

# **Where have all the Children Gone: Implications for Governance**

Keynote Address for the Atlantic School Boards Conference  
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[Title Slide]

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen and thank you Tom (Kendall) and Brian for the kind invitation to speak to you tonight.

One of the things we all struggle with in education – whether we are administrators, researchers or school boards governors – is trying to understand how best to organize the system for student learning. That mission becomes even more challenging when we are faced with complex social changes, new technology demands, and, increasingly – fewer students in smaller communities.

[Slide – Overview]

My talk tonight has three parts. First, some thoughts on why, throughout recent history, I think the enrolment problem has been so controversial and so politically-charged. Next a review of some of the demographic and social trends that have created these difficult challenges, and caused some people to want to re-examine the traditional policy responses. And lastly, and in keeping with the description of my talk in your programs, I'll share my perspective on some of the policy implications associated with these changes and perhaps some opportunities that may not have been apparent to us, even ten or fifteen years ago.

So tonight, the context of the enrolment problem and tomorrow – in smaller groups – an opportunity to discuss some scenarios and to consider some of these ideas.

Some of what I'll say tonight is founded in research – my own and that of other researchers, but a good deal of what I'll say is based on a long career working directly with ten successive education ministers and numerous school board level

decision makers – a period over which enrolment in this province fell by more than 40 percent.

As I look out over those in attendance I see a number of familiar faces. That tells me that many of the trustees here tonight have broad experience in the field of educational governance and, like me have struggled to find the ‘silver bullet’ that will, from a policy and governance perspective, address the pervasive and vexing problem of school enrolment decline.

### **Enrolment Decline has Many Faces**

[Slide – Enrolment decline has many faces]

That’s because enrolment decline has many faces. It is an enormously challenging and politically-charged social issue; it is vehemently challenged by parents and community leaders – who often view fewer numbers of students as temporary – perhaps because of an economic slowdown or short-term layoff; it is often contested by local politicians; and it is feared by teachers and school administrators whose personal lives are directly affected. Enrolment decline is a negative construct and our traditional policy responses to enrolment loss – for example, school closures or consolidations, extended bussing distances, teacher reductions, program cuts, and relocation bursaries to name a few – are extremely unpopular and are almost always resisted by the school community.

To illustrate, let me relate one experience that shows just how passionate people are about school closures.

In 2003, this province was still in a period of significant structural reorganization following changes to the denominational system of education. A group of parents – mostly mothers – angry that their school board had planned to close their school and bus children to a neighbouring community – showed up at the Minister’s office to demand a meeting. No one was expecting them; they pushed their way into the government offices right through the poor security guard at the entrance to the building. Well, the minister was in his district and I was the senior official in charge. We suggested a meeting with senior staff which they would not accept. Meanwhile they began to beat their placards on the floor and strike them against the glass walls of the hallway outside the department. Well at this stage there is no reasoning with an irate group of protesters. They pushed two eight foot solid oak doors off their hinges and onto me and another staff person knocking us onto the floor. Not too much worse for the wear, we eventually we got the group into a large meeting room and once they were convinced that the minister was, in fact, not in the building, accepted a meeting with the officials and the local MHA.

I relate this story not to suggest that you all need to go out and hire a security force for the board office or reinforce your doors and windows, but to provide a real example of how passionate people are about their schools. People care about community schools and will go to extreme lengths when they feel the quality of education is under threat.

[Slide – Save our schools]

Now these days I work in a “safer” academic environment, so I actually get a chance to think more closely about things before having to act – which is a far cry from the frenetic pace of my former life where the luxury of research and reflection sometimes took a back seat to other considerations. And when I review the history

of the enrolment problem and the number of times school boards and departments of education have clashed with parents, municipalities and community action groups it strikes me that in these times schools represent more than learning institutions; schools are symbolic of community well-being. Of course parents are primarily concerned about quality education, but a robust school enrolment is also emblematic of a strong and vibrant community; and the converse also holds true – sustained enrolment decline, for many people, seems to be linked to questions of community survival and the loss of a way of life.

Earlier I characterized enrolment decline as a consequence of social change rather than as the result of a more simplistic demographic shift. I say that because at the root of the startling enrolment shifts we've all seen are fundamental changes to social behavior and changes in the way people now see their place in the world – changes in religiosity, changes in how we conceptualize the family; changes in our life expectations; changes in our career and educational aspirations, and global changes in how we work and where we work....So how did it get to be this way?

