

# REPORT OF THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Middlesex Study Area 1

2008 January 17

VOTING MEMBERS	ADMINISTRATION AND OTHERS
K. Albrechtas M. Bedford S. Clark J. Gough R. Langford L. Lutowicz F. MacKellar Deller J. McDougall	S. Doub (Chair) S. Bandeen K. Dalton B. Desjardins P. Jones C. Knight-Smith P. Tufts R. Van Belois approximately 73 community members
<b>REGRETS</b>	
M. Veale	

The Committee convened the meeting on 2008 January 17 at 6:50 p.m. at Caradoc South Public School beginning with a tour of the school.

1. **WELCOME**

Chair S. Doub welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the host school for the tour of the school.

2. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

After discussion an amended agenda deleting item 8b was approved by a motion by J. McDougall, seconded by R. McDougall. Carried.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

S. Doub asked that the Committee members introduce themselves and indicate what area they are representing. She also asked that the principals introduce themselves and identify what school they represent.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

F. MacKellar Deller noted that the item 6, second paragraph should read "If a facility met the needs of the school and community *and was built to the standards of the time but below the Board's current standards...*"

F. MacKellar Deller also noted that item 7, the presentation by Lisa DeGroot should state that she is a Catholic parent and if Metcalfe Central Public School closed that she would transfer her children to the Catholic system.

F. MacKellar Deller noted that item 9a, the sentence beginning "In this ARC..." the reference to the size of Caradoc North Public School should be deleted. It should read that "...the Board is hopeful to increase the enrolment of Caradoc North Public School, Ekcoe Central Public School and Caradoc Central Public School using ...." She noted that a structural addition would be to Caradoc Central Public School only.

Noting the previous three amendments to the November 29<sup>th</sup> minutes, S. Paisley motioned to approve the minutes. Agreed.

5. **BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

none

6. **COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS RE: FEELINGS OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**

Caradoc Central

C. McFadden began by stating that the school is in a different situation not facing closure but noted that the school community has an interest in the process. The process affects the community in a different way but nevertheless does affect the community. There are many unknowns. Caradoc Central Home and School have meetings after the ARC meetings with excellent attendance to discuss the proceedings at the ARC meeting. Standards are important to the school community. She stated that the community is sensitive to what is going on even though Caradoc Central Public School is not closing. Students, learning and the transition is most important and has been discussed in detail.

Caradoc North

L. Lutowicz began by stating although Caradoc North Public School is not slated to close it is not an easy topic to deal with. She continued saying that the possibility of more students coming to the school was a plus. D. Smith stated that the community is quite interested in the entire process and are quite knowledgeable. He noted that there is some concern with transportation, portables being added and land needs as well as what kind of shuffling would occur in the south end of Strathroy.

Caradoc South

R. McDougall stated that the community feelings have not changed because this threat of school closure has been going on for four years. The community does not want the school to close feeling that if the school is closed there will be nothing left in the village. Standards are good but it is the teaching that goes on within and not the building structure that is important. Not just Caradoc South Public School but all rural schools are being affected and this is what they are fighting for.

M. Nicol stated he feels the Board is pushing the closure of the school based solely on the funding formula. The community feels the school should be fixed but the Board does not want to fix it. The community feels the Board prefers to close little schools. The school is an essential public service in the community. The Board is trying to remove the essential service from the community rather than make it flourish.

Metcalfe Central

J. Gough began by saying the level of education the students get doesn't equate with the size of the school. The EQAO testing scores are higher in their school than larger populated schools.

R. Langford stated that there is much interest in the proceedings. The community is frustrated with funding shortfalls. Keeping small schools open should be an option.

Ekcoe Central

M. Bedford said there is not as much interest because Ekcoe Central Public School is not slated to be closed. The community is aware of the situation and is sensitive to what is going on. The general consensus at School Council is that they are pleased to have more students in the school. They feel there is no problem with having students in portables. In fact, she continued, some students prefer portables. With a greater student population there would be more teachers and more opportunities for the students. The community sees no problem accepting students from the other schools.

F. MacKellar Deller stated that people are aware of the process but because the school is not slated to close they are not as concerned, but are sensitive to the process. She stated that no one has come up to her personally to ask about the proceedings.

Municipality of Adelaide Metcalfe

J. Milligan stated that if the school closes it is not only the children that lose. The school is the hub of the community and there are lots of activities going on. These activities will cease if there is no school. Adelaide-W.G. MacDonald Public School has some space available to house students and would require portables to accommodate the extra students. If students need to be educated in portables at other school sites, it would be better to keep the students in their own municipality. Adelaide-W.G. MacDonald is near capacity and under the preferred number of 400 but there are many schools in the district that have a school population of less than 400.

