

COLES COMMENTS ONLINE EFFECTIVE MARCH 17, 2005

Bay Baxter Boutin • 1 hour ago

I'm sorry that I missed the deadline for posting yesterday; something came up and I wasn't able to write until this morning, but I hope that this will still make it.

I just wanted to address the DEC directly and plead once more for your vote to keep our school open. Over the last few months, I have learned a great deal about the issues this province is struggling with. There are many of them; they are all complicated and sensitive. I have seen a pattern where it seems that those in power are oblivious to the feelings and concerns of regular people. My husband and I have written multiple letters to ministers and the Premier. In response, we have received identical form letters, or notes telling us our letters have been forwarded to a different minister. Our PSSC and our local MLA, Ross Wetmore, have invited the Education Minister and the Premier to tour our school and take a ride on the bus to Chipman with our grade 6-12 kids, but neither has received any response. I understand these folks are busy, but what all this tells me is that the politicians who hold our children's future in their hands are not really listening, and can't be bothered to take a few hours out of one day in their lives to understand what will be a 12 year reality everyday for our children if CIS closes.

We are hoping that you on the DEC will be the voice of reason, common sense, and compassion when it comes to this decision. We know you are in a difficult position, but we truly hope that you feel you have the freedom to consider more than numbers. We believe CIS is in a unique situation due to its geographic isolation. "Small but necessary" isn't just a cute slogan. This school is necessary to the physical and emotional health of our children and our community, and we are willing to do whatever is needed to keep it here and make it work from a financial perspective. Thank you for your service and for listening to all we've had to say.

Eleanor • 19 hours ago

Dedicated Volunteers of The District Education Council,
Mr. Mc. Timoney , Mr. Rousselle, and Premier Gallant

I would like to take this time to present my case if you may, for the reasons I feel our school should be kept as is or better utilized. Now I know you may have heard many or all of these points before, I am still going to present them in a factual manner and try not to run-on.

- 1.) Children should not have to travel in this day and age at the age of 4-8 years old on a bus for an hour or more one way to school when there is a perfectly good facility in their own community.
- 2.) Stress... Children build up stress when taken from their communities, parents get more stressed knowing their small children are stressed and so far away in an unfamiliar setting.
- 3.) Emergencies/Sickness... If an emergency/sickness were to happen, it is so much harder and takes so much more time for a parent to get to a small child, while its hard on any child older children can deal with these circumstances better than the little ones.
- 4a.) Bus Rides... The bus rides alone cause children to store up energy which causes bad behavior when they reach school. Children at this age do not know how to handle all that stored up energy.
- b.) Small children have small bladders, my sister used to live in Chipman and we used to have to stop at least once sometimes on the way for a visit to let our young son out to go pee. There are no washrooms on a bus and nowhere to stop for the children in between Coles Island and Chipman.
- 5.) I feel the bus ride takes learning time away from the children as they are tired and/or charged up which ever the case may be per child and it takes sometimes hours for this to subside.
- 6.) We have a very well kept school. In great shape. Great Gym facilities, shower rooms, locker rooms.

Why can there not be children bused to our central location?

7.) Road conditions of Route 10 to Chipman are horrifying in good weather with all the truck traffic on it to and from the Irving Mill, road break up and when the weather is bad well you all seen the video of the bus trying to pass a truck on that road. it may have had two inches between it and the truck !

8.) We all know the numbers of how the school is graded on what level of Education they are providing cannot be actually taken into consideration here. Please remember DEC members that if you have one Special Needs student that is exempt from taking the test, the score they get is 0.

9.) I would like to say a good many men and woman came out of Coles Island School that are very successful today. Their education was as good or better than anyone else's I think a lot depends on the home and what support a child has.

Keeping a small child in a community they know, who knows them, who gives them support and the good foundation they need to grow and be well rounded people in society is just good sense!

10.) last fact, Mr. Gallant....this is directed to you. I read an article this morning from the telegraph journal. The article was about posting the scores(if you like) of daycares in the province of New Brunswick. In this article the journalist quoted you. It stated you had said "the safety of children should come first" !

I agree, safety, well being and a good foundation so they can become self sufficient members in society. They get that in The Coles Island School !!!

Please take the money from the many wasteful things this government spends it on and leave our children where they can learn without being stressed and having anxiety at such young ages.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every DEC member who takes time out from their lives to do a job they know will not be easy. With respect for you all, May God guide you to know and make the right decision as you have these little lives in your hands.

[Amy](#) • yesterday

To the District Education Council,

I would like to take this time to thank-you all for the time spent on this study. I am sure it has had it's challenges and taken a great deal of your family time. With the decision date fast approaching I would also take this last opportunity to speak up for Coles Island School. This is not just a school, but a vital piece of our community. The children here have an opportunity to begin their years of education in an environment that stresses working together, encouraging each individuals development and allowing parents and community members to have a hand in that. Our children feel safe and nurtured here and that is of great importance to any parent. Because we are small, the opportunities have been endless. We have had a great teaching staff and PSSC over the years that work hard to provide for this school. Our children have been able to participate in so many things that other schools cannot and it has been to their advantage. This year already, the students have done a 9 week enrichment class on basket weaving(integrating science and math), WiSP- Author in the school (Wendy Kitts-Sable Island),, and are currently working on the 10 week Red Cross Swim @ School program where they have been travelling to Sussex to the Potash Civic Centre for lessons. These are not opportunities given through finances from the district but rather money earned from school raised funds and grants our staff have applied for. This is a school that cares about our children's education and we take it upon ourselves to do all we can to make it happen. They have also had opportunities to see the Calithumpians perform, TNB, and a number of activities in school (Thanksgiving brunch & Christmas dinner to name a few.) Due to a principal who gives her all, we also received \$500 for being the Recycle My Cell winner, and the Premier's Challenge winner of \$2000 (Canadian Tire dollars) for equipment for the school. Moving our children to another community can in no way better the education they are being provided here in their own community. I realize that smaller schools cost more to run, however, there have been

a number of suggestions throughout this study to be considered in making us more cost effective. Closing our school will not fix the problems with our education system and would only hurt the families of this community. You have heard all about the distance travelled, bilingualism, the added stress on our families and a number of other issues brought about from this study. These are all issues that need examined and cannot be rushed. Once our school closes...it will not re-open. Families will not move into our community, the Care and Share program will cease to exist and so on. Our community will suffer once again. Please vote to keep us open and ask our government to put serious thought into our education system. We are not unreasonable and would do all we can to create a solution that will build the future of NB education rather than lead it down the path it is on. I could go on about the benefits of Coles Island School but I think I have taken enough of your time.