## **Migration and Labour Market Patterns**

[Slide: Census Areas]

The Atlantic Provinces have always relied on traditional, primary resource-based industries like mining, agriculture and the fishery – the so-called 'lifeblood' of Atlantic Canada. Since the sixteenth century, fishers have settled in coastal bays and inlets along the East Coast – places that would provide shelter and proximity to the rich fish stocks they were after. Numerous geographically dispersed communities grew up along the coastlines, resulting in a population base that was located in virtually all corners of the region. From the perspective of the construction and

maintenance of required roads and infrastructure and the provision of education and other social programs this configuration evolved into a logistical and financial nightmare. For example, outside of the capital region, Newfoundland and Labrador has some 400 towns and communities over which is spread a population of only about 340,000 people.

But the labour market and the economy have changed. Now, with rural depopulation on the rise, and resettlement an option of last resort, many Atlantic Canadians living in rural and remote areas are struggling for community sustainability.

[Slide – The labour market]

There is a trend towards different kinds of employment, more urbanization and increased mobility among educated Atlantic Canadians. The labour market has become very fluid – many of the jobs of 20 years ago no longer exist or no longer hold promise for young graduates. Graduates today have to be flexible – they manage multiple part time or short-term jobs.

[Slide: Jobs by 38<sup>th</sup> birthday]

According to the US Department of Labour, half of all workers have been with their current employer less than five years. Some government estimates suggest that today's learners will have 10 to 14 jobs by their 38th birthday. We know, for example that many of today's university and college majors didn't exist 10 years ago, for example, new media, organic agriculture, e-business and oil and gas studies. What will our children study 10 years from now?

[Insert Slide – Airport scene]

Although not the main factor, a contributing cause of the enrolment problem, therefore, relates to the labour market and the migration patterns of Atlantic Canadians – particularly younger people in their prime childbearing years. Some educational observers believe that too many of our graduates are leaving – that we are educating our young people to become high-value export commodities. We invest in their education and training, and on a personal level want graduates to be successful, but, from the perspective of provincial and regional sustainability, sending thousands of skilled tradespeople, engineers, teachers, nurses, and potential entrepreneurs into the Alberta and Ontario economies is seen to be counter-productive to local sustainability.

[Insert Slide – Migration Patterns of Young people - Atlantic region)

Provincial governments past and present have struggled with this issue; the loss of young graduates from the region is a perennial concern. For at least five decades net-migration has been negative; as the number of people leaving has outnumbered the number moving into the region. Most of those who leave Atlantic Canada are young people under 25, from rural areas. Many who leave their home communities, do so to further their education and some, particularly older youth, may return, but a large proportion choose to enter a more robust job market than is available to them in this region

[Slide – Youth out-migration - the national picture]

Statistics Canada has described a similar national trend – just over half of teenagers aged 15 to 19 are living in their home community ten years later.

But this isn't new. Before 1950, it was common for young people from Atlantic Canada to move to the United States (particularly Boston) or the central and western provinces of Canada for seasonal or year-round work and this has continued. In this province, since the 1960s, when the number of post-secondary graduates began to increase, and well into the 1990s, net out-migration averaged about 3,500 people annually before trending downward. In 2007, New Brunswick posted its first positive net migration since 1990. But, the past few years have also seen a booming Alberta economy which has been attracting even more young people.

## **Urbanization**

[Slide – Urbanization is a global trend]

But out-migration of young people isn't the only issue; there has been a general trend – in this region and globally – towards urbanization, and that has been draining people from rural communities and into larger centers. The post-industrial revolution, whereby manufacturing and primary-resource based industries became globalized caused massive changes in the job market. It also introduced an array of new service-based industries – which operate, largely out of urban centres. Census data shows that since 1950, the percentage of Canada's population living in urban areas rose from 61% to over 81% in 2005 while the share of the global population living in urban areas has increased from just 29% in 1950 to almost half in 2005.

## **Births and Fertility Rates**

[Slide – Four couples]

By far, the most significant driver of enrolment decline is a disturbing drop in the birth rate, which, for some time has been well below replacement levels. The population requires at least 2.1 children per family to sustain it through natural

means; that is to say without accounting for immigration. At the present national rate of 1.54 the population will inevitably shrink from natural decrease after about 2020<sup>ii</sup>. With the exception of PEI, Atlantic Canadians have fertility rates which are well below the national average, and in the case of Newfoundland, at 1.3, are exceptionally low, even by international standards. But people are also tending to have children progressively later in their lives.

