



THE PREMIER
Halifax, Nova Scotia

March 24, 2021

Honourable Derek Mombourquette
Education and Early Childhood Development

Dear Minister Mombourquette,

Thank you for accepting the position of Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development – a portfolio critical to improving the lives of future generations and to creating a thriving Nova Scotia. Education is the great equalizer. With a strong education, all of Nova Scotia’s children can look forward to a happier life and a more secure future.

I am eager to work collaboratively with you to continue to advance an education system that prepares all children for the future they deserve.

Nova Scotia is beginning a new chapter, one that reflects our past and presents new and better opportunities. Previous governments have collaborated with all sectors to build a strong foundation. Special focus was placed on education and early learning to propel our province into the future. We wish to build on this momentum.

Our collective response to the COVID 19 pandemic made Nova Scotians an example for the world. We showed what is possible when we work together and put people first. As we move forward, we will continue to work together to keep Nova Scotians healthy and safe. We will apply the same approach to our new mandate and connect in new ways within government and communities to act on climate change and improve the wellbeing of all Nova Scotians.

The priorities of Nova Scotians are the priorities of government. People want action on climate change and for our province to move faster to right historic wrongs. Nova Scotia only truly succeeds when we all succeed. The work of government, across all departments and offices, must have at its core a commitment to social equity, the value of diversity, and the foundational fairness of inclusion.

For too many Nova Scotians, systemic racism is a lived reality. For many years, people have raised their voices to demand change. In 2020 more members of society awoke to historic and systemic injustice and to the weakening of our social fabric caused by the failure to address persistent inequality.

This generation will achieve change. Fairness demands it. Social justice should no longer be a distant ideal. It should be a definite, measurable goal. Our school system will help drive change.

As Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, you will execute a broad mandate that includes responsibility for early childhood development and the education of children and youth through the public-school system. Every child is different, and consequently each student has different needs. As Minister, you must orient the education system with each individual child at the centre. The system must tailor the educational experiences of students to their unique needs. It must also ensure children are well fed and ready to learn. A focus on local food in school meal programs will make our children healthier and happier and support our farmers and fishers.

Today's children are the future stewards of our economy, environment, and our province. Focusing on their well-being and happiness now prepares them for a sustainable and better future. The needs of the future will be different from the past. As a futures investor, your department needs to have an eye to the horizon to anticipate the impending needs of society. Nova Scotia has a strong foundation in education. Let us build on that.

With the above in mind, you will:

- expand access to healthy food choices in Nova Scotia's schools and increase focus on locally produced food for school meal programs.
- establish a framework for physical activity and health literacy for every student.
- expand biodiversity education in the curriculum to prepare our children to be environmental stewards.
- implement an equity recruitment strategy to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in professional positions in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and across the system at all levels.
- work with the federal government on a national childcare strategy because quality childcare is critical to child health and learning, supports access to the workforce, and contributes to a thriving economy.
- increase access to the *Discovering Opportunities Program*, which links learning to the workplace and better prepares students to succeed.
- undertake a collaborative review of the *Individual Program Plan (IPP)* program and use an evidence-based approach to determine when an IPP is most appropriate.
- update the curriculum to fully reflect the rich, vibrant, multi-generational, and multi-ethnic histories of African Nova Scotians, African Canadians, and Mi'kmaq people and communities.
- enhance the roles of the Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME) and Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) to ensure that the voices of Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians are heard at the ministerial level.
- introduce an accountability mechanism to ensure that the *Inclusive Education Policy* is being properly implemented.
- introduce the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) Act to provide the policy framework to protect the Acadian language and culture.
- strengthen the working relationship with the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to enable both our education facilitators and entrepreneurial stakeholders to develop the imagination and creativity of our young people.
- invest more in the Options and Opportunities (O₂) program to help youth on their career paths, as well as skilled trades courses, digital skills training, computer science programming, and other pathways to emergent opportunities, such as those in sustainable development and renewable energy.

As Minister, you are expected to have command over your portfolio and its issues. You are responsible for building constructive working relationships and fostering collaboration within your Department, the public service, stakeholders, and the community to together achieve progress on mandate items and shared objectives. Whole-of-government human centered design will guide your work. All Ministers are expected to develop and implement policies, programs, and services with a citizen-centered orientation to foster social equity, act on climate change, and achieve inclusive growth and well-being.

All Ministers are also reminded of our shared House of Assembly obligations. You are expected to review, understand, and act according to applicable legislation, regulations, and policy, and to conduct yourself with the highest degree of integrity. Transparency and accountability to Nova Scotians is a fundamental tenet of responsible government and democracy. As Minister, you are expected to uphold these principles as you execute on your responsibilities.

The economy of Nova Scotia remains impacted by COVID-19, but our foundations are strong. To benefit all Nova Scotians for generations to come, the path forward must be sustainable, and built on our comparative advantages. The impact of decisions on our climate will be considered in policy making across government. Investments will meet our climate action objectives. Low carbon approaches will spearhead economic recovery from the pandemic, as well as growth. Sustainable approaches will enhance our competitive position, increase our capacity to innovate, reduce inequalities among Nova Scotians, and create more opportunities for everyone.

With affordability in mind, we will make strategic investments where they are needed most to improve the social wellbeing of Nova Scotians. The return on those investments will be increased workforce participation, higher wage jobs, and a healthier and happier population.

As Premier of Nova Scotia, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you and to continue building on the successes of our collective work to date. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have learned what matters most to Nova Scotians. Together, we can achieve their vision for a stronger, more inclusive, and more sustainable province.

Thank you again for agreeing to serve Nova Scotians in this capacity.

Sincerely,



Honourable Iain Rankin, M.L.A.

Premier of Nova Scotia

c: Cathy Montreuil, Deputy Minister Education and Early Childhood Development
Karen Gatien, Associate Deputy Minister Education and Early Childhood Development