



Strengthening Education In Ontario's Rural and Remote Communities Wawa – May 25, 2016

On May 25, the Liberal government held a meeting in Wawa (along with 12 other locations across Northern Ontario) to discuss how to support and strengthen education in rural communities.

Main Topics of Discussion:

- 1. Supporting the sustainable use of school space in rural communities and community hubs and schools**
- 2. Having school boards share space**
- 3. Supporting decision-making around school closures**
- 4. Supporting quality education in rural communities**

Groups met in round table discussions with members of the provincial government, school trustees and other stakeholders. There were 17 members of the community present, 16 of whom had direct connections to the school system. We ended up having open discussions due to the small groups, many who shared similar concerns about rural schools and the gaps between rural and urban education in Ontario.

Some topics discussed:

Bussing issues – monopolies and prices, distances and wi-fi

Multi-use schools after hours

Removing 'silos' and including various government offices

Staffing numbers – larger impacts in smaller schools

Multi-grade / multi- subject issues and impacts on student learning

Saturated fundraising markets – not always an option to enhance programming

Principals teaching classes – health and safety issues

Funding formula needs to redefine rural (Northern Ontario vs Southern Ontario)

School Closure Review – lack of communication/consultation

Resources (spec ed / specialists) are lacking – students affected

Students in rural schools feel like second class citizens

Overall the meeting felt productive and a lot of information was gathered and we will see how this information is used in the future. The common message from people who contributed to the discussion was that the funding formula needs to change to make it less discriminatory towards rural education.