[Slide: Mothers]

Almost half of the babies in Canada today were born to a mother aged 30 years or older (48.9%). In 1981 it was only about 25 percent; and this reflects a new trend whereby women are choosing to delay starting motherhood. The average age of marriage is around 28 years for women and 30 years for men, which reflects a five-year increase since the end of the 1970s.

Part of this shift can be attributed to changes in religiosity and world view, whereby Atlantic Canadians are less likely to be guided by tradition and church doctrine in their important life decisions. Before 1970, most people held a strong attachment to the Christian churches. But the 70s and 80s were marked by increasing secularization. It was a period where Church doctrine began to play decreasing role in people's lives<sup>iii</sup>. And this, according to some social theorists, is associated with much of the change that we now see reflected in our school enrolments. Almost half the adults in this country now say they have no religious affiliation or do not attend religious services, up from a third of Canadians just twenty five years ago. Other factors that mitigate against larger families include an increase in the number of divorces: 38% in Canada in 2002 and a larger proportion of Canadian couples without children – actually 43% in 2007.

[Slide –Relative birth rates]

This slide shows the number of births by province over time. Since the baseline year, 1971, the number of births in Atlantic Canada has declined by almost half.

[Slide: Baby carriages]

To put it another way, on this slide the top row represents babies born in 1971. The other rows represent the relative proportion of babies born in 2008, in each of the four provinces.

[Slide: How do we compare?]

And we are not alone in Atlantic Canada. These changes are global. Countries such as Japan, Spain, Greece, Germany, Portugal and Italy already have a total fertility rate of about 1.3, where Canada is heading.

## **Enrolment Decline**

Enrolment decline began to reveal itself in this province in 1971 when most schools began what has been a 38 year drop in the number of school aged children. But the signs were evident some years earlier. Last summer, while doing research for a book on denominational school reform, I had an opportunity to review the Final Report of the 1964 Royal Commission on Education. This commission was established to advise the Smallwood government on how to modernize an education system that was – at that time – rapidly expanding and in dire need of attention. (Incidentally, when the Commission began its work there were 1266 schools governed by 270 separate boards)

[Slide –Enrolment decline in Newfoundland]

The evidence of Newfoundland's post-war baby boom could be seen in the classrooms of the 1960s. In just 20 years, from the end of the war to the announcement of the Commission, enrolment increased by over one hundred percent from 70,000 to 145,000 students. But before the province could adequately adapt to the massive increase in the number of school-aged children, demographers were already predicting a reversal in enrolment trends. In fact, as early as 1967, this Commission, in its final report published birth rates which clearly showed that natural population increase was on the decline. But, like opinion polls and economic forecasts, one of the remarkable things about population projections is that when they are positive they give people hope, and when they are negative, people still cling to the possibility that they might be wrong.

Whether for political reasons, or simply wishful thinking, the Commission failed to acknowledge or comprehend the importance of this reversal in birth rates. Instead, it projected that enrolment would be approaching a quarter million (240,000) by 1991. The actual enrolment peaked at 163,000 students in 1971; only four years after the Commission tabled its report. As the 1980s progressed, the gravity of the enrolment crisis had become clear. By the early 1990s the number of school-aged children dropped to approximately 125,000 – about half of what the Commission had forecast. It now stands at 70,000 students and during the next ten years, is expected to drop by at least another 10,000 students. In fact, this year the size of the kindergarten cohort was less than 4800 students compared to almost 13,000 three decades ago.

[Slide – Enrolment decline in the Atlantic provinces]

From this slide, which tracks enrolment across the region since 1986, you can see that there were similar declines in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, although later; and not as severe as in Newfoundland and Labrador. In PEI, where you recently had a major study, enrolment declined one-third, from 30,000 to almost 20,000 students.

We should also bear in mind that enrolment patterns within provinces can be markedly different from one school board to another. For example, Nova Scotia's Strait Regional School Board has seen a 25% drop in enrolments over the last ten years. Over the same period, the Halifax Regional School Board saw only a 10% drop and the Conseil Scolaire Acadien, the French-language school board, saw a 2% increase.

