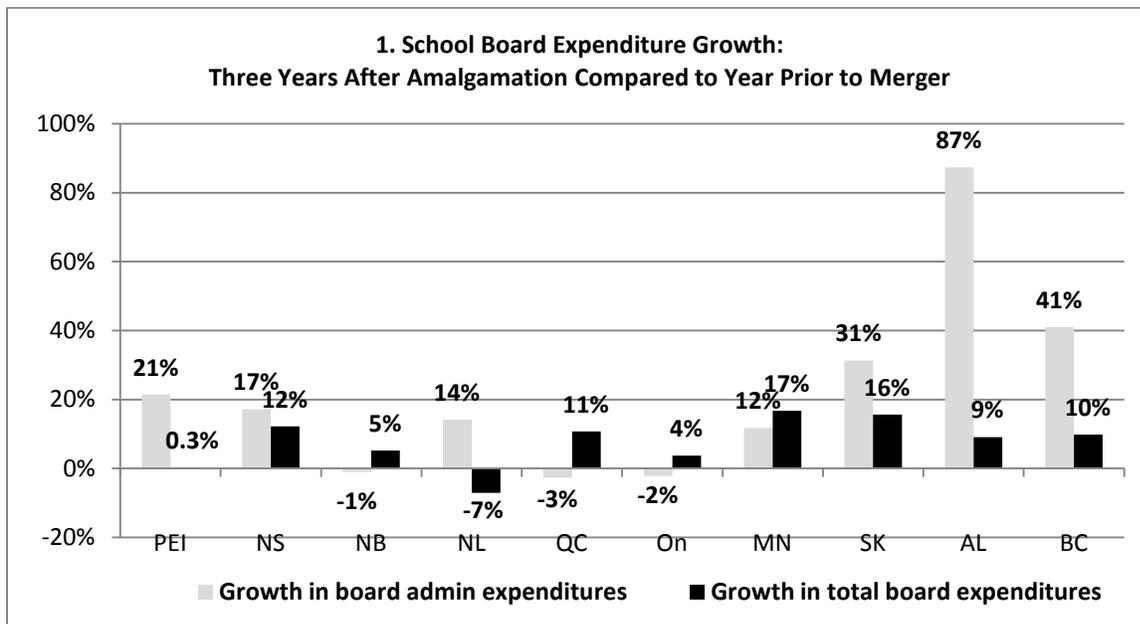
⁵⁶ Office of Performance Evaluation, Idaho Legislature, *Feasibility of School District Services Consolidation*, 2009.

⁵⁷ Lawrence Rosen, "Executive Summary," and "Board Administration Costs," *Investigation Report to the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario*, Regarding the Toronto School Board, August 2002

between district size and per-pupil spending,⁵⁸ and concluded, “The time and energy spent on the amalgamation process would have been better directed towards meaningful education reform.”⁵⁹

The Commission found this literature to be consistent and credible. To augment it, the Commission has investigated the pattern of school board expenditures, particularly the level and proportion of spending on board administration, prior to and following the wave of mergers and consolidation that occurred across Canada from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. The following material is drawn from a more detailed analysis.⁶⁰

The analysis found that in six of ten provinces, spending on board administration went up faster – often much faster – than spending on educational service delivery. As a result, its proportion of overall spending also rose. These patterns are shown in Figures 1 to 3, which compare spending on board administration in the year prior to the merger to spending three years later (to provide time for most transitional costs to be absorbed.) As noted earlier, New Brunswick reduced its spending on administration following elimination of boards. Among the nine provinces that merged boards, only two, Ontario and Quebec, achieved an actual reduction in their spending on board administration by the third year after the merger. Not shown on the figure is the fact that Ontario’s spending on board administration spiked by over 12% or \$125 million in the year of the merger and the following year. In short, following most mergers, spending on board administration grew more quickly than spending on the classroom.

