

## August 2008

### **The future of Halifax's public schools depends on your vote**

A week after Labour Day, nominations officially close for positions on the Halifax Regional School Board. And on October 18, a new slate of school board members will be elected.

This is a critically important election for several reasons. First, it will be the first multi-member board after almost two years of leadership under Howard Windsor. Secondly, the board will be reforming after being dissolved due to dysfunction. And finally, the composition of the new Board is completely up to you.

The voters of HRM and potential school board members now have a chance to change recent history. But change can only occur through the power of the ballot box.

In the last year, the Chamber's Education Committee has been working hard on school board governance issues. Last year, committee members visited school boards in Ontario and Alberta to research best practices in this area. During its investigations, it found that the Calgary School Board, which had been dissolved due to dysfunction, is now one of the most effective boards in the country.

After in-depth research, the Education Committee has created a guide to school board governance. This guide includes a list of characteristics of a good school board member and a good board chair. The Committee has also been asked to forward its advice to the Minister of Education, who is contemplated changes to the laws on school boards.

Some may wonder why people should be concerned about school board governance. But here's a good reason: research has shown that the better quality the school board, the better the quality of education children receive. And because improving the quality of K-12 education in the province is one of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce's stated priorities, it is within all our best interests to elect the best possible representatives to our local school board.

Within the next weeks, the Chamber will be releasing more materials related to the school board elections. These will include a list of questions you should ask each potential candidate for the board. Stay tuned for future developments.

Remember on October 18 to cast your vote. But before you do, you can ensure you get the best possible candidate by researching the best candidate. The quality of the future board is completely up to you.

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