[Slide- Enrolment decline in Canada]

This slide shows the national enrolment picture. While it began much earlier, and has been more pronounced in Eastern Canada, it is now clear that enrolment decline is now becoming a national problem. You can partially blame migration patterns for enrolment decline at the provincial level, but, the overall Canada-wide decline in enrolment is the result of demographic change. In particular, the last of the so-called echo boomers – the large cohort of children born to the baby boomers between 1980 and 1994 – are currently making their way through their final years in the kindergarten to Grade 12 system. The children taking their places are part of a much smaller cohort.

## **Implications for governance: The realities and opportunities of enrolment decline**

[Add slide: Implications of Enrolment Decline Slide]

Having examined these facts and figures let's now consider some of the implications of these changes for school board governance. I'm going to approach this part of my address in terms of both realities and opportunities. My approach here is to look at how we can respond effectively to declining enrolment while minimizing difficult structural reforms.

[Slides follow each point]

### **Reality One: The problem of school enrolment decline isn't going away.**

Enrolment decline is not a temporary blip or a trend that is going to reverse itself any time soon. Many young couples will settle and raise their families in other parts of the country or other places in the world. The combination of an alarming drop in fertility rates combined with this substantial out-migration of younger graduates in their prime childbearing years will continue to present enormous challenges both in terms of our immediate concern - organizing and delivering programs – and in terms of the broader sense of community sustainability. The choices we make now are for the long term and are not going to be easily reversible. So we need to be thinking less in economic-rationalist terms and more in terms of high quality and equitable programming.

### **Reality Two: There are no easy solutions.**

If history can teach us anything, it is that making significant structural changes to school systems is a difficult, sometimes courageous and always unpopular policy choice. And I'll return here to my original thesis: schools and community

sustainability go hand in hand, and that is part of the reason why policy decisions involving traditional responses to enrolment decline have been met with such resistance.

In the eyes of the public, policymakers have not fared very well in trying to meet the challenges of enrolment decline. Whereas education policy may have, in the past, been accepted by a trustful and quiescent public, this has changed. These are uncertain and risky times. More than ever, we now have to negotiate educational policy with a diverse and impatient public. Policy makers on all levels find themselves confronted with the fact that what they plan to function as a benefit to all is, instead, felt to be a curse by some and is opposed.

The closure of a school or the loss of teachers due to enrolment decline ignites public anger, political action and negative media attention. Program reductions are met with similar resistance by parents and advocacy groups who claim that this will result in a second-class education for their children.

### **Reality Three: The standard funding paradigms no longer apply**

When school systems are in decline, one of the most difficult challenges for school districts is to make the case for a reasonable share of public funding. That's because the usual paradigm of public funding does not apply – the conventional belief that educational delivery is scalable; that is, more students – higher costs: fewer students – lower costs is too simplistic. Enrolment decline is expensive. As boards try to maintain programs and instruction in a system that is contracting, the conventional enrolment-driven funding formulas are not entirely appropriate. Over the past three decades, governments in this province struggled with the problem of resourcing. As a result, they frequently ignored their own teacher and resource allocation policies,

and every five years or so, looked to expert panels or commissions for advice on some aspect of resource allocation.

Most existing funding formulas were designed for stable or expanding systems. As student numbers began to decline so did school board operating grants and teacher allocations. That's because some major components of school board funding formulas are based on student headcount. Now, although funding formulas differ across the provinces, K-12 funding is typically allocated on a dollars-per-student basis. The problem with this kind of approach however, is that when enrolments are in decline it is very difficult to sustain equitable programs and services. When fewer students enroll, school boards receive less funding but they do not incur proportionately lower costs – in other words, as headcounts decrease, per student costs increase. The Canadian Council on Learning reports that the cost of running a school with fewer than 100 students is about 30% higher on a per student basis than the cost of running a school with more than 300 students.

This is the case because school boards are unable to reduce their costs in proportion to the decline in student numbers. The cost of heating and lighting a school with fewer students remains the same as it was when there were more students. Instructional and administrative costs can also remain constant or may even increase in the face of declining enrolment. Parents still expect a music program and the cost of a field trip is about the same, whether you have a grade seven class of 25 or 23. In short, reductions in student numbers may not be sufficient to justify cancelling classes or eliminating the need for administrative or support staff, and this kind of funding method does not adequately account for the fact that some costs are not sensitive to small reductions in school populations.

