



Auditor general finds New Brunswick education system suffers from a lack of stability

January 16, 2019

FREDERICTON (GNB) – In her latest report tabled today in the legislative assembly, Auditor General Kim MacPherson identified multiple complex factors that are affecting the academic performance of New Brunswick’s 98,000 students.

“Although we recognize a strong level of commitment throughout the education system, provincial assessment results in reading, math and science have never met targets in 15 years,” said MacPherson.

There have been five different provincial education plans over the last 15 years.

“Political interference is destabilizing the education system,” said MacPherson. “Successive governments have changed priorities too frequently, creating instability and shifting educators’ focus away from teaching New Brunswick’s children.”

She cited the example of the most recent change to the French immersion entry point in the anglophone sector to fulfil a political promise. The rush to implement the change disrupted operations and led to teacher demand exceeding labour market availability which resulted in hiring teachers lacking the required language skills.

The audit also identified socio-economic issues, such as poverty, add to the complexity of the education process and ultimately affect student performance. Teachers must often focus on students’ basic needs, such as hunger and inadequate clothing, before they can focus on teaching.

“System stability and more collaboration with other departments and community-based organizations are required to ensure teachers’ efforts are devoted to educating students,” said MacPherson.

The Education Act outlines a series of plans and reports at various levels to form a complex cycle to improve student performance. The cycle is not operating as intended as deficiencies were identified at each stage. Further, the provincial assessment programs also lack stability which impairs the usefulness of results. As a result, it is difficult to assess and take corrective action to improve student performance.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development along with the anglophone and francophone school districts were included in the audit. MacPherson made 14 recommendations to the department, including to maintain the current 10-year provincial education plans, stabilize the provincial assessment programs, and comply with (or review) the Education Act.

The Improving Student Performance: A New Brunswick Challenge chapter can be found in Volume II of the 2018 Auditor General Report. This volume and the one-page summary for this chapter are [available online](#).

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kevin Maillet, communications, Auditor General of New Brunswick, 506-453-3048.

16-01-19