

# news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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## **Improving inclusive education requires transparency and accountability**

Ensuring the recommendations of the Commission on Inclusive Education are properly implemented to the benefit of students requires collaboration and an open and transparent process, says NSTU President Paul Wozney.

He is expressing concern that government has unilaterally dropped the commission's recommendation to create an Institute of Inclusive Education designed to "provide oversight, a forum for shared leadership, and a review mechanism for monitoring, measuring, and reporting to the public on the outcomes achieved (*Students First*, pg. 107)."

"As outlined in the report, the Institute was crucial to ensuring all students receive the support they deserve and it was supposed to be created prior to the start of this school year," says Wozney. "It was intended to build confidence in the process while allowing parents to be kept informed about significant reforms that could impact their children. It was a key pillar to improving inclusive education, and so it is unfortunate what we are getting instead is a vague promise from government to issue an RFP for yet another private consultant."

Wozney says transformational change requires collaboration and trust between all parties, and that won't happen if the McNeil government continues to stifle transparency. The mandate of the Institute would have given oversight powers to parents of students with special needs, teachers, school administrators, the government, university education programs, and members of the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian Communities. Instead, those powers will now be given to a lone person appointed by the province.

"Following the passage of Bill 72, Nova Scotia now has the most secretive education system in Canada. Gone are the days when the public could go and watch decisions being made at their local school board meeting. Now everything happens behind the drawn curtains of the department of education. The inclusive education report is too important for key stakeholders to be kept in the dark. Everyone needs to be working together and keeping secrets from the public will just create unnecessary cynicism. The recommendation to create the Institute of Inclusive Education was well thought out and was included in the final report for a reason. I'm urging the government to act on it," adds Wozney.

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