

Associate Minister
of National Defence



Ministre associé
de la Défense nationale

22 May 1986

Mrs. Lucie Richardson
34 Brock Crescent
Kingston, Ontario
K7K 5K8

Dear Mrs. Richardson:

I refer to your letter of 8 April 1986 addressed to the Honourable Erik Nielsen, and one of 16 May 1985 addressed to the Director of Dependants Education concerning the Department's Dependants Education System.

I am advised that the Director General Dependants Education Programs has already responded to questions that you raised with him in a letter also dated 8 April 1986 and that he has also provided you with a detailed reply to your letter of 16 May 1985. Under the circumstances, I will limit my response to what appears to be your main areas of concern. These are, I believe, that changes are being made to the Dependants Education System without any parental impact and that the changes may be made primarily for financial reasons.

On the subject of parental involvement, I am advised that an evaluation team has recently completed a ten-week visit to the four major Command Headquarters and fifteen Bases in seven of the ten Provinces. During these visits, the team conducted formal interviews with the Commanders, senior staff officers, Department of National Defence (DND) School Board Chairmen, DND School Principals and local Municipal school authorities. The team also met with parents and other interested parties for some two hours during its visit to Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Portage La Prairie. While it is true that the evaluation team did not seek to meet with groups of parents, it did not decline to meet with them when such a meeting was requested. I also understand that comprehensive questionnaires are to be

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distributed to parents, teachers and secondary students in order to obtain their views and insights on this sensitive issue.

The suggestion that financial considerations will be the sole basis for decisions in this important area of activity is not correct. The Department would be short-sighted, indeed, if it were to adopt a policy which did not ensure the provisions of a quality education to the dependants of our military personnel. The Department has met its responsibilities in this area for over thirty-five years and it will continue to do so. However, this does not mean that where the local Municipal school boards are well placed to provide the required quality education that this option would not be considered. Given the fact that education is a Provincial responsibility and that circumstances have changed in the sense that many of our Bases and Stations are no longer isolated, this option must be considered. The Department has to examine all options including the above.

You have my assurance that changes to the existing education system will only be made where they are both appropriate and in the best interests of the children. In closing, I would like to thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



Harvie Andre