



# Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education

275 George Street, Sydney, Nova Scotia B1P 1J7 Phone: 902-564-8293

Fax: 902-564-0123 (Education/H.R.) Fax: 902-562-6814 (Finance)

Website: <https://cbvrce.ca>

---

## Meeting of the Regional School Advisory Council

Teams Meeting, February 12, 2025 (7 p.m.)

### In attendance:

#### Members

Allison Boutilier  
Tannis MacEachern  
Veronica Merryfield  
Kirt Winter  
Leslie Shepard  
Krista Smith

#### Regional Office

Susan Kelley  
Lewis MacDonald  
Stephen MacDougall  
Suzanne Aucoin  
Marjorie Graham

#### Unable to attend

Georgeina MacKinnon  
Alex Paul  
Deborah Christiano

### Welcome

Susan welcomed the group and did a land acknowledgement and followed up with an acknowledgement of the African Nova Scotian people. She then facilitated introductions. The agenda and previous meeting notes were emailed in advance.

### Accessibility Update (Lewis MacDonald)

Lewis MacDonald, Director of Operations, shared a slide presentation. He talked about two major phases that Operations have been focusing on. The first involves access to the building and moving around. This includes parking, signage, approaches, playground, washrooms, etc. These are large and expensive jobs, all with different challenges.

Playgrounds are mostly inaccessible in our schools and are not easy to convert to accessible. The region doesn't fund playgrounds, but grants are available to schools. There are schools that have done the leg work to access funding, and Lewis can put groups in touch with one another. The regional office could help manage the projects and they could go through our procurement department. When the question came up as to what the definition of accessibility is and what areas are considered, Lewis talked about an audit tool that is used to generate a report showing where buildings are in terms of the different criteria (see attached presentation). They are categorized as meeting, partially meeting and not meeting

accessibility criteria. He also talked about the complexities of washrooms, i.e. not just measuring doorway to fit a wheelchair – (how do you flush, reach a light switch, nurse call button, change table, etc). There is a high level of detail. It is very difficult to achieve 100% accessibility.

The second is more so inside the building, as in seating, lighting, appliances, etc. There is a Joint Plan with individual working groups. The Education sector is linked to the Inclusive Education Policy.

There are three schools that weren't audited, Tompkins, Sydney Mines Middle School, and the old Breton Education Centre. It was expected that Tompkins would be further along in the capital project and may require an audit. Lewis will touch base with Allison, who represents the SAC in that area.

### Cleaning Operations in Schools (Lewis MacDonald)

There is a new time entry program now available that shows unfilled absences, meaning they couldn't be filled with a casual employee. Lewis showed the group a table, which gave great visual of geographical areas, the number of unfilled absences and total percentages. There is also a score card generated from quarterly inspections (equipment/cleaning) as well as a recently available tool that does a daily check and generates a report that includes an AI feature. This is an exciting development that could help from falling behind.

It was asked if teachers/students, in the case of Sherwood Park, could clean desks daily (they would be willing to do that) and if there was a checklist as to what cleaners were expected to do. They follow guidelines and they do floors, washrooms and garbage daily. As for the cleaning of desks, our cleaning spray is a product called Sabre. It was diluted and used by teachers during Covid, but they did run into the issue of chemical burns. It is generally locked away. Lewis said that he would go to a SPEC SAC meeting to discuss if they wish.

### Purchase of Schools Supplies P-8 (Suzanne Aucoin)

Suzanne did a survey with principals in advance of this meeting. The two questions were:

- Would your school SAC support a regional plan for the purchase of school supplies?
- Would your school SAC fundraise to support plan?

It came back with 80% in favor of a regional plan for school supplies and the balance just had more questions. The fundraising support was 50/50.

The feedback from Suzanne's survey is as follows:

#### **Survey Feedback on Regional Plan for School Supplies:**

- **Existing Programs (Sydney River, Marion Bridge)**
  - Covered cost of supplies with a \$25 per child fee.

- School (Student Support Grant) and Home & School covered additional costs.
- Parent fees covered about half the expenses. Home & School and the school each contributed \$3,000.
- Sponsorship option available for families in need.
- Supplies were individualized by teacher requests (varied by grade and school).
- Parents fully participated, and feedback was excellent.
- **SAC Committee's Position:**
  - Support reducing costs for families given rising expenses.
  - Equity – ensuring all students have what they need without singling anyone out.
  - Prefers not to be involved in fundraising efforts but supports assisting families in need.
- **Marion Bridge School Experience:**
  - Since 2015, provided subsidized/free supplies for all students.
  - Parents pay a minimal fee (\$20/student)
  - Bulk ordering system in place; supplies stored in a common location for student access.
  - Helped standardize supplies – families no longer send unnecessary items.
  - Families appreciate the program.
- **Other School Initiatives:**
  - Parent Support/SAC fundraised last year for 2024-25 school supplies
  - Supplies were ordered online and distributed to classrooms.
  - Students only needed to bring indoor sneakers and a school bag.
  - Provided basic items (duo tangs, paper, pencils, crayons, markers).
- **Discussion Points & Considerations:**
  - How will supplies be distributed? Pre-packaged or bulk storage?
  - Additional administrative duties for teachers and staff?
  - Can teachers order their own supplies (individual vs. grade-wide orders)?
  - Will there be a minimum cost to families
  - Collective buying is seen as more cost effective and equitable.

### **Survey Feedback on Funding School Supplies:**

- **Fundraising Responsibility:**
  - Home & School handles fundraising to avoid overlap with SAC.
  - SAC committee is too small to raise the necessary funds alone.
  - Not interested in fundraising due to a small committee and lack of commitment.
- **Funding Considerations:**
  - School-level fundraisers and SAC funding could help support the initiative.
  - Annual Tea and Sale fundraiser proceeds may help fund the initiative.
  - Open to using a portion of SAC funding or developing a new fundraising idea.

- Introduce an optional school fee of \$20-\$25 via School Cash.
- Encourage community donations and supplement with grant funding where possible.
- **Key Questions:**
  - Will this be a regional fundraiser or school based?
  - Is there a commitment from a community sponsor?
  - Can schools seek their own community sponsors instead of fundraising?
  - Would this affect SAC funds from the school?

This gathering of information through the initial two questions was a start. The next step would be to go back to SACs to see what further information needs to be gathered for planning and to see what is working and what isn't. It was noted that having a community area to house the school supplies and distributing on an as-needed basis would be more efficient and reduce the workload of putting together packages. Susan informed the group that the Strait Regional Centre for Education did this last year, at a cost of \$20 per student. We are not funded for this – it is not in our budget.

### Inclusive Education Policy (Stephen MacDougall)

Link to policy: <https://bit.ly/41daGBd>

Stephen gave the group an overview of the policy. Krista had several questions, and she will speak with Stephen to get a broad overview. This topic is timely considering what is going on south of the border. We can't lose traction in this area. It benefits everyone to have good conversations, and we will bring this back to our next meeting for further discussion.

### Additional Information

The group was pleased with all the information shared this evening and there were comments that they now have a better sense of how this Regional SAC can work and have an impact. Our next meeting will be late May. We will do a survey to see if people would prefer to meet in person or on Teams.

The meeting ended at 8:10.