

Let elected school board decide fate of P.E.I. schools, Opposition urges

Education minister stands firm amid protests, says any changes to schools will be made for September

By Kerry Campbell, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 03, 2017 7:32 PM AT Last Updated: Feb 03, 2017 7:32 PM AT



Hundreds of Islanders from all parts of the province attended a meeting in Kinkora Thursday night as part of the province's review of schools. (Stephanie Brown/CBC News)

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P.E.I.'s Official Opposition is calling for a moratorium on school closures until an elected school board can be put in place to oversee the process.

The call comes one day after a fiery public meeting at Kinkora Regional High School as part of the current review of Island schools where speaker after speaker called for a return to an elected board.

"From top to bottom there are questions, concerns and anxiety being raised about the MacLauchlan government's flawed process that's become about cutting costs instead of student excellence," PC education critic Steven Myers said in a release.



Kinkora parent Deanna Bassett Greenan speaks at a public meeting at Kinkora Regional High School Thursday night. (Stephanie Brown/CBC News)

An elected board would be able to "run a fair and independent process to address overcrowding issues in many urban schools," he said.

Elections are still held for trustee positions with the province's French school board.

The last full round of English school board elections in P.E.I. was held in 2008. Trustees for the former Eastern School District elected that year oversaw the last round of school closures in the province. They were fired en masse by Education Minister Doug Currie in February 2011. Following that, trustees were appointed by government.

School board disbanded

During the 2015 election, the Liberals under Wade MacLauchlan promised a return to school board elections. But after winning the election, the Liberals instead decided to [disband the English Language School Board](#), replacing it with a Crown corporation, the Public Schools Branch.

The PSB is overseen by a three-person board of directors, appointed by government, with the province's deputy minister of education as its chair.



P.E.I. Education Minister Doug Currie says interests of parents and communities within the education system are still represented by advisory councils. (Randy McAndrew/CBC)

"We need elected trustees who actually represent each family of schools in any decision regarding our schools," Deanna Bassett Greenan said Thursday night at a public consultation at Kinkora Regional High School. "Each family of schools has a unique voice and their voices need to be heard."

"All these parents are very concerned about their schools closing," said Allan Rankin, referring to the crowd of hundreds of people, some of whom travelled from the eastern and western ends of the province to attend the meeting.

"This is the [only] way they can participate in the governance of their school system ... because there's no elected governance for them."

Changes coming in September

Currie said Friday there would be no moratorium on school closures or slowdown of the school review process, and any changes to Island schools would be in place for September of 2017.

He said the interests of parents and communities within the education system are well-represented by advisory councils announced by government when the English Language School Board was disbanded.

"Particularly through the district advisory councils, particularly through the principals' council and the learning partners [advisory council], which are educational and community leaders, there's a strong voice on education both in urban and rural. And really the ultimate objective of all the councils is to continue to look at learning and look at excellence and put the child as the top priority."

Currie also referenced low levels of voter turnout (less than four per cent) when trustee elections were held on the

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