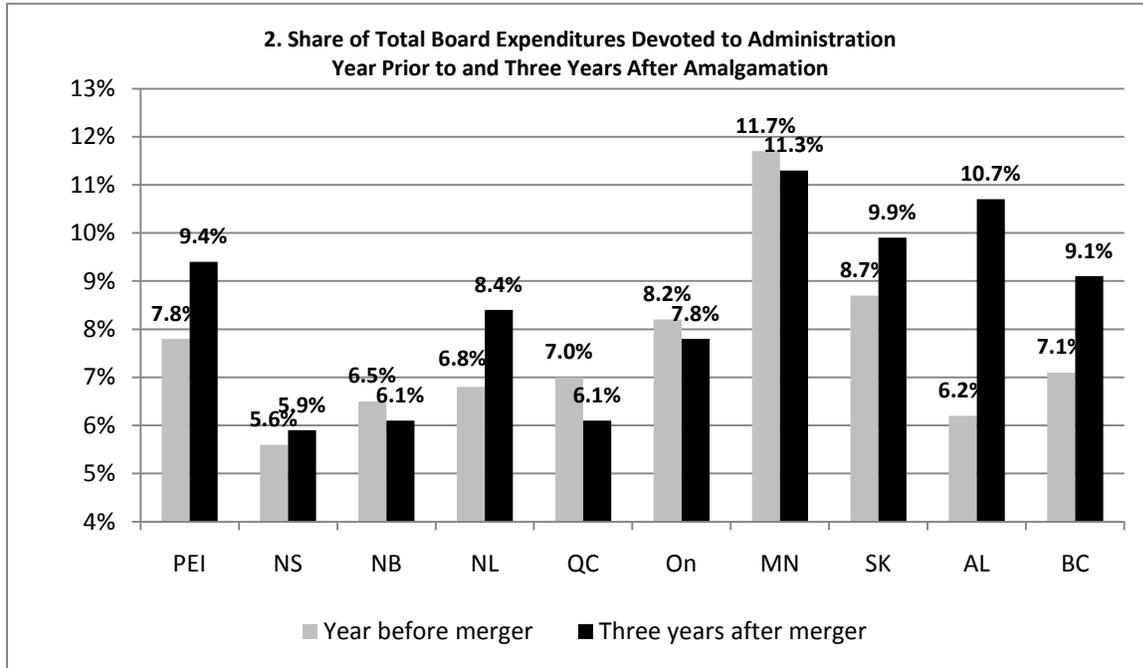


⁵⁸ Frontier Institute on Public Policy, *Amalgamating School Divisions Won't Increase Efficiency*, March 2003, p. 1

⁵⁹ Frontier Institute of Public Policy, *Manitoba's School Board Amalgamation – Before and After*, June 2005, p. 1

⁶⁰ Statistics Canada, *CANSIM Table # 478-001*, retrieved January 23, 2012.

The effect of these trends on the share of education spending going to board administration is shown in Figure 2. A similar trend is observed: in the same six provinces, board administration consumed a greater share of education resources three years after the merger than prior to it. In two of the three other provinces, the share declined only modestly.



Figures 1 and 2 indicate that in Prince Edward Island, following the 1994 consolidation of four English boards into two, spending on board administration had risen by 21% by 1997, while overall spending on education saw virtually no growth. As a result, the share of spending devoted to administration grew from 7.8% to 9.4%.