Respectfully,
Amy Boyd

Chanda • yesterday

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David McTimoney • yesterday

I wish to remind everyone that the District Education Council will meet on Thursday, March 19 at 6:30PM at Nashwaaksis Middle School (note the change in location from Priestman Elementary...will provide more space) in Fredericton. This is the meeting where the study will come to an end and a decision will be made in line with Policy 409. We will stream the meeting to Coles Island and the Director of Schools, Director of Education Support Services and other staff will be in attendance there. Please feel free to attend either site. It is our hope that you might be able to follow online, as well. We would post a link to our website on that day if we can make it work...we are organizing this now. I have been putting together a final report for the DEC with information from both our office and the community. This discussion board will be an important part of the final report. The last opportunity to make an entry on this board will be Monday, March 16 at 4:00PM. After that time, I will print the discussion below to include it in the report and in preparation for Thursday. If you have questions between now and Thursday, please email the sustainability email address or Carol or me for a direct response. Thanks for your input in this process. DMcT

David McTimoney • yesterday

I have read the last two postings from Amy and Leslie and they will be included in the final report. The process of sustainability studies, as outlined in Policy 409, is what we have in place at this time to follow and we do our best to provide for feedback (this discussion board and some quality conversation as a good example) and sharing of information. DMcT

Amy • 2 days ago

In regards to the \$10 million Geary project, I find it very disappointing that the government of the day would take such an action. It does not seem fiscally responsible to me to put that amount of money into that situation. Would it not have been more affordable for the province to do a few upgrades to the modular's at Summerhill and Gesner school's for long-term use than to spend millions of dollars for the alternative...? If the Geary Elementary School is worthy of \$10 million, plus yearly operating costs, I do not see the justification in saying that Coles Island School costs too much too remain a functioning school. It seems that the government of today has placed an unfair decision in the hands of the DEC to make up for poor spending of the past. I continue to pray that our DEC members take this opportunity to stand up to our government leaders for the poor choices made and make their decisions on each school according to what is best for the children/families it will affect in the future. Tearing apart our small rural communities and stripping them of everything is in no way a "positive change for New Brunswicker's".

Leslie Champion • 5 days ago

I have heard much talk about Policy 409 being flawed. If the policy is being questioned, how is it fair to make such important decisions regarding the education and future of our children and communities following a policy which may need to be amended?

Also, we are aware that the government is in the process of developing a 10 year education plan. How can school closures, especially one like CIS where the condition and safety of the building are not concerns, be considered before this plan can be reviewed or put into place?

David McTimoney • last week

For clarification of below...the modular classrooms were added to Gesner and Summerhill to accommodate Lincoln Elementary first, and then remained to accommodate Geary afterwards. DMcT

David McTimoney • last week

There has not been a sustainability study of Geary Elementary in the past, that I am aware of. The DEC of the day saw the school as one to place on the Major Capital Construction priority list and th... more

There has not been a sustainability study of Geary Elementary in the past, that I am aware of. The DEC of the day saw the school as one to place on the Major Capital Construction priority list and that was approved by government of the day. The students of Geary Elementary attended school at Gesner Elementary and Summerhill Elementary, as a split school. 8 modular classrooms were added to the two schools (6 at Gesner, 2 at Summerhill) to accommodate this. The commitment had already been made for an addition and renovation at Geary Elementary when the full extent was found. DMcT

Kelly • 2 weeks ago

This is great that the DEC are taking the time to do this. It might be helpful if they travel with a bus driver accustomed to the route and accompanied by our children, who could give their input too.

[Amy](#) • 2 weeks ago

When the full picture of the true condition of the old Geary Elementary School came into view, was there ever any other considerations made as to what the best solution would be? I cannot imagine that a \$10 million project was the only solution to the schooling issues in the area. As mentioned before, was there ever a consideration of leaving the Geary students in Oromocto and optimizing the schools already in place? Even an increase in transportation costs would not compare to a \$10 million rebuild. The distance for bussing the Geary children into Oromocto is only half the distance (not even) of shipping our Coles Island children to Chipman. If the transportation costs were too much to consider in the Geary/Oromocto situation, I cannot imagine the cost of bussing our children over twice the distance would be acceptable either. It now seems that our rural schools are paying the price for poor choices and spending within the larger communities and that would be an injustice in itself.

David McTimoney • 2 weeks ago

Sorry...I re-read below and missed a point or two. Geary was built as it was classified as a major capital construction project by the DEC and subsequently approved by government. The cost is approximately \$10 million. In the beginning, it was supposed to be an addition to the main structure and a renovation within the main structure. It turned out to be more than a renovation when construction workers found that the foundation/supporting structures (may not be the right language I am using here) would not be worthy of saving and renovating around. Thus, the scope of the project changed. DMcT

David McTimoney • 2 weeks ago

Grandfathering is a definite conversation that needs to occur if the decision is to close CIS in favour of CNCS or Sussex. It would be difficult for me to say at this moment what it would look like. It would need to be a part of the bigger conversation. The Geary situation had costs associated with it. Transportation would have increased to bus the students to Oromocto. The modular classrooms (6 at Gesner and 2 at Summerhill) were already in place from the Lincoln sharing, so there were savings there. In this case, one school operated in two buildings. There were some challenges associated with this but with teamwork and perseverance, it worked out fine in the end. Bussing is acknowledged as a concern for the community. The DEC is going on a bus run in the near future in your area so that they can gain some additional experience/exposure to the roads, distances and travel conditions. DMcT

Bay Baxter Boutin • last month

I agree with Amy's most recent comment, and it is frustrating to think that CIS could accommodate more students from other communities with less cost to upgrade, but everyone would think it was ridiculous to ship their kids to Coles Island. Why is it not considered ridiculous to send our kids to a school in another community that may cost more in repairs and may also be on the chopping block sooner rather than later?

