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From: Cole, Judy (ASD-W)
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 3:44 PM
To: (ASD-W) District Education Council; Faith Kennedy
Cc: (ASD-W) Senior Admin Team; Hayes, Anna Marie (EECD/EDPE); (ASD-W) All Principals; (ASD-W) All Vice Principals; (ASD-W) Education Center Office Staff -Fredericton; (ASD-W) Education Center Office Staff -Oromocto; (ASD-W) Education Center Office Staff - Woodstock
Subject: Media Story - Bath Community School - Premier Involved
Importance: High

(We have asked for a correction on Jane Buckley's name at end of this story).

Bugle Observer
Dec. 5, 2019

'It is very alarming': MLA asks why premier involved in school study



Premier Blaine Higgs's involvement in a school sustainability study for the Carleton North area has been questioned by Andrew Harvey, Carleton-Victoria MLA

The role of Premier Blaine Higgs in determining the future of a school in Bath came under question at the Anglophone West District Education Council meeting Saturday on school sustainability.

Andrew Harvey, Liberal MLA for Carleton-Victoria, questioned the independence of the council after chairperson Kimberly Douglass said the DEC decided to change its priorities and study the Carleton North school system because Higgs stepped in.

"My understanding is that the DEC makes decisions independently, and now we are being told that the premier instructed the DEC to look at these schools. It is very alarming that the DEC is being told what to do by the premier of the province. It is supposed to be an independent education system in terms of administration and oversight," Harvey said. "The people of Bath are fed up with this action. I'm fed up with this process."

In a letter issued to parents on Sept. 11, superintendent David McTimoney said a tender call had been placed for the demolition of Bath Community School, the community's former middle school. Renovations at Bath Middle School were halted in the spring with the discovery of asbestos.

On Sept. 13, Higgs told Brunswick News he was putting plans on hold to demolish the former Bath Middle School in the middle of the stalled renovation.

"We are going to put a pause on demolition or further construction right now so people don't have to think there is going to be a crane there in the middle of the yard with a wrecking ball," he said.

"We're going to put a pause on all that, and we're going to have the DEC discuss the overall picture for that entire region."

The district cancelled planned sustainability studies scheduled for seven schools in Oromocto on Sept. 24, instead asking for a study on Carleton North schools in Florenceville-Bristol and Bath.

The premier did not return requests for comment about his involvement in the school sustainability process.

Douglass said the DEC had to react to the provincial decision.

"We weren't told we have to study it now this year, but the premier said that nothing would go forward until we did a study ... We are here to look at the area and look at the schools and make the best decision for the entire area," she said.

"It's not our argument what's going on in that building [Bath Middle] and what's not going on. We can't argue with DTL, we aren't saying it should have been stopped or shouldn't be stopped. We already approved that the school would be used and the money be invested to move it forward."

Douglass said the renovations were halted and the tender went out to have it demolished.

"The premier came in and said: 'Wait a minute, you can't do that.' The district has to decide whether to close it down. We are looking at the full area, that's what it is."

"The people have sacrificed and said to look at both buildings and find the best solution for Bath. The DEC voted it as a No. 1 priority, the government of the day put the money aside and started construction. It was supposed to be completed now. There is a tremendous amount of frustration that is going to bubble out here over the next couple of months," the MLA said.

Harvey said it is "very unfortunate" to go through the process again "because the premier said we have to go through the process."

"We are doing it because we need to study this whole area. We made this decision because we wanted to do it right," Douglass said.

"We did it right four years ago," Harvey replied.

Jane Tingley, DEC member and former chairperson, said when the DEC found out about the planned demolition, council members decided to study the Carleton North area before the school was demolished.

"We are going back and doing the whole area now," she said. "We have already studied the school, we already committed the money for that school, we have already said we want to keep it open and renovated ... We are all on the same side.

"The fact that the premier and the government of the day was going to demolish the building, I believe kudos goes to us to say: 'Hey, wait a minute. We are going stop what our plans are and going to come here and prevent that from happening.' We are very aware of how passionate this community is."