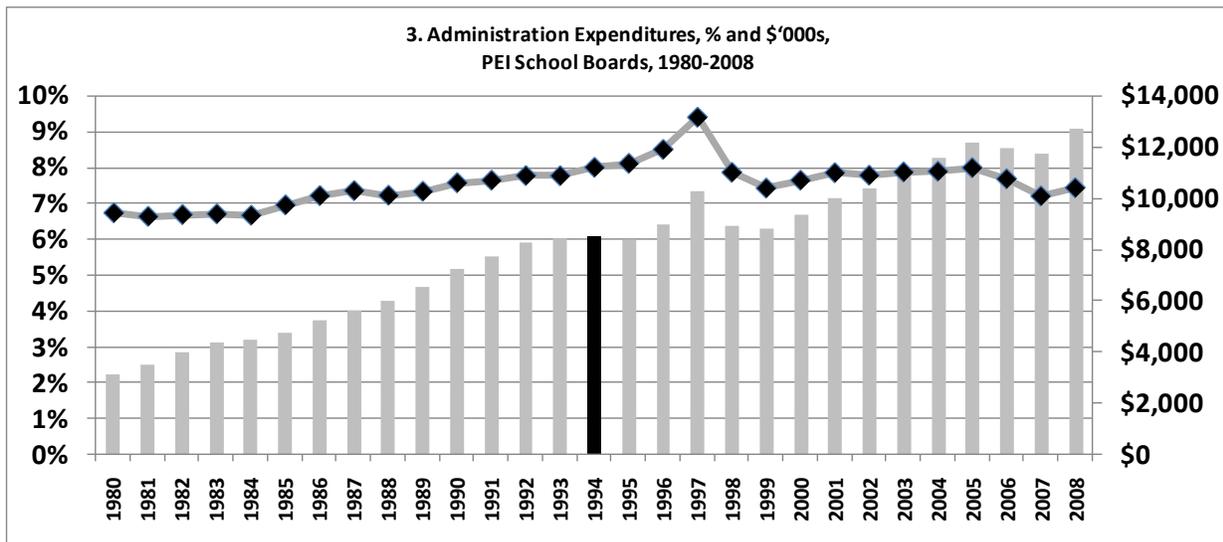


Figure 3 shows the province's historical pattern of spending on board administration (bars, right axis) and its share of total board expenditures (line, left axis). In the late 1990s, spending declined to a slightly lower proportion, though a somewhat higher level, than prior to the merger. This effect was short-lived: the proportion quickly recovered to pre-merger levels and spending rose steadily through much of the 2000s, dipping slightly near the end of the period.

Based on the evidence from research and its own empirical analysis, the Commission concludes that board consolidation cannot be justified on a cost savings basis, and would, in fact, likely require increased spending over the next several years.

In closing, the Commission observes that efficiency goes beyond dollars. The impacts of a merger on operating effectiveness must also be taken into account. In Manitoba, these were predicted as follows by the deputy minister at the time: "... while there might be reasons for amalgamation, the process would take a great amount of energy and would distract everyone from focusing on things that had more potential to benefit students. When reorganizations of any kind occur, people shift their attention to the impact of the reorganization and give other tasks shorter shrift. Amalgamation would throw into question jobs ... work locations ... and school programs. Many administration issues would require harmonization, from agreements to computer systems to personnel policies to bus schedules to program standards. The attention given to all these issues would be attention not given to teaching and learning."⁶¹ The Commission concurs.

12.2 Use of Resources

The Commission undertook an analysis of patterns and trends in Prince Edward Island's education expenditures since 2005-06. As noted in Section 4, Prince Edward Island's spending on education has gone up faster than that of any other province in Canada over that time.

The Commission found that:

- Departmental expenditures have increased substantially faster than board expenditures
- Salary expenditures have increased faster than non-salary expenditures
- Instructional expenditures, both salary and non-salary, have increased more quickly overall than operational expenditures
- Management salary expenditures have increased more quickly than front-line salary expenditures.

Since 2006-07, the Department's staff complement has risen at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11%, almost twice the government-wide average. The Department's budget (excluding the post-secondary component, which was moved to another department in 2008) increased by over 36% between 2006-07 and the current year. Growth was highest in the student services area. Strong growth also occurred in the areas of corporate services and learning programs until recently, then reversed in

⁶¹ Ben Levin, "School Division Amalgamations," *Governing Education*, 2007, p. 143

the past year or two. Most recently, the kindergarten and early childhood area has seen significant growth. In most years, all areas of the department except French programs grew more quickly than grants to boards.

Spending patterns and trends in the two English board offices from 2005-06 to 2009-10 are shown in Figure 4. The analysis indicates some differences between the boards:

- Spending grew at different paces, with the Western School Board up 22% (a CAGR of 5%), compared to growth of 16% (a CAGR of 3.8%) at the Eastern School District.
- In both boards, spending on supervisory and professional staff and on school administrators had above-average growth, with the ESD outpacing the WSB.
- Spending on classroom-related activities – instructional salaries, EA salaries, and instructional materials – grew more quickly and accounts for a greater proportion of expenditures in the ESD than in the WSB.
- Conversely, spending on most non-instructional categories grew more quickly and took up a greater share of spending in the WSB.