With regard to our conversation on potential outcomes if the school is closed, I'm wondering how the grandfathering would work exactly. If a child has been through grade 6 at CFAS and wants to spend the next 6 years there, I can't imagine that the district would provide bussing during that time if the catchment school becomes Sussex or CNCS. So would the parents then be responsible for transportation? I can see trying to talk a 7th grader out of staying at CFAS, but I have my doubts when it comes to an 11th or 12th grader (if it would even be fair to ask that of them), and that could create a substantial hardship on families if they were faced with driving their kids to Chipman daily. In the event

that the district would provide busing, that is a significant cost that would need to be factored into the equation.

I would also like to point out that while CNCS is closer to most students in terms of distance, the route and what the back roads are like, particularly in winter, should be taken into consideration. Depending on the bus route, it may not actually result in any savings time-wise for some children than going a longer distance to Sussex or even Chipman on the highway. And again, I would like to say that if you decide to ship all these kids out of our community, it would be nice if there would at least be some additional educational and extra-curricular opportunities to show for it.

As always, my great preference would be for our young children to remain at CIS, and to work together as a community with the district to find ways to boost enrolment and reduce costs. I think with some time, it could be done. We have a lot of passionate and active community members here that area willing to do whatever it takes to keep this school open.

I understand that this issue is somewhat separate from the discussion at hand, but as far as the older kids, it would be absolutely fantastic if families could choose from among the three schools based on their proximity and educational programming. This option was mentioned at the first meeting for the young CIS students if the school closed, and it struck me as unrealistic due to the busing requirements, but maybe it's not...after all, it was presented as an option. The unfortunate problem here is that if CIS remains open (which I mightily hope it will), I'm guessing that things would remain status quo for the older children. I didn't live here when the decision was made to send grades 6-12 to Chipman, and I wasn't able to participate in that discussion. Personally, I am very frustrated to send my 7th grader 15-20 km farther than other closer schools, and also to not have the option of district-provided transportation to a school that offers French Immersion.

Thanks again for all your feedback, Mr. McTimoney, and I look forward to hearing your comments.

[Amy](#) • last month

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I would just like to point out that to close one elementary school, increase transportation costs and then add the need for upgrades to the remaining school does not reflect responsible spending or problem-solving to me. In the case of Coles Island and Chipman Elementary School, the CIS is in better structure than the CES with a very well maintained gymnasium as well. The gymnasium at CES has a ceiling that is too low for many physical activities (BB, VB...) and has been described as more of a multi-purpose room. The projected costs (shown as projected savings or one-time cost avoidances on the financial comparisons report) is almost twice the amount for CES(\$593 000) than for CIS(\$289 000). I would venture a guess that this may be similar with other cases throughout this study (past and present). The Chipman Elementary Students would benefit from a facility such as CIS although because of population, I suspect it would be an outrage to suggest so. Also in the case of the Geary Elementary School, the children were transitioned successfully into the 2 or 3 available spaces in schools in Oromocto (not sure the exact particulars) while repairs were undergone. This, ended up being an entire new school (which by car is 10 minutes from Oromocto). How much did this reno-turned new build end up costing the province? Also, just wondering if you could give the reason for continuing with the project rather than opting to allow the Geary students to continue on in the Oromocto schools where they had already had a successful transition in attending for well over a school year and were in close proximity to their outlying community? Thank-you for your input.

David McTimoney • last month

In an ideal world, a change in catchment area would be for all students in grades K-12. So, if Coles Island closed and the catchment area became Cambridge-Narrows or Sussex, then ideally the 6-12 students would go to CNCS or Sussex as well. Sometimes, there is a "grandfathering" agreement that comes into play...ie. an 11th grade CFAS student may want to graduate next year from CFAS as opposed to CNCS or Sussex. These are the types of decisions that the DEC would need to consider in making their recommendations on next steps. I am guessing they would be interested in your feedback on this, too.
DMcT

Charles McNair • last month

Thanks for posting this great article !

Charles McNair • last month

Great point !

Bay Baxter Boutin • last month

Thank you for your response, Mr. McTimoney. As a follow-up question to the Sussex issue, if CIS closed and Sussex was an option, would the students then be switched to CFAS after grade 5, as is the case right now for older students? Would we have the option of sending our older students to Sussex (or CNCS for that matter), if the younger students were sent there? I know this question is on the minds of many parents with children already at CFAS, and it seems it's been discussed but there haven't really been any clear answers. Thanks again.

David McTimoney • last month

I will try to get caught up with some of the questions/comments raised below; if I miss something specific that I should be answering, please let me know.

The question was raised about Sussex as a consideration. Sussex could be a part of the equation, if the DEC voted in favour of making the recommendation to the Minister to close the school. In the distance comparison document, the distances to CNCS were less than the distances to Sussex. Considering another district's school as an option can happen in two ways...through legislation and changing the Education Act (Regulation 2001-24, the boundaries for each district) or through an agreement between Superintendents (as per Policy 319A). For some of the students attending Coles Island, Sussex would be closer than Chipman. In looking at it closer, CNCS would also be closer for these students. FI comes into play, as well...that was noted below.

The formula for assigning FTE is beyond the scope of this study and is not a decision that can be made by districts...this would be a provincial/departmental decision (to change the funding formula for teachers/FTE). Likewise, the collective agreements are negotiated with the Province...the Department of Human Resources has this responsibility. The districts are charged with the responsibility of following them.

When I was looking at bussing today with the transportation team, I had a look at bus stops too. This will be important information to share with the DEC as they analyze all there is to look at. The transportation team will be on hand to show all the details to the DEC.

Chipman Elementary does not have an official "gymnasium". It is better described as a multi-purpose room. It is smaller than the nice gym that is found at Coles Island School. They have more FTE assigned to Phys Ed instruction...I believe it is 0.7, going from memory.

