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CHAIRPERSON: Barbara Holland  
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**Delegation Meeting Date:**  
March 1, 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 West Windsor Area, including Assumption College Catholic High School and St. James and St. John Catholic Elementary Schools

### RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board receive as information the Final Staff Report on the accommodation review study for the West Windsor area, including Assumption College Catholic Secondary School and St. James and St. John 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, St. James Catholic Elementary School shall become a JK to 6 school with consolidation of the JK to 6 student population within the current St. James and St. John Catholic Elementary School boundaries being accommodated at the St. James 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 the St. James site or, if failing to obtain SCC funding, a further report be submitted to the Board regarding alternatives; and

That effective September 2016, a middle school be established to accommodate the grades 7 and 8 student population within the current St. James and St. John boundaries, said middle school to be initially located in the short term at the St. John site and, ultimately relocated to the Assumption College Catholic Secondary School/Catholic Education Centre (CEC) site upon

**completion of an addition and renovations, as may be required, at Assumption/CEC; and**

**That the Board apply to the Ministry of Education through the School Consolidation Capital (SCC) Program for funding to undertake the construction of an addition and renovations, as may be required, at Assumption and/or the Catholic Education Centre to accommodate a middle school, or if failing to obtain SCC funding, a further report be submitted to the Board regarding alternatives; and**

**That effective upon the relocation of the middle school from the St. John site, St. John Catholic Elementary School be closed and deemed surplus to the Board's future needs, pursuant to Section 194 (3) (a) of the Education Act.**

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**SYNOPSIS:**

An accommodation review study of the West Windsor 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 West Windsor 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 West Windsor 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, St. James shall become a JK to 6 school with consolidation of the JK to 6 student population within the current St. James and St. John boundaries being accommodated at the St. James site; The Board apply to the Ministry of Education through the School Consolidation Capital (SCC) Program, for funding for the construction of an addition to support the consolidation; or if failing to obtain funding, the Board dedicate capital reserves to the installation of portables or a port-a-pack at the St. James site; and*

*That effective September 2016, a middle school be established at the Assumption College Catholic Secondary School site, to accommodate the grades 7 and 8 student population within the current St. John and St. James boundaries; The Board apply to the Ministry of Education through the School Consolidation Capital (SCC) Program, for capital for a retrofit at Assumption Secondary and/or the Catholic Education Centre to accommodate a middle school, with the construction of a new gymnasium; or if failing to obtain funding, the Board dedicate capital reserves to retrofit Assumption Secondary and/or the Catholic Education Centre; and*

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

At a public meeting on January 21, 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:**

The majority of those attending the public meeting were families from the St. John community. One delegation presented and nine other members from the community publicly addressed Administration with questions and suggestions. Through professional and respectful presentations from the community, Board Administration received valuable and insightful feedback.

**Presentations from the Delegations:**

- Emerson Valley and Kerri Stephenson presented as members of the St. John Elementary Catholic School Advisory Council. The Delegates presented an alternative recommendation which included a proposal to move all of the St. John student population to the Assumption site, creating a JK to 6 school, as well as a middle school and high school at the site. St. James would remain a JK to 8 school, with 7 and 8 students within the St. James boundary having the election to attend either St. James or the middle school at Assumption. The Catholic Education Centre would then be relocated. (The delegation's written submission with recommendation and rationale are attached with this report).

**Questions/Concerns Presented at the Public Meeting (with response from Administration):**

*"Three years ago, this administration came together joining forces with the St. John community and the Catholic School Advisory Council to present a proposal to the Ministry of Education. This proposal was to move the entire St. John school to Assumption forming a K – 12 school. This was a very creative and comparatively inexpensive solution. Why was this proposal not adopted as the administration's recommendation?"*

While this option was creative and was deemed an alternative worthy of consideration by administration, it was not inexpensive. The budget quality estimates of the option prepared at the time indicated renovation costs to convert the Catholic Education Centre back to school use at between \$1.2M and \$1.5M.