Figure 4: Comparison of Board Expenditure Patterns and Trends, 2009-10

| <i>Expenditure Category</i> | <i>% of Total</i> | | <i>CAGR since 2005-06</i> | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| | ESD | WSB | ESD | WSB |
| Board supervisory and instructional | 1.1% | 1.4% | 10.2% | 6.4% |
| Principals and Vice Principals salaries | 8.6% | 7.2% | 6.4% | 5.1% |
| Instructional salaries | 49.8% | 47.2% | 5.5% | 4.9% |
| EA's and YSW salaries | 6.7% | 6.3% | 7.2% | 10.4% |
| Transportation salaries | 3.1% | 4.4% | -1.5% | 0.1% |
| Maintenance salaries | 4.1% | 5.2% | 2.8% | 4.7% |
| Administration salaries | 2.6% | 1.7% | 3.5% | 6.2% |
| Transportation non-salary | 1.3% | 1.6% | -6.9% | -3.6% |
| Maintenance non-salary | 5.7% | 6.6% | 4.0% | 5.4% |
| Administration non-salary | 1.4% | 1.3% | 4.8% | 2.7% |
| Instructional materials | 1.4% | 1.3% | 3.1% | 8.1% |
| Capital minor repairs and renovations | 0.8% | 1.1% | 9.9% | 6.8% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 3.8% | 5.0% |

These analyses suggest that efficiencies are most likely to be found in the salary area, which has seen the bulk of growth and which accounts for the vast majority of total spending. Within the salary category, efficiencies are most likely to be found in the areas of supervisory and professional support personnel. This is, in fact, the direction supported by many of the Commission's recommendations.

In particular, the following actions support more efficient use of resources and a greater focus on student learning:

- The shift of direct service delivery from the Department to the boards will reduce duplication, role confusion, and conflict.
- The downsizing of the Department will enable a leaner, flatter management structure.
- The decentralization of direct services closer to the student will reduce hierarchy and bureaucratic approaches, and may enable some savings in travel costs and allowances.
- The slowing of curriculum development and the establishment of a renewed curriculum plan will achieve savings in the short term and a more orderly, effective process in the longer term.
- The comprehensive review of services to students with special needs, while primarily intended to achieve more effective use of resources, may also identify efficiencies through new staffing models and a reduction in paper burden.
- The new staffing and funding formula and associated monitoring and accountability will encourage better and more innovative management of funds.
- The strengthened preventive maintenance planning and implementation system will reduce future unscheduled repair and renovation costs of buildings, and contribute to energy efficiency.
- The new professional learning model will reduce the system-generated use of substitute teachers, as well as operating costs on days when students are not in the schools.

In addition to efficiencies arising directly from the Commission's recommendations, potential exists for further cost savings through measures beyond the scope of its mandate. These include rationalization of school attendance zones and bussing and the resulting greater efficiency in utilization of infrastructure, and expanded use of technology to provide greater equity of access to courses.

Overall, the governance structures and processes called for in this report will contribute to a greater capacity, at all levels of the system, to collaboratively identify and act upon opportunities to best use resources in support of student learning.

13.0 Legislative and Regulatory Changes

The Commission's recommendations entail some immediate legislative and regulatory measures in the Spring 2012 sitting of the Legislative Assembly, followed by development of broader and more significant measures over the coming year.

A number of specific amendments to the School Act and its regulations will be required to enable the Commission's recommendations for changes to the electoral model. These will affect the following sections of the Act:

- Section 27, to require 'no more than' nine trustees on a board, rather than 'no fewer than.'
- Section 31, to fix the time and year of elections as November, 2012 and every four years thereafter.
- Section 32, to change the voting age from eighteen to sixteen.
- Section 36(1), to provide for a trustee term from January 1 following the election to December 31 of the next board election year.
- A new section to provide for the annual election of student trustees.

As well, the School Board Regulations will need to be amended to shift from the current number and boundaries of trustee electoral zones, to zones aligned with the Families of Schools, and to reassign and revise responsibilities and procedures currently carried out by the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Commission notes that Section 12 of the *School Act* provides for the Minister to appoint such advisory bodies as he or she considers appropriate, and hence no legislative measures are required to enable the establishment of the Minister's Education Partnership.

The Commission suggests that legislative and regulatory amendments necessary to allow implementation of its time-sensitive recommendations be undertaken immediately.