The point about amalgamating within communities is noted and, through this discussion, gets shared

with the DEC. Similar to the process we are following now, a study under 409 would need to occur for this to happen. We are currently studying the consolidation of Stanley Elementary and Stanley High School, into a K-12 school. These two schools operate as independent schools within one building. I'll need to update the financial comparison document in the next day or two. It was noted that I forgot to include the costs associated with changes to the administrative assistant position.

DMcT

Ellie • last month

What a great idea Amy. To make CFAS a K-12 school. There is some great thinking. As you said also, I don't think it would impact the community as much as taking our children from their community.(If this is possible)

Jeremy • last month

Under utilized classrooms cost nothing compared to under utilized staff. Why is the provincial staffing formula not included in the sustainability study?

Jeremy • last month

From what I can gather because of collective agreements between the district and the teacher's union regarding the staffing formula, Coles Island School has 3 teachers, 1 teacher/principle and 1 teacher's assistant for 30 primary students. So 6- 7.5 primary students to 1 teacher is the framework for which you must adhere, even if it means driving pupils into educational distress through closure of the school as a result of the unsustainable-ness of under-utilized staff?

Unions are useful but often capsize their own ship through their inherent ability to unrealistically overload it.

The unions are none of my business and really, I wish them well but...

If little children are expected to "lengthen out" their time away from home like working adults, and little pupils are compelled to "overextend" their distance away from mom, and small pupils are forced to "squeeze in" with large highschoolers on buses, and little bladders are "stretched" due to long bus rides simply because adults won't be "flexible" with their cookie cutter style provincial staffing formula, that doesn't seem morally right. I don't think the general public will be ok with that. I'm also quite sure the union will be flexible on this.

Kelly • last month

As a mother of 2 children, one at CIS and one at CFAS, who both leave at 7:10am every am and return at 3:15-30pm and 4:15-4:35pm, respectively, I am VERY concerned that adding extra stops to the bus route to CES for more children would greatly increase my children's length of bus ride. Currently my daughter at CFAS has an average ride of one hour and 20min to and from school. If her little brother and the rest of the CIS go to Chipman on the same buses as the 6-12 then I am sure the bus rides will become even longer than what we have been talking about in the presentations both by the district and the stakeholders of CIS. This point was really made evident to me this last week when the 9-12 were not on my daughter's bus run due to exams. She was home an half hour earlier. I heard her express how she wished the high schoolers would not be on the bus again this week as she herself notices the difference it makes in the amount of time that she gets home and thus the amount of time that she has to devote to her homework, extracurricular activities and also to her social and family life. It pulls at the heart

strings when you don't discuss things audibly but your children express your very concern themselves. I think the calculations of the days and months spent on the bus by Bay need to be looked at closely. Will the district also calculate how many more actual bus stops on each route these changes could mean, if the decision was made to send CIS to CES?

Also I want to point out to the current DEC that the children at CIS and at CES, already have given their due diligence to make sacrifices for the good of the greater district as a whole. What I mean by this is that around 2009 (I do not know the exact year but I do know my daughter was entering grade 3 or 4), changes were implemented that took away the second bus run for the K-2 at both CIS and CES. This meant that these younger grades now had to stay at school one extra hour to come home with the 3-5 grades. This also meant that both schools had 1/2 day Fridays every Friday to help with the allotted instructional time. I wonder if you have any idea what 1/2 day Fridays are to working parents.... a nightmare. If my husband did not have a flexible schedule most but not all Fridays, and if we did not have awesome neighbours we would have to take our children out of school on Fridays. We have on occasion. Remember we live in a rural area and have moved here with no other family and also that my job enforces me to be on the job or the business is not allowed to be open. We feel education is very important and we do make that a priority in our home standards, however, I wonder if the options that are being considered and the decisions makers realize that we need support to education and not deterrents to keep kids from attending schools. Children must learn from a very young age to find school, and getting to school, pleasant and inviting NOT be disenchanted by the process before they understand what it all entails and represents for their future success. The bottom line here is, we are already working with less than optimal conditions and have already given up extra bus runs that most schools in our district have, so why do we now even have to consider the possibility of giving up our school?

I appreciate that the DEC has very difficult decisions to make and I am all for the government tightening it's belt and being more fiscally responsible. That is how I operate on a personal level. However, I think every department or in the case of the anglophone west school district, EVERY community, EVERY school, EVERY grade, EVERY class, should be looked at carefully for wasted resources. Maybe this study would be better completed by looking at a checklist for each area, school, grade, class. Then zooming in on the red areas and cleaning up that waste before actually cutting off small AND necessary educational institutions. Cleaning up or minimizing waste is totally different than permanently closing a school. Please consider these points when making your decision. Please consider our 30 some reasons to live and breathe and collaborate with you on their behalf. Please consider that this is all about education, the future of NB. Thanks so much

Kelly • last month

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Here is an article from the Times and Transcript today that the DEC members may not have access to otherwise. I am including it as I feel it to be timely and of pertinent content, in light of the decision that they are making re. CIS.

Today's T&TAre Coles Island parents behind the times, or is it 'powers that be?'

Norbert Cunningham

Last week I wrote about a planned closure of the Coles Island School, a K-Grade 5 facility with a mere 30 students.

Local residents are attempting to have it continue. I used it to illustrate the difficulties many rural schools are facing, especially in this time of fiscal problems.

Feedback

A Coles Islander left a lengthy, articulate reply on the T&T's website. It merits highlighting.

I suggested the two-storey school looked like it has about 24 classrooms, judging from a photo. The reader wrote it only has six. It wasn't clear if he meant in total or in use, but never mind. If that estimate was erroneous, consider this a correction. I'm glad I noted it was an estimate. And I was unaware it contains a fairly new gymnasium.

The reader, identified as Jeremy Beam, supplied information that sheds new light on the situation. He raises good questions about how much reform is needed in our education system and bureaucracy.

Good to hear

My main point was it's hard for any government near insolvency to justify keeping a school with nine employees and only 30 students open when it costs almost \$500,000 a year.

Mr. Beam agrees the status quo can't be justified. He says residents are not asking for nor have ever asked for 'the status quo.'

So yes; it gets interesting.

In passing I said if the school is to be saved, innovative approaches are needed, possibly a modern version of a one-room school. I was serious. I'm not convinced regionalization is always the best answer or cheapest.

