



Community Schools Alliance

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR August 15, 2023

This evening's annual meeting of the Community Schools Alliance marks the fourteenth anniversary of the launch of our organization at a meeting in Ottawa in 2009 and the eighth annual meeting since the adoption of a formal constitution in 2015.

It's my honour to again have the opportunity to present a summary of the past year's activities since our 2022 meeting. As was the case last year and in 2021, the meeting is being held virtually to eliminate the travel time and accommodation costs required for in-person meetings and make it as easy as possible for members to attend.

After last year's virtual meeting, a virtual election supervised by Vice-Chair Marcus Ryan (Zorra Township) and committee member Patricia Greig (Northern Bruce Peninsula) resulted in the re-election of committee members Stephen Harvey (Middlesex Centre), Stephanie Jaworski (South Glengarry) and myself (Southwest Middlesex). During the year three members of the executive, Jim Collard (Niagara-on-the-Lake), Denis Doyle (Frontenac Islands) and Marigay Wilkins (Southwest Middlesex), submitted their resignations. The Community Schools Alliance thanks Jim, Denis and Marigay for their valuable contributions to rural and northern schools. Subsequently Deputy Mayor Dane Neilsen (Grey Highlands) was appointed by the executive to fill one of the vacant positions.

A call for nominations for election to the executive committee to fill the two remaining vacancies and the positions of three members whose terms will expire at the end of August, 2023 was issued to members in June. Only four nominations were received by the July 10 deadline so the executive is recommending the confirmation of re-election by acclamation of Patricia Greig (Northern Bruce Peninsula), Carol Lowery (Temagami) and Marcus Ryan (Zorra) and the election by acclamation of Sue Carleton (Georgian Bluffs) for 2023-2026. A decision regarding the remaining vacant position will be made by the executive committee.

The committee met virtually eleven times during the year between August 26, 2022 and August 4, 2023. The secondment agreement with Southwest Middlesex remains in place. Due to a staff change within the municipality, we welcomed Administration Coordinator Barbara Pinnell who agreed to become the part-time administrator of the CSA.

The CSA chair joined with delegations from Zorra Township to meet with Education Minister Stephen Lecce and/or his parliamentary assistant at both the AMO conference last August and the ROMA conference in January. On both occasions, the delegations repeated the CSA requests that the Rural and Northern Education Fund be increased to \$50 million, that should the moratorium be halted, that it remains in place for schools qualifying for the RNEF until a thorough review of the education funding formula is completed and that school boards and community groups, including the Community Schools Alliance, be consulted before the templates required by the 2018 Pupil Accommodation Guideline are developed. Other members of the executive committee met with their individual council delegations with cabinet ministers, including Minister Lecce, at both conferences. In addition to those opportunities, Councillor Stephanie Jaworski was active in both Ministers' Forums asking Minister Lecce to enhance the Rural and Northern Education Fund and to continue the moratorium until the education funding formula is reviewed.

Following the election of Marit Stiles as leader of the provincial NDP and the Official Opposition in February, Chandra Pasma, MPP for Ottawa West-Nepean, was appointed NDP education critic. The CSA chair met with MPP Pasma at Queen's Park in April to advise her of the history, goals and positions of the Alliance.

In May, the CSA chair delivered a presentation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy during its public hearings on Bill 98, the Better Schools and Students Outcomes Act. He applauded the proposed amendment of the Education Act to require school boards to collaborate with municipalities to facilitate early and integrated planning for schools to meet current and future needs. He also stressed the importance of the Rural and Northern Education Fund to schools that qualified for the funding and their communities.

Also in May the executive committee accepted an invitation from the Ministry of Education to meet with their officials for a discussion of how the Ministry can better support the unique needs of single school communities from a community infrastructure planning /student accommodation perspective. After signing confidentiality agreements, a sub-committee met with Ministry in June and we look forward to future consultations.

Since the launch of the CSA, the IT staff of Middlesex County has maintained a website for the organization. In January a subscription from WIX was purchased by the CSA and the site was moved to a new location. Southwest Middlesex continues to provide assistance in updating and maintaining the site and their support is much appreciated. The new site went live in February.

AMO's staff has continued to assist the CSA by sending out invoices for membership fees, providing us with regular financial reports and generally managing our finances.

I especially thank our municipal and individual members who support us with their membership fees. Those fees are our only revenue stream and they allow us to fund research and to employ a part-time administrator to keep us organized.

Finally, I thank the other members of our executive committee for their ongoing generosity with time and advice as we work to protect our schools in rural and northern Ontario and give as many students as possible the opportunity to attend elementary and secondary school in their home community. In addition to the members mentioned in earlier paragraphs, the committee includes Meghan Chomut from Shuniah, Dane Nielsen from Grey Highlands and Stephen Townsend from West Grey.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Reycraft". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

Doug Reycraft
Chair, Community Schools Alliance