

BCS Sustainability Study
Public Meeting #2
January 25, 2020

Mr. McTimoney, Mrs. Douglass, members of the Anglophone West School District (ASD-W) District Education Council (DEC), Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Mike Blanchard and I am speaking on behalf of the Bath Lions Club.

The members of the Bath Lions Club acknowledge the fiscal restraints and financial responsibilities, currently being implemented by the Higgs government in the province of New Brunswick. However we completely disagree with the possible demolition of the Bath Community School that had been under construction for more than a year and a half. This project was approved by the Gallant Cabinet in January 2017 to be completed by the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year, and it must be honored.

We applaud the Anglophone West School District (ASD-W) District Educational Council (DEC) for initiating the second sustainability study of the Bath Schools in order to halt the demolition and to reinvestigate the educational needs of Bath and surrounding area. The Bath Lions Club believe the DEC's decision in April 2015 to recommend a refurbish K to 8 to the minister of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) was the right decision then and remains as the right decision now.

The department of EECD's Policy 409, Multi-Year School Infrastructure Planning policy (item 6.4.4 Policy 409) requires the DEC to consider the "impact on the local community" while doing the sustainability study. This would include the Village of Bath and surrounding areas such as Beechwood, Johnville, Upper Kent, Maplehurst and many other small communities in this rural agricultural area. It is the DEC's responsibility to understand the effect of the demolition of BCS on the cultural heritage of the region this school serves.

Lions International is a global community of 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs in over 207 countries. The Bath Lions Club is one of these clubs who share a common belief, "community is what we make it". Schools in rural communities are one of the last pillars supporting rural life. They are the heart of every community who has one, especially in rural areas. When a school is lost, the community loses. Local families are forced to bring their children to a different community for school which changes their loyalties, spending habits and possible

community for school which changes their loyalties, spending habits and possible exodus of families and businesses from the local area. This leaves decaying physical structures and discouragement of those who remain.

It was evident, approximately five years ago, when our community rallied to save our school and keep our children in our community. The prospect of a refurbished "New born to Grade 8" school rejuvenated community optimism and pride in obtaining an updated facility that could support the educational needs of our students and the social and cultural needs of our community. These goals and needs have not changed and the completion of the school is the only thing that is expected.

When deliberating, the DEC must consider how demoralizing it would be to our citizens to suddenly demolish BCS after waiting over 5 years for its completion. This would be immoral, unjust, deflating and just WRONG.

It is well known that schools in small rural areas are "the hub" of the community. Many community activities, sporting events, concerts, community fund raisers and educational courses had been offered in the former BMS school. Since the BCS students returned to the former elementary school a large number of these events cannot be offered to students and community members. This is because of overcrowding, lack of an adequate gym and no available classroom or cafeteria space. There is no extra room for the Step Ahead Learning Center to offer parenting classes nor allow outside agencies the opportunity to provide services for parents and families. Middle School indoor sports are offered in a rented church gym in Florenceville approximately 10 km away. The current BCS is inadequate to fulfill the needs of its students and community. This reduces community support, deflates school pride and often have families look at other schools to fulfill their childrens needs. The completion of the refurbished K-8 Bath Community School will alleviate these concerns and is the most plausible option.

Considering this, the Lions support the completion of a refurbished BCS housing K to Grade 8 students in our community. The club also believes it is necessary to include office space and classrooms for the "The Step Ahead Learning Center" to enable it to adequately provide day care, pre-school & after school care and outreach programs. This proactive approach, of combining services and creating strong partnerships is essential in redefining the function of rural schools. It not only meets the needs of the students but the needs of the greater community. This model of centralizing services be it education, health, social services or other agencies is essential to sustain our rural school and our way of life.

The Lions willingly support schools. They understand how they are essential to the educational, social and personal development of their students, whom eventually become local and global leaders. For over 100 years through Lions Club International, Lions have assisted needy communities all over the world providing safe drinking water, proper eye sight and humanitarian aid. We are welcomed and respected by many, for our commitment to people, groups and communities through our motto "We Serve". It is important to note that the students at BCS understand the meaning of "we serve". Students have raised an enormous amount of money locally and globally for Cystic Fibrosis, Terry Fox, Relay for Life, Breast Cancer Research, Free the Children and local unfortunate families. The schools Me to We group has been nationally recognized for efforts to serve people locally and globally. These children, led by their teachers, are part of a giving community. Isn't it ironic, that BCS students raise funds to support education and schools in under privileged countries, while the provincial government is considering demolish their own school?

The Bath Lions Club annually donate money to school initiatives that support students in all of the schools in the Carleton North feeder system. Some events are: Carleton North Feeder System Turn Around Awards, CNHS scholarships, Christmas dinners, "WE Day", libraries, sports teams and musical groups. As a club we know what that these initiatives create meaningful learning experiences to make our students well rounded community minded citizens and leaders.

In Conclusion, The Bath Lions Club is asking the District Education Council to reflect on section 5.3 of the Department of EECD policy 409 which states "the department of EECD recognizes schools are integral to the promotion and preservation of the local culture and community, **especially in rural areas**". We agree with the department, that rural areas are an integral part of our province and their culture needs to be safe guarded. Locally, our community contains the provinces primary economies of agriculture and forestry. These industries are based on a strong work ethic, perseverance, and commitment to quality which are the same virtues established in our schools. It is a culture that is worth sharing and growing, not eroding.

The most effective way to support the educational needs of students in the Village of Bath and surrounding area, is to finish the refurbishment of the BCS currently under construction, which was previously approved by the DEC almost 5 years ago. The decision at the time was the correct one and is the right one now. Little has changed in this community since the initial sustainability study in 2014-2015.

The educational needs of our children are not being adequately met at this time. The staff and students have persevered and endured hardship in a crowded school since becoming Bath Community School almost five years ago. School challenges identified by ASD-W district office such as; limited physical space, shared washrooms, no break out or meeting rooms, small gym etc. can all be eliminated in 6 months by completing the school under construction.

It takes strong leadership and foresight to do the right thing and we are encouraging you to do the right thing once again. That is to finish the school!

Thank You