Priority and effort should then shift to a comprehensive modernization of the *School Act* and Regulations for the 21st century, with a view to introducing a new Act in the Spring Session of the Legislative Assembly in 2013. This work must go beyond piecemeal amendments to fully and coherently express and support the system-wide focus on student learning called for in this report and the vision, goals, and plans to be collaboratively developed. Insights into this task can be gained from similar work which has already taken place in most other provinces, notably including Ontario's recent *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act* and Alberta's comprehensive renewal of its *Education Act*.

The *School Act* should be renamed the *Prince Edward Island Education Act*, and should express a focus on student learning both in a new statement of purpose at the outset, and through the use of aspirational, results-oriented language throughout the statute. Roles at all levels should be revised as

necessary to emphasize student learning. In particular, boards, rather than simply being required to “provide for instruction in an educational program” as at present, should be required to promote the student learning goals identified in the provincial strategic plan, through the provision of appropriate and effective educational programs. Boards should be required to assess their decisions, policies, priorities, and investments against the test of its impact on student learning. As well, priority should be placed on realigning the duties of principals to give greater weight to those directly related to student learning. Personnel in the areas of administration, maintenance and transportation, and along with education assistants should be referred to as ‘education support staff,’ rather than ‘non-instructional staff’ as at present, to emphasize that their roles also support learning.

As well, the new Act should express and foster shared responsibility for education through open, inclusive processes – including the Commission’s recommendations to establish the Minister’s Education Partnership, to reinvigorate the electoral process, to introduce student trustees, and to increase the role of parents and community members at the school and Family of School levels.

In the medium term, implementation of this report’s recommendations may also require or result in further statutory amendments and revisions to Regulations, such as fine-tuning of the School Board Regulation, and revision of the Finance Regulation to align with and support the new staffing and funding model.

Finally, for the avoidance of confusion, the two English jurisdictions must be uniformly named to ensure common understanding of the distinction between ‘Board’ as a body comprised of trustees and ‘District’ as the geographic area governed by the Board.

Recommendation # 46 : That the Department work with the Legislative Counsel Office to ensure the necessary amendments to the School Act and Regulations are made in time to allow trustee elections to proceed in November 2012 in accordance with the recommendations put forward in this report.

Recommendation # 47: That the Department work with the Legislative Counsel Office on a comprehensive renewal of the School Act, to be renamed the Prince Edward Island Education Act, to express and support the system-wide focus on student learning called for in this report.

14.0 Conclusion

The past eight months have been a learning experience for all members of the Commission. At the outset, members brought varying views on the key issues and how they could best be addressed. Very quickly, the group agreed on their core aim – to recommend governance measures that would support and improve

student learning. As the work continued – review of issues, development of the discussion paper, design of consultations, discussions with education partners and the public at large, deliberations and findings – consensus grew on the nature of the issues and challenges, their causes, and the steps necessary to resolve them and move forward.

“As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

These issues go far beyond structure. Like the one-tenth of an iceberg that shows above the water, structures are visible and appear relatively easy to change. Less visible, but more important, are those processes and mechanisms that hold the system together, give it direction, and shape how it is supposed to work. Even less visible are the elements far below the surface – the intangibles of leadership, organizational culture, and practice. It is at these deeper levels that change is most needed and will achieve the most improvement – but is also the most difficult.

The Commission is united in its belief that the recommendations in this report will address these deeper issues and will improve student learning today, tomorrow, and in the long term. Prince Edward Island’s education system shapes the future of every Island student, and our future as a society. All education partners and all Islanders share the responsibility to promote education and to ensure that all Island students are challenged and supported as they learn, develop, and achieve.

Recommendation # 48: That the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, through their words and actions, demonstrate to the people of Prince Edward Island, their commitment to education as society's most valuable investment in future success and well-being.

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Appendix One: Terms of Reference

Introduction

On April 12, 2011, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development announced a systematic review of education governance in Prince Edward Island's school system. A Commission will be appointed to conduct research and consultations and make recommendations on a governance model that addresses matters of accountability, responsibility, and authority.

