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Our File Number:

7.

JUN 19 2002

Mayor Peter J. Kelly  
Halifax Regional Municipality  
P. O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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Dear Mayor Kelly:

Thank you for your letter requesting an inquiry into the school closure policy of the Halifax Regional School Board.

As both Minister of Education and as MLA, I have heard the same concerns about school closures in Halifax as you and your councillors have. As a result, I asked staff to review the board process and they reported that the process followed by the Halifax board is consistent with the process outlined in the *Education Act* and *Regulations*. While I may or may not agree with how the board assessed or applied certain criteria in their decision-making, I have no authority to intervene when they have acted within the parameters set in legislation.

However, I do have responsibility for the quality and integrity of programming. In the case of École Beaufort, I believe parents had legitimate questions about how their children's French Immersion program will be affected by the board's decision to close their school. I have heard similar concerns in other parts of Halifax about French Immersion. As a result, I launched a review of French Immersion throughout the Halifax region. While the committee's mandate is not to review the closure of École Beaufort, I hope parents will have their program concerns addressed.

As a final comment, with regard to school closures, I am increasingly concerned that parents in Halifax and across the province are questioning whether boards are fairly, objectively, and consistently applying the criteria for school closures in their decision-making. I recognize that closing a school is extremely difficult for any board and the affected communities, regardless of the process. At the same time, I am certainly open to improving the school closure process based on the principles of fairness, objectivity and consistency. I have asked staff to review this issue, and any comments you or your council members may have in this regard are welcome.

Again, thank you for your interest.

Yours truly,

Jane Purves

c: Sue Uteck