I was focused elsewhere, though, and didn't develop that theme further. I may soon.

Mr. Beam is taking a similar approach, if not absolutely identical. Authorities owe residents' ideas careful consideration. They should implement them if the savings goal can be met. There's no logical reason every school and district must be a cookie cutter reflection of all others.

Problems

For the province, the issue is simple – it's money it can't afford to spend.

Mr. Beam says "almost half the students are from families who have moved here recently, a trend that is indicative of increased enrolment, not less."

If so, one must question the ability of the authorities to do crucial demographic research. A news story quotes them as saying the enrolment decline shows no sign of changing. What's up with that discrepancy? Mr. Beam says Coles Island has had more than 40 new housing starts since the twinned highway opened and it's growing, not shrinking.

He agrees the \$500,000 operating cost is far too high, but citizens have never had any input into decisions that make it so.

Having nine staff for 30 students is ludicrous. He notes salaries account for most of the cost: "Coles Islanders didn't ask for this. I think the teachers union did."

Residents didn't ask for, or know about, a decision to erect an \$8,420 flag pole, he says, or more than \$6,000 in renovations to a 'janitor room.' Nor, he says, did the local school governance committee. He suggests they'd have rejected both, "as they have other things."

Good points

These are good points, assuming he has his facts right. He hits the mark when he says teacher-student ratios are based on "obsolete pre-information age teaching models."

It appears officials waste large sums of money on one hand, then tell citizens the school is too costly on the other.

Politicians overseeing fiscal reform need to be sensitive to such things. It's easy for them, bureaucrats, advisors and observers like me to say some schools must close. Some undoubtedly must. But if there's an affordable alternative, why not adopt it? Community is important.

Coming restraint and reform need public support, yet the kind of picture Mr. Beam paints is guaranteed to lose support. For good reason!

The real key to effective, long-term cost efficiency lies in reforming the bureaucracy and system, closing schools only when no fiscally responsible alternatives exist. Declaring that's the case merely because you've never tried an alternative before is neither fair nor logical.

Mr. Beam says citizens want "a Prius, not a Cadillac" school, "but the mindset in management or unions is where the change needs to start."

He doesn't specifically say a one-room school, but his comments clearly indicate parents are open to innovative, much less costly approaches requiring far fewer staff.

Regionalization and busing has been the norm since the 1960s, a very different time. Is it still as logical as many assume?

So, Coles Island, good luck! Citizens with reasonable alternatives are entitled to fair consideration.

The last word

Here's Laurence J. Peter:

"Bureaucracy defends the status quo long past the time when the quo has lost its status."

Norbert Cunningham norbc@rogers.com Norbert Cunningham is a retired editorial page editor of the Times & Transcript. His column appears daily.

Amy • last month

I would like to thank D McT for his efforts in answering our questions to the best of his ability and taking the time to review our comments. I have heard that the Chipman Elementary School does not currently have a gymnasium facility or that the current one is in need of repair. I am wondering if you could verify this information. Also, wondering if considerations have ever been made to immalgimate schools within existing communities, where the effects of the communities would be minor, rather than closing smaller schools that would cause greater stresses for those affected. For example, CFAS and Chipman Elementary School are both schools with declining enrollement. They exist within minutes of each other and would cause much less negative effects for families within that community because of that. CNS is a prime example of a functioning K-12 school within our province and could be examined as a pilot for this option. There are also other communities with 2 or more schools in close proximity that could also be examined. I understand this would require some review to determine what facilities could do this effectively and is not a simple task. If closures are our only option, this should only be done in communities where there would be minimal effects/disruption for those affected. All schools have a responsibility to be run as efficiently as possible, and could make positive change to cut costs and avoid closure.

[Stephanie Jeffery](#) • last month

I am a mom of 4 children. Three of which attend CFAS. All of which complain of the long bus ride. The picking on, being said and done on the bus ride. This concerns me greatly with my Grade 3 daughter travelling on a bus with high school student, should our school close. It makes me worried sick knowing what goes on these high school buses, to know my daughter maybe be riding on the same bus.

After leaving the Jan 15th meeting, my daughter was sniffing in the back. I asked what was the matter, she said "if they close my school, YOU are going to teach me at home. I am NOT going to another school". It broke my heart knowing this is taking such a toll on my child at such a young age. Crying herself to sleep worrying about what the future holds. It is said that "Moving" is listed in the top 10 stressful things adults do in their lives.

When my children were younger, in elementary school, their father worked out west. He thought we should all move out west. I, thinking like a mom, thought no because we had no family support there and too stressful to move my kids around (knowing work out west doesn't always last). So we did not move. So why is it ok to have someone make that decision to move our kids to another community for us?

I truly hope the DEC understands these little kids need to be close to their homes. Where, if anything happened, their parents are not far away. Just think of the kids, while you make your vote.

Anglophone West School Distric • last month

I have reviewed the recent comments and tried to pull out the questions so that I can answer them here. If you ever find I missed a specific question, don't hesitate to email the sustainability address, Carol or me directly...I try my best to find them and provide the answer for all to see.

I reviewed the 2013-14 infrastructure records that we have and I see that Chipman Elementary has a capital improvement project wish-list of three items, amounting to \$593 000. One of these items is for a ventilation system, which makes up the bulk of the amount. The other two projects are for site improvement (parking lot) and hardware for doors.

At Cambridge-Narrows Community School, the wish-list for capital improvements amounts to \$145 600. The three projects are for window improvements, ventilation improvements and cafeteria/kitchen improvements.

The one-time cost avoidance number is not meant to deceive people and for this very reason I have indicated on the report that the projects vary in necessity and it has been separated from the annual savings. The DEC understands the meaning of the amount and I will be sure I explain it to them if they are unsure.

I will also note that the savings from the principal responsibility allowance would not kick in until a five year term is complete or a new position is found by the incumbent...should the school close. This amount was just above \$14 000, annually.

The staffing formula is what we, as a district, work with to staff our schools. Maximum class sizes, as governed by collective agreements, provide the framework for which we must adhere to in assigning FTE. There is not a lot of flexibility from a district stand point on this account.