On top of that cost would be the cost to relocate the Catholic Education Centre staff to another facility and renovate that facility. This was not specifically costed at the time, since costs would be dependent on the renovation requirements at the facility ultimately chosen. Different options were looked at conceptually, including the St. John facility and the former St. Anne High School in Tecumseh. A cost of \$0.4M to \$0.5M was considered as the minimum that would be required for a facility with little renovation needs. The community has suggested that the St. Michael's Continuing Education High School may be an option, however, the population and programming options in the adult education program requires use of most of the site and therefore, there is insufficient room at that location to accommodate administrative staff.

With respect to the Ministry of Education consideration of the proposal, it was not deemed an option that the Ministry was prepared to readily approve. The Ministry indicated that the Board had already spent capital dollars to convert the school to offices only very recently in 2004. Also, the Ministry noted that the costs of moving the administration offices could be significant

depending on the location. This would have added to the Board's unfunded capital deficit, since administration facility capital costs are not directly covered by Ministry grants. At the time, the Ministry was pointing the Board to consider other accommodation options. Since St. John was not impacted by the previous accommodation review, no further action was taken on this option.

*"With enrolment of St. John being down, are there other ways to encourage utilization of space there rather than close the school? What about filling the space with specialized programming?"*

School closure is only recommended after the Board has considered numerous factors, including enrolment trends and the potential for meaningful community partnerships that can offset the costs of maintaining underutilized facilities. Where the Board becomes unable to "fill the space", school closure and consolidation allow the Board to redirect educational funding away from the maintenance of empty facilities and into specialized programming.

*"Has the Board taken into consideration all the refugees coming to Windsor? A lot of houses in the area are being prepared for refugees so this may increase the enrolment. The fact that the Board has accepted that both parents do not have to be baptized and if the Board waits a bit longer, the school could remain open with the refugees coming."*

The Board has considered enrolment projections and does not foresee sufficient immigration and development to support two Catholic elementary schools in the west end of Windsor in the long term.

*"Integrating grades 7 and 8 with the high school, is putting kids with adults. Our 18 year olds today are not like they used to be. I am not ready for my 12 year old to hear and witness what is going on in the school grounds. There is no guarantee of controlling these kids in the high school. My kids will not be staying at St. James if this recommendation goes through. I feel it is putting them into a grown-up atmosphere too soon."*

The Board went through this process with Corpus Christi Middle School and heard a lot of the same concerns. When Corpus Christi came into existence, different schedules including lunch times were developed and the buildings were segregated with secured doors. The parents had a voice through an Integration Committee and the process eased the apprehension. The experience of students and parents at Corpus Christi has been very positive. None of the concerns articulated by the speaker have been reported at Corpus Christi. Should the recommendation be approved in West Windsor, an Integration Committee will immediately be established to address any concerns and to prepare recommendations that will ensure a similarly positive experience for students in this area.

*"As a parent I am very disappointed that I heard about the possible closing of the school through a student in the school yard. I am very grateful that parents have the opportunity to speak tonight. I do not think anyone is taking this seriously and my biggest fear is putting my child into a high school. I do not know where St. James is located and know nothing about the staff and students. It would be helpful to see the school. It is a shame that we are concerned about the financial aspects. There is a good possibility that I may take my child out of the Catholic school system if this happens."*

Administration is committed to an accommodation review process that encourages feedback from communities. Numerous notifications were sent out to school communities through web site postings, notices home, and synervoice messages. The Board wants communities to be informed so that it can receive feedback that will assist them in making the best and most informed decision on student accommodations. Through previous accommodation review studies the Board of Trustees has listened to the community. In each past study the final recommendation has been different than the initial one, incorporating suggestions made by the school communities. Parents are encouraged to tour the schools, collect information, be involved in Transition Committees, provide written input, and speak at the public meetings before Administration and the Board of Trustees.