If we are concerned about equality of educational opportunity, we have to use a different kind of yardstick for these small rural schools. Per-student formulas tend to place all students, regardless of geography, into the same category. The only reasonable solution is to look at differential formulas based on geography, the composition of school enrolment, and program requirements.

The kinds of policy responses we need in facing these changes have significant costs attached. Superior technology infrastructure and high bandwidth connectivity are absolutely essential if we're serious about creating equitable and high quality learning experiences in our schools – especially those rural and remote schools. We need to be driving home the reality that any cost efficiencies associated with enrolment decline will need to be re-invested, probably with other new funding.

**Reality Four: The changing demographic profile of the population means more competition for funding:**

[Insert Slide: Ageing population]

One of the other demographic trends associated with enrolment decline is an ageing population and an ageing population means there is increasing competition for public funding. Even though public expectations for schools have ramped up, an ageing population means that health departments now capture proportionally more of the attention of politicians and proportionally more of the money available for social programs – and some people perceive that this has been at the expense of education. In the past we had cohort sizes that were more than double the size they are today. An older population makes it more difficult to make the argument that schools need more funding. So I think school boards need to cultivate local partnerships; school boards need the support of school councils and local organizations to bring this message to local MLAs and MHAs. My research on

government decision making shows that the most significant factor considered by ministers in their policy decisions relates to political pressure from their constituents and the media..... It turns out that thoughtful political action continues to be one of the most effective tools available to school boards.

**Reality Five: In a contracting system, we need creative staffing policies:**

It seems counter-intuitive. But a shrinking system creates problems with the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers. In the 1960s as student enrolment increased significantly, and into the 70s, the number of new teachers entering the system grew. Many settled in rural communities, which, at that time had substantial economic bases in the fishery or in other primary sectors. These teachers are now reaching retirement age and are exiting the education system in large numbers—a trend that will continue for several years. As these teachers retire, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain teachers for rural, remote areas, particularly in certain specialty areas such as guidance, speech language pathology, special education, mathematics, and science. And this gets more difficult as communities get smaller.

Now I spend a good deal of my time these days teaching and working with novice teachers. Every September when I ask them where they want to teach, very few are interested in a rural placement. Most new teachers, (and more recently, administrators) are reluctant to relocate to smaller, more isolated areas. Young teachers, like most young professionals want access to the services and lifestyle offered in larger centres.

In the coming years, education planners expect a global shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in specialty areas. We need strategies to attract high quality,

motivated teachers into positions in rural schools. Here in Newfoundland & Labrador, because of our circumstances, we have been forced to contend with the recruitment and retention problem, probably, to a greater extent than some other provinces. To that end, several years ago the province introduced some innovative HR policies that seem to be bearing fruit. For example, student teachers who have university degrees in specialty subjects and are willing to work in remote areas can be issued interim teaching licences before they complete their teacher preparation. In addition, there are financial incentives for student teachers who are willing to undertake their internships in some rural and remote schools and for teachers who are willing to work in these schools. Student teachers who specialize in high-demand disciplines can participate in paid internship experiences in rural and remote schools. As well, retired teachers can resume teaching while still collecting their pensions if there is a hard-to-fill position and they are willing to teach in isolated areas.

School boards, the Faculty of Education, the Teachers' Association and the province have also collaborated on teacher recruitment fairs and teacher induction programs.

**Reality Six: Some consolidation and restructuring is inevitable.**

In some cases, particularly in communities where there is more than one school or when communities are in reasonably close proximity school closures and consolidation are an important and necessary option. Sometimes, when bussing distances are reasonable and provision can be made for students to participate in after-school extra-curricular activities the only realistic and appropriate option may be the rezoning of students to other schools. School boards need to demonstrate that they are fiscally accountable for public expenditures and to show they are willing to operate within a context of finite financial resources. But, as my colleague Dr. Mary Green, who is now at Acadia University argues: consolidation can't be

forced and must be accomplished in a reasonable and humanistic way (pause). My colleague and friend, Dr. Harold Press just finished doing some work for the Prince Edward Island Department of Education. In his report, he identifies a set of guiding principles to keep in mind as school boards make decisions about how to reorganize schools, whether that means closing, rezoning or consolidating. It makes sense for trustees to consider not only current and future enrolment numbers, but also such factors as school size; student transportation distances; access to the social and developmental aspects of school life; and the quality and condition of school buildings.

