



June 14, 2024

Premier Tim Houston
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Dear Honourable Premier:

I am writing on behalf of East Hants Municipal Council to express concerns regarding the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) and to urge this government to consider reestablishment of school boards with local elected representation.

It is our view that the change to the current model has not been effective and there has been a significant negative impact as a result of losing the local input the school board model offered.

East Hants has experienced several bussing issues as a result of CCRCE decisions to discontinue or relocate bus stops with little local knowledge of the impacts to families. Several letters have been written regarding these bus related issues.

East Hants has struggled to build open, consistent, communication lines or to successfully collaborate with the CCRCE.

As examples;

After Hours School Access

East Hants been attempting to establish a previously existing Joint Use Agreement (JUA) for after hours community use of schools within East Hants since November 2022. Until recently, there has been limited movement which directly impacts recreation programming opportunities for our communities.

The original 1998 JUA was the result of collaboration between the then school board, the Province and the municipality, which gave exclusive rights to East Hants to use the gymnasium and storage areas at Maple Ridge Elementary and Riverside Education Centre, both classified as community facilities under the agreement. In exchange, East Hants Council contributed \$800,000 towards the construction of Maple Ridge Elementary to increase the size of the gymnasium and \$40,000 towards the cost of increased storage at Riverside Education Centre. In the early years of the agreement, East Hants also continued to pay an operating fee annually which ended in 2005 after a decision was made to help fund the Youth Liaison Officer to work at Hants East Rural High School. The agreement expired in 2017.

As there was an increasing need for community access and recreation programming, municipal staff approached the CCRCE in 2022 to establish the agreement. Both the municipality and non-profit groups have faced a number of challenges with bookings for after hours use of schools, including:

- Requests denied due to lack of custodian availability;
- Rental permits taking a long period of time to be issued;
- Inconsistent fees from different schools and extra fees required for custodial overtime;
- User groups booking facilities with CCRCE without insurance.

A working group consisting of reps from the municipality, CCRCE and the Province was established that meets quarterly to establish a new draft agreement. East Hants provided a draft agreement in spring of 2023 to CCRCE for discussion purposes, but to date it has not been finalized. At the most recent meeting in early June, initial draft edits were finally proposed, but there are still more to finalize before this can be discussed further.

HRM/HRCE Service Exchange Agreement

In 2004, Halifax Regional Council approved a service exchange agreement (SEA) between HRM and Halifax Regional Centre of Education (HRCE) that established reciprocal use of facilities in exchange for municipal services. An updated agreement was finalized in 2018 for a period of 10 years that

identified a number of items. The precedent has been set. East Hants would like to collaborate with CCRCE on a similar agreement.

Municipal Funding of CCRCE Assets

There has been interest from East Hants CCRCE Schools to develop assets such as playgrounds and trails and they seek funding support from the municipality because the CCRCE seems unwilling to fund their own assets requested by their own schools. One request in particular is over \$200,000 for an accessible playground.

Connectivity to the Elmsdale District School from the municipal sidewalk at Kali Lane and Tyler Street was raised in June and again in October 2023, with the CCRCE indicating there are no plans to extend the pathways to ensure students can safely cross their property to get to the school from the neighbouring residential areas.

I share these topics as examples of ongoing challenges between the municipality and CCRCE. It is our opinion that these challenges to make progress on various topics is a direct result of there being no local representation at the CCRCE table.

If you would like to discuss these challenges in greater detail, please reach out to Kim Ramsay, CAO at 902-883-6225 or by email at cao@easthants.ca or myself at eroulston@easthants.ca or by phone at 902-632-2573.

Again, on behalf East Hants Municipal Council, I urge this government to consider reestablishment of school boards with local elected representation.

Best regards,



Eleanor Roulston, Warden

Cc:

- Karyn Cooling, CCRCE Regional Executive Director
- Chantelle Paris, Executive Assistant to the CCRCE Regional Executive Director
- Becky Druhan, Minister of Education
- John A. MacDonald, MLA Hants East
- Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA Hants West
- Brad Johns, MLA Sackville-Uniacke