*“I do not think the kids at St. John or St. James are ready to go to a high school. There is smoking and a lot of bad language. St. John is a small school and is a close-knit family. I have been there my whole life; I love it there and I love the Principal. It would be a nightmare if it closes.”*

Administration understands the value to students of both St. John and St. James Catholic schools, making decision to recommend a school closure very difficult. Should the Board approve recommendation for school consolidation, Administration will work closely with a Transition Committee, school communities and staff so that concerns are heard and addressed.

*“I have three sons and my oldest used to attend Taylor School. There were 600 students; was not enough room and they had to bring in portables. There was a lot of trouble with bullying and that is one of my concerns. Everything always comes down to money. I do not know anything about St. James. I like the small school and do not want St. John to close. Maybe more kids can be brought in and maybe there will be an increase with the refugees and additional jobs coming.”*

As stated previously, the Board does not foresee sufficient immigration and development to sustain two elementary schools and a secondary school in the West end of Windsor.

Projected enrolment in a St. John/St. James JK to 6 consolidated school would be approximately 400 students, with a projected enrolment at a middle school of approximately 100 grades 7 and 8 students. The size of these schools is consistent with others in our system and would support safe and inclusive school communities. Should a decision be made to consolidate, the Board will present a business case to the Ministry of Education for capital funding for the necessary additions and renovations.

The Board has considered enrolment projections and does not foresee sufficient and immigration development to support two Catholic elementary schools in the west end of Windsor in the long term.

*“I am a parent from St. James but also was employed at St. John’s for five years and currently at W. J. Langlois. I have directly seen the effects of Corpus Christi and know it is a good model but have some questions and concerns. I would like to see all of St. John move together to Assumption. Could part of St. John be used for different community agencies such as YMCA, Boxing Club, and Kids Alliance – renting space out to those groups? Could there be a Primary IB and busing to St. John for two or three classes? Suggestion for piggy backing on leadership activities and a Transition Room. The Transition Room would have a person service the high school, middle school on Leadership and other programs. Also suggestion for a Special Needs program with a Snoozelon Room or a school of excellence and improvement for kids with special needs. If the recommendation is passed on April 5<sup>th</sup> would the staffing be known; what Administration will be; will there be a new team?”*

One of the assets of the JK-6 and 7-12 model is that the grade 6 students become wonderful leaders. These leadership skills can then be enhanced as these students progress into middle school and high school with the benefit of specialized leadership programs. Many of the valuable suggestions articulated by the speaker can be addressed through a Transition Committee, composed of parents, school staff, and senior students, in consultation with Board Administration. Specialized programming will evolve out of the Committee recommendations. Assumption already has unique, specialized programs that can be built upon, such as hospitality, aviation, aerospace and robotics.

The Board will make busing available to St. John students, if they move to either St. James or to Assumption/Catholic Education Centre, in accordance with the Board’s busing policy. All students living on the east side of Huron Church Road would be eligible for busing to St. James. For Grade 7 and 8 students, if they move to the Assumption/Catholic Education Centre, busing eligibility would be in accordance with Board’s busing policy (i.e. busing eligibility for students beyond the 1.6km walk zone).

Should a decision be made accepting Administration's recommendation, strong administrative teams will be put in place to consider the development of quality programming for all students, including those with special learning needs.

*St. John opened a new class – first time in 10 years. There are 205 students now. There is now no baptismal requirement – how is the Board working on increasing enrolment at our school and the Board as a whole? I drove by a public school recently and there are banners advertising registration for JK. The public school is taking the time to advertize. They are getting refugees. What is our Board doing to attract students? I recently found out that the Board waived the requirement for baptism and want to know what the Board is doing to attract students. How does the Board 'right size' the infrastructure?"*

The Board wants to retain the students it currently has at the elementary and secondary schools. The Board does a good job across the system. The Board has enhanced the grade 8 open house meetings to make sure it is marketing itself by highlighting Catholic education and faith experience. Programs have been expanded – for example, Hockey Canada Skills Academy Program at F.J. Brennan Catholic Secondary School. The Board continues to expand programming but it can only be done if there are the physical resources to do so. The Board must ensure that unused pupil spaces are in check. The Board is committed to academic excellence and faith opportunities for students and is proud of its academic achievements and inclusive model of education. The Board appreciates this feedback and will continue to communicate these achievements.