French Immersion was noted to be a concern at the November meeting. Policy 309 governs us in that decision making process. Basically, a program needs to be sustainable in order for it to be offered at any school. One attempt to ensure all students have a level of French education is with the recently implemented pre-intensive, intensive and post-intensive French curriculum. Most notably is the intensive program, at Grade 5, where all students are immersed in French for half the year (regardless of which NB Public School they attend). It is not the same as French Immersion, but an improvement to French instruction for our province.

I have focused on CNCS and CES as they are within our district. To include Sussex, there would need to

be a change in district boundaries from a provincial level. I will ask at EECD about this and post when I know more. It is a very reasonable question.

One question that was asked was if people can continue to share thoughts on the study. The answer is "yes". This discussion (in totality) will be a part of the final report and the DEC knows it is ongoing and how to find it. Emails are also welcome. As mentioned above, I will reply if specific questions are asked. If comments are made for input into the study, I will read them, as well (but not reply to every comment...I'll assume that they are made for DEC consideration).

The theme of the long bus ride and safety are clear in your comments and presentations from January 15.

DMcT

Steve McCready • last month

I would just like to say how proud I am of both the " Lets save the Coles Island School Group and the Coles Island PSSC group plus all the concerned citizens of the area.Hopefull to this point we have displayed our sincere concern for our very young students and our students in general and the negative effects shipping our very young students to other locations for their educational start.

Coles Island is standing up for our very young,our community,other rural communities facing the same issues and our province as a whole.

I can only urge the " DEC " to explore every option we have suggested to maintain our rural education for the very young.

We look to the " DEC " to say yes they are right,we can cut cost to provide education for rural communities and we are willing to work with Coles Island and other rural communities with small schools to make this happen by working together.

We are not asking for status quo,we are asking you to think outside the bus ,and use the information highway and E Learning to accomplish common goals.

Thanks

Steve McCready

Bay Baxter Boutin • last month

Last week, my 7th grade son called from CFAS because he had sprained his ankle in gym class. I could hear him holding back tears when I asked him if he wanted me to come and get him. "If it's okay," he said, and I knew he was referring to the long drive from Coles Island to Chipman. "Of course," I said, and was on my way. I was lucky that I was home and that we have a good-running vehicle; I'm sure there are many other instances where this is not the case. On my drive to Chipman, no less than SEVEN DEER crossed the road on two separate occasions directly in front of my car. My son waited 35 minutes for me to get there, and another 35 minutes to get home before we could care for his ankle.

We recently moved to the community, and this is my son's first year at CFAS. He truly loves school and always has, and he seems to be making friends and enjoying his new school. But he HATES the bus ride, and there are days where he doesn't want to go to school because of that alone. He is exhausted when he returns at the end of the day, and he has very little time or energy for after school activities, or even just downtime to hang out with us here as a family. This is really concerning to me because I can see a marked difference in his attitude toward school and his overall energy level. I can only imagine the effects this ride would have on very young children.

I calculated the number of hours that he currently spends on the bus and came up with this, which I hope will make it clear exactly what we're expecting our children to do:

1.25 hours each way = 2.5 hours/day
2.5 hours/day = 12.5 hours/week
10 hours/week = 50 hours/month
50 hours/month = 450 hours/9 month school year

So our grades 6-12 are already spending 2700 hours of their lives on the bus, which comes out to A FULL NINE MONTH SCHOOL YEAR at TEN HOURS/DAY, SEVEN DAYS/WEEK. If you add grades K-6 to that, it's doubled, for a whopping 18 months @ 10 hours/day out of a child's life by the time s/he reaches 17-18. Keep in mind that some kids actually have a longer bus ride than that already, so for them these numbers would be even higher. Many parents have also expressed concern that if more, younger kids are added to the existing bus routes, there will be additional stops, resulting in even longer rides. These are precious hours, so important in young lives, squandered with virtually nothing to show for them. It's wrong for us to ask our children to do something that we wouldn't do ourselves. I know I wouldn't sign on for that kind of commute for 12 years.

Not only are we expected to ship our kids off to a faraway community, but the schools there don't even offer French Immersion, which is another major concern for my family. My husband is French, and our children had been in French Immersion all their lives until we moved to New Brunswick. You would think that as the only officially bilingual province in the country, a bilingual education would be available to all students, but we were saddened to find that just isn't the case. Our rural students here are being bussed hours away to another small community with a school that doesn't even offer significant program benefits. We are seriously considering transferring our son to Sussex next year, which would require a considerable time and financial commitment on our part, as we would have to drive him daily, so it is not an easy decision. But unfortunately, that seems to be our only option for French Immersion, and he wouldn't be spending so many long hours on the bus, so it's an option we have to consider.

In looking over the district's presentation from November with the traveling distances to CIS and the other proposed schools, I noticed a few things of interest. With only one exception (one student is closer to CES by 1 km), the shortest traveling distances BY FAR in terms of the proposed schools are to CNCS. Traveling to CNCS looks to add about 10-20 km to the current average busride, Sussex adds between 20-30, CES adds between 30-40, and Havelock adds between 40-60. (These are just rough estimates; some students have shorter or longer add times). So CNCS is the closest, and Sussex is next, but many of us already have older children going to CFAS, so obviously this is complicated. I recall, Mr. McTimoney, that you said something like, "Some students will even have a shorter bus ride to one of the other schools." From what I can see, there are only two students, and I'm pretty sure they're in the same household, since their traveling distances are exactly the same to all the schools, and their bus ride would reduce by 0.7 km if they went to CNCS instead of CIS. 0.7 km!!! That is the ONLY instance of a shorter bus ride among ALL the students and ALL the proposed schools.

So if distance is a factor, and clearly it is, there is something I would like to clarify. At the meeting in November, we were presented with the options of Sussex and Havelock as well, however, in the most recent information regarding finances and staffing that was posted on the district website on January 15th, there seem to be only two options that the district is considering if CIS were to close: CES and CNCS. Sussex is substantially closer than Chipman to most families in the CIS catchment area, and does offer French Immersion, which is a pretty big deal, in my opinion. I understand that Havelock is simply too far to be a valid option, but what happened to Sussex? I also recall mention of the possibility of families being able to choose between the schools (which might help those with older kids already at CFAS, etc.), but I'm not sure if that's actually still on the table or not. I understand Sussex is in a different district, but when I spoke to the principal at Sussex Elementary in preparation for our community

presentation, he sounded as if they would welcome Coles Island kids with open arms. He said that even if they sent a bus all the way to Coles Island, it still wouldn't be their longest bus run, as they go as far as Norton and other outlying communities.

