

COMMISSION ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CALLS FOR CONSISTENT AND STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NS

NEWS RELEASE

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Halifax (NS) - The Commission on Inclusive Education today released its Interim report, *Turning Point*, containing 15 recommendations aimed at engaging Nova Scotians in the design of a consistent, student-centered approach to inclusive education across Nova Scotia.

"There is widespread support for the principle of inclusive education in Nova Scotia, but it's clear to us that neither students with special needs nor their peers appear to be well served by the existing model, and the implementation of this model is not working," says Dr. Sarah Shea, Independent Chair of the Commission. "As a result, adjustments or revisions will not suffice. Instead, we need to work together to redefine and redesign inclusive education in the best interest of all Nova Scotia students. This is our goal as a Commission."

The interim report summarizes the current state of inclusive education in Nova Scotia and makes recommendations on the Commission's work over the next nine months, including broad engagement with teachers, parents, students, advocacy organizations and Nova Scotians.

"We are the latest in a succession of provincial committees struck to examine inclusive education and we are finding the same problems that others have reported for more than 15 years. Clearly, we need to move from describing problems to solving them," says Monica Williams, Provincial appointee to the Commission. "We must take advantage of this turning point to work toward a new model of inclusive education that supports the learning and success of all students in a fair and equitable way."

The report notes that while a series of actions – large and small – will be required to design the right system for Nova Scotia students, it must be *"...supported by a cohesive provincial framework that promotes alignment, consistency, and accountability in inclusive education."*

The Commission's work in the coming months will include:

- developing a single Nova Scotia provincial policy for inclusive education;
- creating a clearly defined vision of inclusive education that ensures equity and fairness for all students;
- delineating outcomes for inclusive education that are measurable; and
- using evidence to describe the optimal continuum of supports required for successful inclusive education, including access to the right curricula, teaching, specialized staff, integrated services, and instructional settings.

"It is essential that the actions that we take are: focused on the best interest of all students; evidence-based; feasible and sustainable in schools and classrooms; and ethically, educationally and financially sound," says Adela Njie, NSTU appointee to the Commission. "In the months to come, we look forward to consulting with students, parents, educators and other Nova Scotians and hearing their suggestions for moving forward."

"To be clear: we are not looking backward to past practices, or standing still within existing limitations, but working toward a new model of inclusive education that meets the needs of all students in a feasible and sustainable way," concludes Shea.

Nova Scotians can sign-up to receive updates from the Commission and access the interim report at:
<http://www.inclusiveedns.ca>