7. **PUBLIC INPUT SESSION**

S. Doub reminded Committee members that they could ask questions of clarification of the speakers but could not discuss the content of the presentations. She also reminded the presenters that individuals could speak for five (5) minutes and groups would be given ten (10) minutes.

a) Individuals

- Ron Carruthers, Caradoc South Public School

R. Carruthers stated that in a 2003 provincial inspection report a study was recommended to be performed to determine the source of water infiltrating the foundation on the north side of the structure. He questioned whether this study was completed and what was the result. He continued by stating that lower level classroom air quality is poor likely due to the water drainage problem. In the earlier accommodation study it was suggested that most of the students would be bused to Glencoe but now the recommendation is to have most students go to Mt. Brydges which is further than the recommended distance. The Board should investigate building in Melbourne where land prices would be cheaper.

Questions from the Committee were entertained asking for clarification of the water study referred to in the report of 2003.

- Tom Jeffery, Caradoc South Public School

T. Jeffery stated that the school is an integral part of the community. He said that students take pride in their school and community when they live in the community. Without a school in the community crime rates would increase, local businesses would close and there would be no incentives for youth involvement within the community.

- Karen Nygard, Cardoc South Public School

K. Nygard stated that since amalgamation she sees neglect and deterioration of Caradoc South Public School. The Middlesex Library and YMCA have offered to locate at Caradoc South but were rejected because of Board policies. She said that sending the students from Caradoc South to Caradoc Central would eventually hurt Glencoe District High School. She said that the communities of Metcalfe and Caradoc South deserve local schools within their communities with the same programs that students in London are offered. She asked the Committee to be creative rather than let the administration close the school.

F. MacKellar Deller asked for clarification with respect to the Middlesex County library and the YMCA wanting to come into the school. One of the concerns was that the school was not barrier free.

- Liz Anne Want, Caradoc South Public School

L.A. Want said the school is an integral part of the town. Students must make new friends and will be bused over one hour every day. Small schools have proven to be very successful. Teachers know the students and their families. If the school closes property values will decrease and businesses will close.

b) Groups

- Coalition for Small Schools: Suzanne Greenslade  
S. Greenslade is co-chair of the Coalition for Small Schools which began four years ago. Their goals are to raise the public perception to understand that schools are key to the community; to regain commitment of the value of the school to the community; and, to work collaboratively to send a strong message to all Ministries to support the unique needs of small schools. The Coalition has identified to the Ministry gaps in the funding formula and have made recommendations. The government has addressed the concerns to some degree. If a community loses its schools it loses its realty and property values decrease. Funding for schools are formula driven rather than by pedagogy. She suggested that the book "The Hobbit Effect August 2006 - Why Small Works in Public School" by Lorna Jimerson states that small schools are beneficial for kids. She stated research shows that students in smaller schools have better achievement rates, graduation rates, and become more engaged in studies. The gap is lessened with at risk students, attendance increases and drop out rates decrease, students have a feeling of belonging and there is an increased participation in activities, school safety increases, students take ownership of community and parent and community partners increase.
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex: Janneke Newitt  
J. Newitt began by stating that the prospect of closing Caradoc South Public School is due not to declining enrolment but the school has been declared prohibitive to repair. A grant has been received by the Board to erect a new school but there is no obligation to construct the new building in Melbourne. A 2006 study entitled "Education on a Human Scale: Small Rural Schools in a Modern Context" states that there is no research evidence that bigger is better. Research does state that both safety and academics are better with a smaller school size. Small schools produce higher academics and graduation rates. In the official plan of the Municipality, Melbourne is recognized with the greatest growth potential. The Municipality has undertaken an environmental study on the sanitary sewage lagoons and have approved improvements to Appin and Melbourne. Southwest Middlesex has agreed in principle to support relocating a branch of the public library to Caradoc South School either in a new facility or an addition to the existing school. As well it has agreed to share the cost of providing to the Board a serviced building site for the construction of a new school in Melbourne.

c) Correspondence

S. Doub stated that the three pieces of correspondence was distributed to Committee members.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**a) Program Benefits of a School of approximately 400 Students

K. Dalton distributed this document stating that this was in response to a request made by this Committee at an earlier meeting. She asked some principals to list the program advantages of school with approximately 400 students. The list is not exhaustive nor is the list based on any research. It is based on the opinions and personal findings of a focused group of Principals. K. Dalton responded to a question of stating that this size of a school maximizes the money received from the Ministry and is able to maximize programming. J. Gough stated the bottom line is that it is our tax dollars. K. Dalton said that the community must know that this is the most effective way to use those dollars.