Let me be clear that I would greatly prefer that CIS does NOT close, as my 4th grade daughter loves it there, and I love having her so close to home at this age. As Amy mentioned in an earlier comment, I think we all make sacrifices for our older children to have access to other programs and activities that wouldn't be available to them if the upper grades were here in Coles Island. My question is that if we're already questioning how worthwhile those sacrifices are at ages 11-18, how can we possibly think they can be justified for young children aged 4-10?

Jeremy • last month

Asking for "teacher to student" ratios at Coles Island Elementary that mimic other elementary schools in NB is not "mind numbing innovation" or "out of the box thinking", its common sense.

3 teachers, 1 TA, a full time secretary and principle for 30 students is not necessary.

Under utilized classrooms don't cost anything compared to under utilized teachers and staff. Fix the under-utilized staffing ratio and most of the fiscal problem is fixed.

I ask the members of the DEC to vote to keep the elementary school open. OPEN FOR FISCAL CHANGE to the provincial staffing formula for rural areas. Provincial staffing formulas shouldn't drive rural primary students into educational distress with long bus rides, out of community schooling, and on top of that, higher teacher to student ratios at a distant school. Vote to get the right ratio, right at Coles Island.

Jeremy • last month

I ask members of the DEC to please vote for option 2.

(Invest dollars into infrastructure/ programming at Coles island School.) The school has been slated for possible use as a seniors apartment complex if it was closed. I am suggestion leasing or selling the old section and using the leasing dollars or purchase dollars to keep the new section an elementary school. I am suggesting that sale or lease negotiations required including with their apartment renos, the few necessary changes needed to the remaining school section. It already has washrooms, an office, janitors room, other empty areas that could be used for hot lunch, teachers room, etc, and of course the gym. It's a school in itself. The stage area can be turned into 2 small classrooms, suitable for 30 to 40 primary students. (If the square footage per student was to low, the stage area could be divided vertically providing an upstairs room. I don't think that is necessary.)

Doing this would make the square footage comparable with other schools and solve a lot of other issues with busing 4-10 year old children farther away from their moms and dads.

Part of the gym could also be used for classroom or preschool activities. Keep it simple. A small school is better than long complicated bus rides for primary students.

Amy • last month

According to the financial comparisons report released on January 15/15, there is a one time cost avoidance of 289,000 reported for our school. At the November meeting this cost was explained to the public as the overall cost of upgrades that are noted that could improve our school but WERE NOT crucial to our building. Every school has upgrades that they would take advantage of if the funding was available. This is giving the public the opinion that Coles Island School is in need of these repairs/upgrades to continue operations and is painting an inaccurate picture, when in fact, our school is one of the better conditioned schools in the province. In fairness, I would like to know what the financial cost of improvements for the Chipman Elementary School and the Cambridge Narrows School is, as all schools in the province submit upgrades desired on a yearly basis. Thank-you.

Sabrina • last month

Thank you so much for clearing this up for me. :) Also if there is more information we may come by about our school and Coles Island can we send this to the DEC as well?

Amy • last month

Coles Island school is a small but necessary part of our community. The nearest neighboring communities are not just a stones throw away. Our middle/high school children currently travel on the bus to Chipman and although we are not thrilled with the distance or road conditions, the benefits of being in a larger school helps. Our children have an opportunity to take part in sports and other social activities that are not at an elementary level. Our children are at an age where they can learn to cope with the distance and do not have the same needs as a younger child. As a child starting their education, there is a need for parents to be available to their children. This is a scary step for many children and they need to feel support and security. For many families in this community, sending our elementary children to any other community will be fatal. The opportunities to be involved in our children's education when it is most crucial will be lost. The stress placed on families and our children will have a negative effect on the schools they are placed in as well. Teachers will be faced with more issues due to tired kids, mis-behavior, sickness etc , as well as full classrooms, that will take away valuable learning time. Many families will lose valuable working hours because of time needed to be available to our children. Travelling 20 mins to retrieve your child is far different than 50. Bus drivers will be placed with an even larger responsibility of maintaining their children on the bus and still being able to focus on the roads. If a child misses the bus now, many parents can simply drive them to school. If they are travelling to these neighboring communities this will not be the case. The decision of school closure is stated to be decided in the best interest of the child's education. I have yet to understand how any of this can impact our young children or families in a positive way. It will not put more money in our pockets, give us more time with our children or give them a better start in the journey for their education. I pray that as you make this difficult decision, you will have the best interests of these children in mind.

Anglophone West School Distric • 2 months ago

Prior to this year, I have only been involved in one sustainability study. It was in 2011 in former School District 17 and I was superintendent at the time. It was a study on the sustainability of Burton Elementary and the DEC voted in favor of maintaining the status quo. The process we are following now models that process. I know that there was a sustainability study in former School District 18 where the final outcome was the closure of Douglas Elementary School, with those students moving to Royal Road Elementary School. Around that same time (2010, I believe), there was a sustainability study on Juniper

School. The DEC voted in favor of closing this school and moving the students to Bristol Elementary School. For this one, however, the closure was delayed by one year by the Minister. I am sure there are others out there around our province.

There is nothing concocted about the study. It is a process clearly outlined in Policy 409 and one that we are following. This is the only process used for closing a school (unless there is an emergency, natural disaster, etc.).

Those are my comments...maybe others have some too.

DMcT

John Klassen • 2 months ago

I just got home from the meeting, and upon some reflection on both meetings that I've been to, a few things left me with questions that maybe others here in the group have had or perhaps find interesting. I am not the best at finding the information I am looking for but perhaps someone else is.