Commission Members

The Commission will be comprised of five persons with demonstrated understanding of educational governance, and diverse experience and knowledge of education matters in Prince Edward Island. The Commission's work is strategically important to the future of Island children and of our Province. Members of the Commission bring the following competencies to their task:

- Demonstrated capacity to deal with governance issues
- Familiarity with educational issues including stakeholder perspectives
- An awareness of the broader policy context of the work and its implications for the Province's long-term goals
- Strong communication and public engagement skills
- Strong teamwork and decision-making skills

Resources

The Commission will have as its lead resource, the Assistant Clerk and Secretary to Policy Board (Ms Wendy MacDonald) and senior officials of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. In addition, as required, the Commission may engage outside expertise to assist in fulfilling its mandate.

Mandate

The Commission's purpose is to carry out research and consultations to develop a vision and detailed recommendations on the governance model for Prince Edward Island's school system.

The Commission shall examine and make recommendations on governance structures, mechanisms, and processes to ensure leadership and accountability for student learning outcomes and for the effective, efficient, responsive operation of Prince Edward Island's educational system, including:

- The future governance role of school boards in PEI, including duties and responsibilities, number of boards, and method of election or appointment.

- Clear, appropriate roles for the other elements of the educational governance system, including the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department, school administrators, and parent advisory structures.
- Measures to ensure that the governance model provides equitable, consistent opportunities to all Island learners and to educational system human resources.
- Measures and processes to ensure engagement and inclusion of all stakeholders in the shared leadership and development of our educational system.
- Means to ensure that the governance model makes efficient use of resources to contribute to the sustainability of the educational system and to maximize the share of resources that can be focused on direct services to learners.
- Advice on the assignment of responsibility for planning, ownership, management, and renewal of the educational system's physical plant.
- Advice regarding roles and duties associated with long-term capital planning.
- Recommendations on legislative and regulatory amendments arising from the Commission's recommendations.
- Other matters in keeping with the overall goals of the Commission, as agreed by the Commission and Government.

Process and Timeframes

While the Commission will determine its own detailed work plan and timeframes, it is expected that its work will include the following components:

- **Research:** The Commission will investigate and examine matters associated with the mandate set out above, including approaches and best practices in other jurisdictions. Based on its research, the Commission will develop discussion materials including a White Paper, which outline options and analysis to assist Islanders through the consultation phase.
- **Public Engagement:** The Commission will use multiple approaches to actively engage a wide range of Islanders and seek their views on school governance and on the findings and options presented in the White Paper.
- **Analysis and Recommendations:** The Commission will prepare and deliver a comprehensive final report to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development by March 1, 2012.

Appendix Two: Overview of Consultations

Community Conversations (120 participants), November 2011

- November 7, Westisle Composite Senior High:
22 participants, 4 groups
- November 10: Athena Consolidated, Summerside:
9 participants, 1 group
- November 21: École Évangéline: (Simultaneous interpretation)
15 participants, 1 group
- November 24: Montague Regional Senior High:
24 participants, 3 groups
- November 30: Charlottetown Rural Senior High:
50 participants, 4 groups

Education Partner Meetings (71 participants) November – December 2011

- November 2, Westisle Composite Senior High:
Western School Board Trustees, Westisle (9)
- November 10, Summerside:
Western School Board Superintendent
Western School Board Senior Management Team (4)
- November 14, Summerside:
Department Senior Management Team (8)
- November 21, École Évangéline:
Commission scolaire de langue française, Superintendent and Senior Management Team (3)
Commission scolaire de langue française, Board (9)
- November 22, Charlottetown:
CUPE Locals, Education Support Staff (6)
- November 24, Stratford:
Eastern School District Superintendent
Eastern School District Senior Management Team (8)
- November 28, Charlottetown:
PEI Teachers Federation (2)
PEI Association of School Administrators (7)
UPEI Faculty of Education (8)

- November 29, Charlottetown:
Deputy Minister, Department (meeting completed Dec 15)
- December 1, Summerside:
La Federation des Parents (1)
- December 5, Charlottetown:
Eastern School District Trustee
PEI Home and School Federation (4)

Public Presentations, December 1 – 7, 2011
(Simultaneous Interpretation, December 1)

