
New MHA questions school closures

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Marshall Dean, Straits-White Bay North MHA, outside the House of Assembly.

The newest member of the Official Opposition asked his first questions as an MHA in the House of Assembly Tuesday.

Liberal Marshall Dean won the seat for The Straits-White Bay North in a byelection in October.

His first questions were directed to Education Minister Darin King.

Dean asked the minister to reverse a decision by the Western School Board to close Bayview Collegiate in St. Lunaire-Griquet, which is in his district.

The school is scheduled to close after a new high school is completed in St. Anthony.

Dean said parents in the community are upset students will then have to be bused about 40 kilometres each way, which raises safety concerns in winter weather.

King said he made a commitment at a public meeting during the byelection to raise all the community's concerns with the school board. King said he's since done that. But Dean responded by pointing out the province reversed a decision in 2005 by the Nova Central board to close Leo Burke Academy in Bishop's Falls.

He then asked King to commit to do the same in this case.

"I'm prepared to talk about my commitment to let those (school) boards do the job that they've been elected to

do," the minister said in the House.

Dean also asked King about four schools which have already been closed this academic year due to air quality issues such as mould.

The Liberals have been asking questions on that issue for the last several sittings of the House, and demanding the province do mandatory air quality inspections in all schools and post the results online.

"So I ask the minister, how many more times will we have to raise this issue before you take the initiative to reconsider the way air quality is monitored in our schools," Dean said.

But King said many of the air quality issues recently discovered in the province's schools would not have been detected by testing.

He said the problems only came to light after renovations began on the buildings.