**Reality Seven: We must also consider alternatives to closure and radical restructuring:**

The economic-rationalist argument that the organization of schooling must always adhere to a strict set of economic principles is archaic and antiquated. This is where I think some of us have failed in the past. Just because it is possible to consolidate schools, doesn't necessarily mean it is always the appropriate thing to do. There are social costs associated with school reform and these need to be considered because in the longer term, these social costs may far outweigh the immediate economic benefits of wholesale school consolidation. I'm suggesting here that we must allow space for other kinds of evidence to be evaluated before we make long-term decisions on school closures that have all kinds of social implication for students and families. Sometimes consolidating schools and bussing students 30 or 40 minutes to another community is not in the best interests of a student's education. There is also good evidence in the literature to suggest that bigger is not always better.

### **Reality Eight: The way children learn is changing.**

These days, the experiences of learners are very heavily mediated through digital devices of one form or another. Nowadays students acquire most of their new information through a complex web of e-portals, blogs, social networking tools, video, and electronic text. Information is expanding at exponential rates. According to one US source, the amount of technical information is now doubling every two years and this is predicted to continue to increase. We are currently preparing students for jobs and technologies that don't yet exist . . . in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet.

So an important point to recognize, is that schools have a responsibility to educate students to work in these emerging environments. So we need to be thinking hard about our pedagogy and about how technology-mediated learning can fit into our education system. Within this context, citizens expect the school system to graduate students with an education that prepares them for an ever-changing technology-filled world. So this is an opportunity to be innovative in looking for ways to use technology to deliver high quality learning experiences, especially in low-enrolment rural schools.

### **Reality Nine: The way we deliver school programs is changing.**

And that brings me to my final point. The way we deliver programs is changing and will continue to change. Despite our best efforts to convince education departments otherwise, some teachers will be lost from the system. There comes a point – and Brian Shortall and I both have some experience with this – where even the most robust teacher allocation models will not be sufficient to offer a full suite of programs through traditional, classroom-based teaching, particularly in high schools. The notion of one teacher-one class may no longer be a viable and effective model.

We already have some good models of e-learning in web-based classroom environments, and these are constantly being refined and improved upon. We established the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation here in this province in 2000 to allow students to complete programs using virtual classrooms and real time (synchronous) teaching. A student's e-teacher provides instruction via audio and videoconferencing, e-mail, fax, and conference forums. It was a major undertaking and required a significant and sustained financial commitment from governments past and present....and I'm talking here about costs associated with design, technology infrastructure, network requirements, training and e-teachers. The benefit is that a range of programs are now being offered by master teachers to students in schools that would, individually, be incapable of offering such programs. Today, in this province the centre offers 31 courses, as well as e-tutoring, counselling, and a host of resources to help students complete AP courses independently.

Now this doesn't mean students will complete all their studies in this way, but new e-learning approaches are providing highly-effective instruction to students in subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, physics and a host of others, including music and art. And the study of effective e-learning approaches is an emerging field that can help all of our provinces design better e-learning programs. Dr. Elizabeth Murphy and other researchers at Memorial's Faculty of Education are currently engaged in this work and I look forward to their findings.

## **Conclusion**

The challenges posed by declining enrolments are clearly daunting. When the post-war baby boomers left the K-12 system starting in the 1970s, and into the 80s and 90s, they did so during recessionary times. The standard policy responses led to

large numbers of school closures, teacher layoffs, hiring freezes, and service reductions. Should we expect the same during the current economic slowdown, as enrolments continue to plummet? Or can we be more effective in our policy responses?

Given that enrolments in Atlantic Canada are likely to continue on their present course, it seems inevitable that school board officials, and yourselves as trustees, must be prepared to embrace the opportunities for innovation that declining enrolments present. To repeat the same pattern of wholesale restructuring so evident in the recent reform literature means that we run the risk of repeating a pattern of educational upheaval that can be so damaging to school communities.

Michael Apple, in his book entitled, *Ideology and Curriculum*, argues that schooling is "inherently a "political and moral process" (p. 12) and that the factors influencing how we organize schooling are not only economic, but also political and more importantly ethical. Schools have always been foundational to community and regional cohesion. And so I think it is appropriate to ask: Can a school help to grow a community? The fact that you are here this week speaks to your interest in the future sustainability of community-based schools and your desire that the children under your care be part of that future.

Thank you very much.

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