1. out of the sustainable studies that have already been conducted in other schools, how many were successful in saving their school? if so how and what did they do to save it?
2. at the first meeting a lot of information was thrown out there. just about everyone that attended had a question for the dec whether they voiced their question or not or had time to do so. but this second meeting? those that had presentations threw a lot of information back at them and the dec only asked 1 question?

This whole thing about this sustainable study seems off to me. In my opinion it seems like they have already made the decision to close the school but have concocted this sustainable study to make the parents and other members involved feel like they have a say in this decision. after the first meeting the tension in the air was so thick you could cut it with a knife. just imagine if they just came out and told us they were closing it end of story. that wouldn't go over so well.

if this sustainable study does have the weight and prospects needed to keep a school open. what must the school do to tip the scales in its favor?

sorry just my 2 cents worth hope someone finds this useful or can answer these.

David McTimoney • 2 months ago

If there is ever a need for information, please email Carol or me, directly. We are the best people to obtain it for you and it is often readily available (ie. enrolment).

The financial comparison document was a request from the December 4th meeting in Stanley. I decided it would be good to prepare for all three studies. Some of the information from this document could be found in the presentation that was posted on November 21. As the study proceeds, I am preparing a variety of documents that I think will be helpful to the DEC as they formulate a decision.

The presentations and any subsequent documents that get sent in to us from the January 15 meeting show a clear preference in how stakeholders want the DEC to vote. This is an important part of the process and all documentation can be included in the final report for DEC. However, it is important to remember that the documents I prepare for the DEC are designed to provide information, the power point and the financial document included. This study is not designed to be an "us against them" event. Thom Parkhill's presentation suggested that the power point presentation on November 20 did nothing to convince the DEC to vote in favour of closing. The presentation was not designed to convince the DEC to close...it was designed to provide information to all. That is my role in the study...provide information and facilitate opportunity for the DEC to be as informed as possible in order to make a responsible decision. Stakeholders contributed to this on Thursday night and continue to have the opportunity to do

so.

The Francophone-Anglophone bussing question is one that often comes up and is beyond the scope of the district...this would fall to the Province.

DMcT

Sabrina • 2 months ago

Also to note we where treated unfair with this Stanley got theirs also the same day which gives them time and gave us done.

Sabrina • 2 months ago

Why is it that The Sustainability Study Finances was only put up on Thursday January 15th, 2015? Which was the day we had to speak. When we called schools or went to them for info they couldn't give it to us.

Amy • 2 months ago

Regarding a news article in todays news concerning bussing, would it not make sense for the province to integrate French and English students in the larger urban areas. These children are travelling ma... more

Regarding a news article in todays news concerning bussing, would it not make sense for the province to integrate French and English students in the larger urban areas. These children are travelling many of the same routes and yet costing the province twice than what is necessary. Rural communities SHOULD NOT be losing out because of higher education costs when there is waste like this. The province has stated that it could impose upon the "launguistic rights" of the francophone students, however I think in our bilingual province the rights of many of our children are infringed upon already seeing that the French immersion program is NOT province wide and DOES NOT give our children equal opportunity of functioning as a bilingual adult by the end of their schooling. Rural school children are suffering and being sacrificed for the good of larger urban communities. Why is closing our rural schools and totally disrupting the lives of rural families alright without truly examining every possible solution? Would it not make more sense to ensure safe, effective and equal opportunity for ALL NB STUDENTS through improved transportation costs in the usage of bussing in many urban areas than cramming more rural children onto our buses and having their safety risked more than necessary? I would ask that you give all possible solutions the time they deserve before choosing to sacrifice our rural schools and communities.

Anglophone West School Distric • 2 months ago

We will keep the discussion board open until the early parts of March. At some point I will need to transfer the records into the information report that I prepare for the DEC as they make their decision on March 19. If your questions about the stakeholder presentations are directed to the presenters, then the presenters would need to be diligent in watching this board and posting replies. If there are questions for me, I will keep answering them. DMcT

Leslie • 2 months ago

Will this board be available for questions and comments that may arise from the stakeholder meeting and if so, until when?

Anglophone West School Distric • 3 months ago

Thank you Amy...these comments are helpful as the DEC reviews feedback from the parents and public.

DMcT

Anglophone West School Distric • 3 months ago

These considerations need to be taken into account and will be a part of the discussion for DEC as they try and figure out the best course of action. If the DEC decides that closure is an option, then those numbers need to be crunched carefully and the impact of students already attending school in 6-12 need to be considered.

Thanks for your comments.

DMcT

Amy • 3 months ago

It was mentioned that the students from Coles Island School would have one of three options if our school is slated to close. If this is the case, will those options be available for students in grade 6-12 who have already moved onto middle/high school? I do not think it would be beneficial to any of our families to have our children having to attend schools in two different communities and would also directly affect the number of students attending both CFAS & CNS. Has there been any projected figures for the class sizes and teacher to student ratios if this is to take place?

Amy • 3 months ago

At the meeting held on Nov 20 in Coles Island it was mentioned in the report that there has been no indication of growth in our area both economically and socially. I would like to point out that over the past few years there have been a number of new families that have moved into the area and have purchased existing homes. I did not feel that the report was accurate as although there may not be new housing under construction that does not mean that we have not had any growth in this community. As for the economic factor I do believe the highway construction for long-creek area is a 2-year project and there has also been preparation for the pipeline coming. Many families do travel for work and it is by choice that we live in this rural setting and allow our children the opportunity to attend this school because we know who our children attend with and we have the opportunity to really get to know the staff well and be involved with our children's education. Forcing our children to start off their education so much further from home I know would be detrimental to their development causing difficulty for working parents to be so involved in their schooling. Instead of a few hours off of work to take in an activity we would be looking at more time lost or not being able to involve ourselves at all. I feel that our children really benefit from having a strong group of parents that are involved in their school and they develop better at this level of their education.

Anglophone West School Distric • 3 months ago

Thanks for checking the site and using the message board. I have figured out how to delete the message (looking for the power point) so I have done so. See you in January.

Bay Baxter Boutin • 4 months ago

Yes, I have read it now that it's available, thank you...I would delete the comments below if I knew how to do it!

Jane • 4 months ago

I see the document is now posted with the other documents. Hope you have located it.