- Advisory Council on the Status of Women: Jane Ledwell and Lisa Murphy
- Autism Society of PEI: Jeff Himelman
- Lon Bechervaise and Rob MacDonald
- Canadian Parents for French: Gail Lecky
- Commission scolaire de langue française: Edgar Arsenault and Gilles Benoit
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE):
 - CUPE: Lori MacKay
 - CUPE Local, Bus Drivers: Doug Rix
 - CUPE Local, Education Assistants and Youth Service Workers: Linda Jones
 - CUPE Local, Administrative Assistants: Karen Tsistinas
 - CUPE Local, Custodians and Maintenance Staff: Gordon Gay
- Early Childhood Development Association: Sonya Corrigan
- Don Glendenning
- Immanuel Christian School: Matthew Mann
- Learning Disabilities Association of PEI: Mary-Lou Griffin-Jenkins and Joanne McCabe
- Leona Mclsaac-Moran
- Karen Mullally
- Judith Reeson
- Lynn Sherren
- Western School Board: Gary Doucette

Student Meetings (36 participants), December 2011 – January 2012

- December 16, 2011:
 - Kensington Intermediate Senior High School (10 students)
- January 12, 2012:
 - Charlottetown Rural High School (14 students)
- January 19, 2012:
 - Montague Regional High School (12 students)

Key Informant Meetings, September 2011 – February 2012

September 27, 2011

- Dr. Rosemary Henderson, Co-chair, Health Governance Advisory Council
- Rosemary Scott, Legal Counsel, Eastern School District

October 5, 2011

- Dr. Richard Kurial, Chair, Task Force on Student Achievement

October 24, 2011:

- Shauna Sullivan Curley, Former Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development

November 29, 2011:

- Linda Lowther, Former Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development

December 14, 2011:

- Jeff Clow, Child and Youth Commissioner

January 22, 2012:

- Lowell Croken, Chief Electoral Officer

January 30, 2012:

- Dr. Ben Levin, Canada Research Chair in Educational Leadership and Policy (teleconference)

February 6, 2012

- Foster Millar, Senior Advisor, and Allan Maynard, Director, Public Works and Planning, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

Briefs and Submissions

Organizations (8):

- Charlottetown Rural High School staff
- Englewood Home and School Association
- Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce
- PEI Coalition for Women in Government
- Prince Edward Island BioAlliance
- Sherwood Elementary School Administrators
- Standing Committee on Special Education
- West Royalty Home & School Association

Individuals (40):

- Anonymous (4)
- Betty Auld
- Robert Boehner
- Desi Doyle

- Sean Cain
- Coady Campbell
- Randy Campbell
- John W.A.Curtis
- Leslie Farnell
- Kelly Gallant
- Deneen Gallant-Norrington
- Kelly Gillis
- Don Glendenning
- Larry Hale
- Tara Huestis
- Angela MacDonald
- Red MacKenzie
- Cindy MacLean
- Barb MacMillan
- Marcia Martin
- Peter Meggs
- Ann Millar
- Diane Morrison-Robinson
- Mark Ramsay
- Tony Reddin
- Rebecca Rioux
- James Robbins
- Adelbert Roche
- Verna Ryan
- Carolyn Simpson
- Dave Steeves
- Nadine Sutcliffe
- Keith Tompkins
- Bethany Toombs
- Joanna Watts
- Celine White
- Jill Wood

Overview of Communications, Outreach, and Media Relations

October 27, 2011: Launch

- Release of Discussion Paper, in both official languages
- Launch of website, www.peieducationgovernance.com
- Extensive one-on-one media interviews and Compass, Co-chairs
- Invitation to stakeholders, in both official languages

Week of November 1, 2011: Promotion of Community Conversations

- Further news release
- Ads in Journal-Pioneer, Western Graphic, La Voix Acadienne
- PSAs by Chairs
- E-mails to all schools and to their parent lists
- Direct invitations to Home and School locals in West

November 9, 2011: Follow-up News Release

Week of November 14, 2011:

- News release November 17
- Ads in La Voix Acadienne, Guardian, Eastern Graphic
- Further e-mail outreach

Week of November 21, 2011:

- PSA re storm postponement of Charlottetown Community Conversation to Nov 30

Week of December 12, 2011:

- Co-chair media interviews on the consultations