



Nov. 16, 2016

STAYING CONNECTED

~ A message from Official Trustee Mike McKay ~

To North Okanagan-Shuswap School District Community Members:

Thanks to all of those who were able to attend the community engagement meetings in Sicamous and Armstrong on October 29. We look forward to the next events in Salmon Arm and Enderby on November 26. See further details below regarding time and location.

As I shared with attendees at both sessions, there are several reasons that I value these connections with each community. They include:

- *hearing from you with questions, concerns and recommendations;*
- *reporting on student achievement results;*
- *providing timelines for decisions that are pending regarding facilities, programs and school configuration;*
- *sharing information regarding our progress toward district priorities and emerging issues;*
- *ensuring a common understanding of financial and enrolment information; and*
- *updating the work being done in response to the Special Advisor's Report recommendations.*

In Sicamous, much of the community dialogue was around the proposal to develop a single campus K-12 school. There were several thoughtful perspectives shared, many of which connected with the K-12 Task Force report - a document that did a tremendous job in providing good research and background information. It is a strong foundational resource that helps us take a renewed look at various options and arrive at a path forward. Participation in the meeting by the Sicamous Mayor and Council members and staff was most helpful. We work best when we work together.

In Armstrong, there were several questions about potential school consolidation and the possibility of program enhancements. We have received a number of suggestions from the community about proposals for supporting education in Armstrong and across the district. We will continue to evaluate these ideas and other suggestions and create the best educational environment for all students in all district schools. The Mayors of Armstrong and of Spallumcheen attended the consultation meeting and their ongoing interest and perspectives are appreciated.



TECHNOLOGY



Explorations

Numeracy



**Water Walk
(Social Responsibility)**

Operation Safe Stop



www.sd83.bc.ca

I look forward to discussing other community-specific topics as well as district-wide issues when we meet at Shuswap Middle School in Salmon Arm at 9 a.m. and A.L. Fortune in Enderby at 1 p.m. on November 26.

At various recent meetings, I have begun to articulate a framework that makes sense to me as we deal with the often divisive and very difficult topic of potential school closures. My comments seemed to resonate with various groups and I want to share them here as well. Essentially, I believe there are four criteria against which school closure recommendation should be tested. They are:

- Is the school's physical condition in a poor state and would it disproportionately drain the district's resources to bring the facility up to a reasonable standard and is there another school that has space and can be reasonably accessed by students?;*
- Is the school population dwindling to a degree that it is not reasonable to deliver a full and robust educational program?;*
- Is the school district in such dire financial circumstances that significant cuts in all areas of operations are required and school closures and program consolidations need to be part of that overall plan?; and,*
- Has the school lost the community's confidence regarding its ability to provide quality student learning?*

As we look at the current realities around the district, including increasing enrolment and enhanced funding, I believe the responsible course of action is to review the school closure options with fresh eyes. The community engagement sessions and the work staff is doing will help us to develop a strategic direction that is appropriate for today and for the future.

In closing, I believe the following guiding principles serve well as we strive to support student success across the district: every child, every chance, every day.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ **Students First**
- ✓ **Engaged Communities**
- ✓ **Responsible Resourcing**
- ✓ **Equitable Access**
- ✓ **Do What's Right for Today and For the Future**

Respectfully,
Mike McKay

*Mike McKay, Official Trustee
North Okanagan-Shuswap School District*

Questions? Feedback? Please send me an email at trusteefeedback@sd83.bc.ca