

## Nova Scotia Election 2024: Letter to Official Parties

November 1, 2024

For over a generation, the Atlantic Canada Special Education Authority (APSEA) led its service delivery model for blind and visually impaired (BVI) students. APSEA provided essential support, ensuring every student had access to the academic and compensatory skills necessary to become successful contributing members of Nova Scotia. Students received vital training in skills such as braille and assistive technology, and, equally important, they had the opportunity to learn from their peers about living as a person with vision loss in a sighted world. For those needing psychoeducational assessments, qualified psychologists collaborated with families and schools to meet their unique educational needs, facilitating academic success.

Among these essential skills was the support and encouragement families gained from gathering opportunities. Many families new to raising a BVI child would turn to one another for encouragement and strategies to ensure their children could lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Sadly, due to significant changes following the pandemic, APSEA is no longer the gold standard in the education of BVI students that it once was. The organization has abandoned many flagship programs, leaving BVI students to learn essential life skills online. A young child cannot learn how to use a white cane over Zoom; braille cannot be taught without individual instruction; and the specialized assessments that equipped teachers to understand how best to support BVI students are no longer available.

Families across Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada have tirelessly attempted to persuade APSEA leadership that the new service model is ineffective. Yet, after numerous meetings, letters to the board of directors, and considerable publicity, APSEA and the Nova Scotia Government continue to ignore families.

We are asking you to agree to form a task force within the first 100 days of your government. This task force must be empowered to ask hard questions and take the necessary steps to ensure that BVI students and their families can once again be proud of the education they receive.

We posted this letter on our website at [blindstudents.ca](https://blindstudents.ca). Your responses are requested by **November 15, 2024**. Your responses will be distributed similarly, ensuring that Nova Scotians who care about the future of BVI students can make informed decisions when they cast their ballots.

PC Party

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Sincerely,

Parents of Blind and Visually Impaired Students in Nova Scotia