

January 13, 2012



Honourable Ramona Jennex  
Minister of Education  
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[www.tians.org](http://www.tians.org)

Dear Minister Jennex:

On behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), we are writing to seek assistance on an issue related to recent changes to the school field trip insurance program.

Over the past year, TIANS has been approached to assist with an issue affecting adventure tourism operators. Tidal bore rafting companies in Nova Scotia have reported wide spread cancellations of school field trips beginning in 2011. From our research, it appears an internal policy change has reclassified tidal bore rafting into the same category as whitewater rafting. This has affected school decisions across Nova Scotia in being able to provide this experiential learning opportunity to their students.



We have contacted the schools regarding this issue and were referred to the School Insurance Program (SIP) who has declined our requests to meet. It appears this unexpected and random policy change is not based on liability issues in regards to tidal bore rafting. In fact, the tidal bore rafting companies own insurance providers classify them as a flat water activity and have no concerns regarding business coverage. These insurance agents have attempted to connect with SIP as well, but to no avail.



This change is resulting in a significant revenue loss to rural tourism businesses. Conservative estimates from two businesses have placed their school trip revenue loss at \$50,000 for 2011 alone. Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors and the ability of companies in Nova Scotia to extend their operating season is being greatly impacted by the reclassification that has taken place. This policy appears to contravene the government's efforts in the 'jobsHere' Strategy to create a competitive and progressive business climate.

TIANS would greatly appreciate any direction from the Department of Education, suggesting an appropriate forum in which this issue can be addressed. With the 2012 season approaching a resolution on this issue is crucial.

Sincerely,

Darlene Grant Fiander  
President

cc Minister Percy Paris, Economic and Rural Development and Tourism  
Nova Scotia School Board Association  
TIANS Board



Education  
Office of the Minister

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Darlene Grant Fiander  
President  
TIANS  
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Halifax, NS B3K 2Z8

Dear Ms. Grant Fiander:

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your informing me of your concern regarding the school field trip insurance program and the issue recoverage regarding tidal bore rafting. I note that the reclassification of tidal bore rafting into the same category as whitewater rafting has resulted in changes in school trip bookings and an apparent loss of revenue to rural tourism businesses.

I am certainly aware that schools make careful decisions about trips for students and sometimes limit trips for a range of reasons, including budget and curriculum fit. I was surprised to read that two businesses estimate school trip revenue loss in 2011 at \$50,000.

With specific reference to the insurance coverage issue you have identified, I have asked Ann Blackwood to address this concern with her contacts at the Nova Scotia School Insurance Exchange. Our English Program Services division works closely with the Nova Scotia School Insurance Exchange to facilitate the expansion of community-based learning, address related safety concerns, and discuss issues identified by partners in the school community. You may wish to follow up with Ann Blackwood who may be reached by telephone at (902) 424-5745 or email at [blackwaa@gov.ns.ca](mailto:blackwaa@gov.ns.ca).

Please be assured that the Department of Education is working hard not only on implementation of government's education plan, *Kids and Learning First*, but also on aspects of the *Nova Scotia Workforce Strategy* pertinent to the public school system. I understand that my staff have long worked collaboratively with TIANS to support the effective implementation of our Tourism 11, Tourism 12, and Food Studies/Hospitality 12 courses. May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation of this ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Ramona Jencks  
Minister of Education

c: Honourable Percy Paris  
Ann Blackwood