

Parent School Support Committee (PSSC)
Moncton High School
Moncton, NB

March 28, 2024

Hon. Bill Hogan
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development
639 Main Street
Woodstock NB E7M 2C7

Dear Mr. Hogan,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the **overcrowding issue at Moncton High School**. As members of the school community and the school's PSSC, we are deeply alarmed by the current situation and its impact on the quality of education and the overall well-being of our students, staff, and administrative team.

With a student population of close to 1600, Moncton High School is now at 34% over capacity and growing monthly. Overcrowding is a significant challenge across the entire Anglophone Education School District and the province. This issue is at risk of being a crisis for the province but is also a substantial provincial opportunity for growth and improvement.

We request a meeting and ask that the overcrowding situation at Moncton High School be deemed URGENT - all potential short-term and long-term solutions need to be considered immediately.

Overcrowding in schools can have several detrimental effects, including:

Compromised Safety: Overcrowded classrooms and hallways can pose safety risks in emergencies such as fires or evacuations. It may also contribute to the spread of illnesses where social distancing becomes challenging. Bullying continues to be a school issue, which is believed to be related to overcrowding.

Diminished Learning Environment: Large class sizes resulting from overcrowding can hinder the ability of teachers to provide individualized attention to students, leading to a decrease in academic performance and engagement. Classroom activities are hindered, and instructional techniques must be revised, impacting students' overall academic performance. Students' concentration has become a problem, and overall discipline issues continue to increase.

Negative Impact on Physical and Mental Health: High levels of crowding can lead to increased stress and anxiety among students and staff, affecting their mental well-being and overall satisfaction with the school environment. Absenteeism continues to be a significant problem at our school and in many schools province-wide, with overcrowding believed to be one of the causes.

Teacher Retention, Stress Leaves and Attracting New Teachers: As a province, we struggle to hire and keep enough teachers. They are the system's backbone, but poor working environments

increase the risk of losing teachers in the short and long term and make it more challenging to recruit teachers.

Given these concerns, we urge the province and Anglophone East School District to **prioritize addressing the issue of overcrowding at our high school through short-term measures such as increased funding, expediting the new school build process, utilizing other spaces within the district (i.e. Old Moncton High School); and reassessing school zones to redistribute student populations more evenly across less crowded schools within the district.**

On a short-term basis, redistributing students to less crowded schools can alleviate the strain on resources and create a more conducive learning environment that promotes academic success and overall student well-being. Additionally, this approach can help mitigate safety concerns associated with overcrowding and ensure that all students have access to the quality education they deserve.

We have 12 portables and will have four more by next September at a minimum. It is important to note that the school is only nine years old. There are also location challenges for these portables, with the current recommendation to continue to put the portables in front of the school as a cost-saving measure. Doing so would block MORE windows in the school, negatively impacting classroom environments and losing needed parking spaces.

Building new schools must be a top priority for the provincial government, or this problem will continue to compound. Capital investment in building a school should be closely scrutinized and reviewed to decrease the building timeframe to a couple of years versus a five-to-ten-year time horizon. This is very possible if the will is there.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response to these issues and concerns impacting our children and the future of our great province. We will be working with other schools in our district to ensure a voice beyond that of Moncton High School is heard.

Our children must be a top priority. You have a chance to make our province a leading one - the success of our students will ultimately result in the success of our province. It is the best investment that can be made.

The new Moncton High School is less than ten years old and is becoming a sea of portables. This is unacceptable to the students and parent community.

We look forward to meeting with you.

PSSC Moncton High School Members

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