R. Langford wondered if the Principals noted any negatives. K. Dalton stated that she never asked the Principals for negatives. M. Nicol asked for a report on the negatives of a school this size for a future meeting. K. Dalton stated that she would not ask Principals for negatives. After considerable discussion S. Doub suggested that the report be with benefits of schools with approximately 200 students. J. McDougall stated that the document should be rural schools. K. Dalton said the original report before them was not specifically from rural principals. After further discussion F. MacKellar Deller motioned to request that the Board administration provide a report on the benefits of program of elementary schools of less than 200 students similar in format to the report presented of at least 400 students. J. Milligan seconded it. Carried.

M. Nicol asked for clarification of vice-principal allocations. K. Dalton stated that it is not based on a pupil count but the Board is allocated so much money for principals and vice-principals. Firstly the Board looks at schools with 20 staff members and greater and begins to allocate vice-principals. In the end you may have a school with 23 staff but they don't have a vice-principal. M. Nicol questioned whether the students of this ARC fund vice-principals in other schools. K. Dalton stated that vice-principal funding is received for the whole student population of Thames Valley and allocated to as many schools as is possible.

R. Langford indicated that a student population of approximately 400 is needed to provide quality programming. He questioned whether there was any evidence to support that students do better in schools with that number. There are no statistics available but only what the teachers are reporting to their administrators.

- b) Response to Senior Administrative Recommendation - PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) Activity  
None

9. **BREAK**

S. Doub stated that there would be a fifteen (15) minute break.

10. **COLLATION AND REVIEW OF PMI RESPONSES**

None

11. **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS**

F. MacKellar Deller distributed a sheet with explanations of boundary waivers granted to students at Ekcoe Central Public School even though the school is over 100% capacity. K. Dalton asked that these be collected because of the Freedom of Information Act. She stated that the number of students listed in this sheet even though names were not given could not ensure anonymity of those students. The Committee requested a report for the reasons boundary waivers were granted at Caradoc Central for out of area students. This will be given at the next meeting.

J. Gough stated that the closure of Caradoc South and Metcalfe Central Public Schools was not a done deal. A discussion ensued with the distribution of musical instruments to selected schools. K. Dalton explained that the Board was given program enhancement money for the Arts. Specific criteria and qualifications for schools to receive instruments were noted such as staff to teach the program and space within the school to house the instruments safely. K. Dalton stated that all schools do not have staff to teach music. Instrumental music is not a Ministry mandated program. Music is a mandated program and is taught in the schools but instrumental music is not.

M. Bedford requested a microphone system be set up for future meetings. S. Doub will make that request to the host schools.

J. Gough questioned whether all trustees are coming to tour the schools that they will be voting on. R. McDougall would like the trustees to visit the schools that they will ultimately vote on when recommendations are presented at a Board meeting. S. Doub suggested that the Committee could invite the trustees to their schools. Many trustees attend meetings. Trustees P. Sattler, S. Peters, T. Grant and M. Henrick were introduced at this meeting. F. MacKellar Deller asked if pictures of the schools could be included in the recommendation. S. Doub stated that this could be arranged.

It was noted that February 13, 2008 is the final public input meetings. The Committee is not limited to a specific number of recommendations for the administration. Next meeting deliberations will begin to discuss the administration's recommendations as well as any public input.

M. Nicol asked if the report to the Board could be bound and sealed so that it cannot be edited. K. Dalton thought this was not necessary as the report would be published to a website for everyone to see.

S. Doub stated that the Committee needs to formally discuss recommendations at these meetings and all members have to agree on one recommendation that will go forward. If the Committee feels that there isn't enough time to finalize a report it does not have to be submitted at the February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. K. Dalton stated that the Committee as a whole does not have the right to meet outside of a public meeting. That is contrary to the guidelines.

S. Clarke questioned whether Committee members that have not attended all the meetings can still vote. S. Doub stated yes.

12. **NEXT STEPS**

K. Dalton indicated that the deadline for Public Input submission was February 1<sup>st</sup>. Minutes and agendas are posted on the Board's website as well as Public Input Forms.

13. **ADJOURNMENT**

J. Motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by L. Lutowicz. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

14. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held 2008 February 13 at 7:00 p.m. at Caradoc Central Public School.

S. Doub  
Study Committee Chairperson