

Council sending concerns to school board

By Sarah Sobanski

Hastings Highlands council wants Hastings Prince Edward District School Board to know it's concerned about how area schools compare to those across the province.

In council's agenda April 18 the school board released its Director's Annual Report 2017. In it were 2017's EQAO testing results. Councillor Alex Walder noted HPEDSB was below provincial averages in many grades. He also noted stats had declined from last year in most grades.

In a later email to *Bancroft This Week*, Walder called the report, by HPEDSB director of education Mandy Savery-Whiteway, "eye catching and informative."

"Her report on the board wide EQAO results" are clear and forthright. While she should be commended for the openness, the message is disturbing and it must be recognised that we have a problem," he wrote.

"For a long, long time HPEDSB's assessments have been consistently below the provincial standards. Even a few areas which at some time showed comparable or above scores, are now lower than the current provincial averages. We see a down slide from 2016 to 2017. Not only are we not gaining but are losing ground."

Walder wrote that he believed the results showed a "systemic problem." He called on the board and ministry to recognize the problem and act by creating a strategy to address "needed support and resources."

"I want to make it absolutely clear that in my opinion these district wide results are not because we have less intelligent children, less capable hardworking teachers or local school administrators," he wrote. "It is not enough to report the raw data."

He added, "Raising attention to this issue cannot only be the action of Hastings Highlands council. All elements of society and levels of government have a vested interest to make sure that our children will have the skills with which to compete in tomorrow's world."

Council approved Walder's motion to send a letter to the board with its concerns on testing results and needs for area schools.