



1325 California Avenue
Windsor, ON N9B 3Y6
CHAIRPERSON: Barbara Holland
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: Paul A. Picard

Posted to Web site:
February 9, 2016
Delegation Meeting Date:
February 29, 2016

BOARD REPORT

Public **In-Camera**

PRESENTED FOR: Information Approval

PRESENTED BY: Senior Administration

SUBMITTED BY: Paul A. Picard, Director of Education

SUBJECT: **Final Staff Report on the Accommodation Review Study for the Amherstburg area, including St. Bernard and Stella Maris Catholic Elementary Schools**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board receive as information the Final Staff Report on the accommodation review study for the Amherstburg area, including St. Bernard and Stella Maris Catholic Elementary Schools; and

That the Board receive public input concerning the Final Staff Report, including the final recommendation presented by Board Administration as follows:

That effective September 2016, the St. Bernard Catholic Elementary School Community be consolidated with the Stella Maris Catholic School Community at the Stella Maris site, with students to be accommodated in the short term through the use of portables, as may be required; and

That the Board apply to the Ministry of Education through the School Consolidation Capital (SCC) Program for funding for the construction of an addition and renovations, as may be required, to support the consolidation at Stella Maris or, if failing to obtain SCC funding, a further report be submitted to the Board regarding alternatives; and

That effective June 2016, St. Bernard Catholic Elementary School be closed and deemed surplus to the Board's future needs, pursuant to Section 194 (3) (a) of the Education Act.

SYNOPSIS:

An accommodation review study of the Amherstburg area has been completed in accordance with the Board's modified pupil accommodation review process. Board Administration has prepared this final report for submission to the Board of Trustees as information, and for the

purpose of allowing members of the public to provide feedback on the report through public delegations, prior to a final decision on the accommodation review scheduled to take place at the Board's public meeting of April 5, 2016.

BACKGROUND COMMENTS:

On November 24, 2015, the Board of Trustees approved proceeding with a modified accommodation review process to address the challenges facing the Amherstburg area schools as a result of declining enrolment. To respond to these challenges, through the public consultation process, the Board invited the community to provide input in the development of an optimal accommodation option for students in Amherstburg that would support the delivery of the highest quality Catholic education programs and services.

Based on the rationale detailed within the Initial Staff Report presented to the Board on November 24, 2015, Board Administration presented the following initial recommendation for consideration in the accommodation review study:

That effective September 2016, the St. Bernard Catholic Elementary School Community be consolidated with the Stella Maris Catholic School Community at the Stella Maris site; The Board apply to the Ministry of Education through the School Consolidation Capital (SCC) Program, for capital for the construction of an addition to support the consolidation; or if failing to obtain funding, the Board dedicate capital reserves for the installation of a port-a-pack at the Stella Maris site; and

That St. Bernard Catholic Elementary School be closed effective June 2016, and be deemed surplus to the Board's future needs, pursuant to Section 194 (3) (a) of the Education Act.

At a public meeting on January 20, 2016, Board Administration invited community input on the Initial Staff Report, the initial recommendation, as well as the school information profiles, which had been prepared by Administration and presented to the community to provide an understanding and familiarity with the facilities under review.

Report on Public Consultation:

Although notification of the public meeting was forwarded well in advance through letters sent home, a web site posting, and synovoice messages, few community members were in attendance. One delegate presented her concerns and suggestions with respect to accessibility for the Board's students with special needs.

Presentation from the Delegation:

- Angela Kelly, a parent whose two daughters had attended St. Bernard school, indicated that her family had been instrumental in addressing accessibility issues at St. Bernard. She questioned what was available in that regard at Stella Maris. She inquired as to whether the equipment from St. Bernard would be transferred to Stella Maris. She also questioned whether portables were to be utilized, and if they would be accessible to all students? Ms. Kelly also suggested the purchase of iPads for the educational advantage of students with cognitive or physical challenges.

In response to Ms. Kelly's presentation and her insightful concern for the Board's students with special needs, Administration advised that the Board takes seriously its obligation to support its students with special needs. The Board has historically overspent in the special education envelope because of its commitment to hold inclusive education as a priority. The Board will continue to support students with special needs.

The Principal of Stella Maris School indicated that the front door of the facility has been made accessible. There is a washroom in the junior section of the school to accommodate one of the students and the primary area has a larger and accessible washroom for students with wheelchairs.

With respect to the use of portables, typically, any portables that are installed by the Board are equipped with stairs. However, if there are students accessing the portables that require ramps for accessibility, such ramps are provided accordingly.

Should the Board make the decision to consolidate St. Bernard and Stella Maris, Administration will hold individual family meetings to discuss transitioning students who require special education programming. Consistent with previous school consolidations, Administration and special education personnel will meet with individual families to ensure that a transition plan is developed and implemented allowing the student full inclusion in the school community, with the necessary resources specific to meet student needs and success.

Report on Information Received from the Municipality

Board Administration attended a meeting at the Town of Amherstburg Town Hall on November 9, 2015 with the town representatives led by the Chief Administrative Officer. The Board presented background information respecting the Amherstburg Accommodation Review including general area demographics, school capacities, current and forecasted enrolments, school utilization, boundary maps, student distribution and transportation statistics, community use of schools data, facility and site information and potential accommodation options. The Town provided information with respect to current and potential development. Further discussion centred on the Provincial initiative promoting community hubs and the interest for such arrangements that may exist in the area. Attendees agreed with continuing to exchange information as the review process progressed.

Rational for Final Recommendation

For the reasons set out in the Initial Staff Report, Administration's final recommendation remains substantially the same as the initial recommendation submitted for community consultation.

Proposed Plan – Final Recommendation

Based on current enrolment numbers and forecasts, 4 additional classrooms would be required at Stella Maris to accommodate the combined JK to 6 student populations of St. Bernard and Stella Maris. In order to facilitate the consolidation of the two schools for September 2016, this additional classroom space would be provided through the use of portables. The Board would apply for funding approval from the Ministry of Education to proceed with the construction of a permanent addition and renovations to Stella Maris with the intent of having the work completed for start of school in September 2017. St. Bernard would be closed and deemed surplus to the Board's needs effective June 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

As detailed within Report.

TIMELINES:

As detailed within Report.

REPORT REVIEWED BY:

- EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:
- EXECUTIVE SUPERINTENDENT:
- DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:

Review Date: February 8, 2016
Approval Date: February 8, 2016
Approval Date: February 9, 2016