

June 11, 2024

Dear West Hants Council,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the equity issues experienced by West Hants youth within our current schools.

As a member of the Diverse and Inclusive Communities Committee, I feel it is important to draw attention to the hard work being done by our dedicated community members and school personnel.

Last night, I had the privilege of participating in an honest, thoughtful discussion with our current school's front-line staff (student support workers, counsellors, teachers, administrators at Brooklyn and Dr Arthur Hines Elementary Schools, the West Hants Middle School and Avon View High School, as well as a Regional Education Officer from the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education and the Valley director for the Black Educators Association).

The discussion centered around racism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination experienced daily by WHRM youth in the school setting. I found the conversation to be extremely beneficial as it provided the schools with a venue for talking with each other, something they have not had and also gave me with a new awareness of what is currently being done to help address these concerns.

These amazing individuals shared the challenges faced every day and the steps taken to improve their response to hurtful incidents and their capacity to prevent them, learning from one another's ideas and experiments.

I left the meeting feeling extremely encouraged by what I heard about the work being done as I feel schools play an extremely important role in shaping the future of the community. However, I also realized many complex and persistent issues still remain; one item that strikes me as something that you as our elected officials can act on would be to support this much needed work and write a letter to the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education requesting additional resources.

Our educational leaders working on these issues in the schools are doing so on top of their already exhausting jobs. When asked what could be done to better support their efforts, they responded that written letters to the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education asking for a full-time equity coordinator in both the West Hants Middle School and Avon View High School would be a valuable resource.

I would ask that as our elected officials and voice for our communities that you endorse a letter to the AVRCE and request they consider the additional staff resources be implemented to support the future generations of West Hants.

Please note there is some urgency with respect to timing, as the school year is winding down for summer break. I respectfully request that you kindly consider the ask and provide staff with the direction to work with myself and other members of the Diverse and Inclusive Communities committees to prepare a letter.

In gratitude,
Anne Bishop