*"I have one student at Assumption and two additional will be attending there. I am listening to the parents here – it seems like there is an underlying tone that this is a done deal. Parents do not want this recommendation and I do not know what the answer is. When you look around this evening, there are only a handful of parents; maybe because they have gone through this process already. She stated that she does not want this recommendation."*

The option is presented as a recommendation. This is not a done deal. The purpose of the meeting is to hear input. Administration welcomes and encourages feedback. There will be opportunity to speak directly to the Board of Trustees at its meeting in March, and the community may also direct written submissions to the Director's office.

*"Corpus Christi has been mentioned more than once – just last month there was a brawl at Assumption. There were 40 students from another high school. She does not want her child seeing that."*

Assumption College Catholic High School fosters a safe and inclusive environment. The school community is lead by a strong administrative staff and excellent teachers who are actively involved in the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention strategies that support a very positive school climate. Administration has heard the concerns of parents with respect to early integration of grade 7 and 8 students into high school and has incorporated recommendations within its report to address those concerns.

*"I like the fact that this ARC is modified, but the last ARC had a Committee and there were four public meetings. There was more opportunity for parents to brainstorm. That's why there could be that underlying tone that it is a done deal. I met with my Trustee and made suggestions and hope the recommendation changes slightly."*

Throughout the ARC process, Administration has received valuable from the community, through various means, and will continue to listen to the community in the implementation of the final accommodation decision of the Board of Trustees.

*"I am concerned with primary students being in portables and kids walking to washrooms. I am unhappy with where the money goes through fund raising. My five year old son does not need an iPad to learn and I am concerned he is not writing cursive. I do not feel it is smart to fund raise for electronics and why is the money being put into those things when we can keep St. John school open?"*

Safety of students will be held to the highest priority in the implementation of an accommodation decision. The Board of Trustees will continue to listen to the community as it sets budget priorities.

*Is the Transition Committee member position voluntary or assigned?*

The composition of the Committee is not prescribed by Board policy. Communities may suggest ideas for the establishment of the Committee. Sub-committees could be created. No matter how the Committee may be structured the ultimate purpose will be to consult with parents, staff and students when planning for and implementing a school consolidation.

### **Report on Information Received from the Municipality**

Board administration attended a meeting at the City of Windsor City Hall on November 18, 2015 with the City represented by the Division heads for Planning and Building Services, Parks and Facilities, as well as Recreation and Culture. The Board presented background information respecting the West Windsor 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. A wide-ranging discussion ensued regarding development potential in the area and population expectations as a result of the prevailing economic climate and how these may impact the review. The City stated its preference that schools remain open as they are focal points for neighbourhoods, but acknowledged the fiscal realities being faced by both the Board, in particular, and the region in general.

### **Board Administration's Final Recommendation – Changes to Initial Report**

Where Board administration's initial recommendation included closure of St. John school effective June 2016, Administration has amended its recommendation to include accommodation of grade 7 and 8 students within the St. James and St. John boundary in a middle school located temporarily at the St. John facility effective September 2016. The middle school would then subsequently be relocated to Assumption once required additions and/or renovations were completed, and St. John's would be closed at that time.

### **Rational for Final Recommendation**

For the reasons set out in the Initial Staff Report, Administration's final recommendation includes the creation of a JK to 6 school at St. James and a middle school at the Assumption site to accommodate all elementary school students within the current boundaries of St. John and St. James. Having heard many of the concerns of the St. John's families, Administration has amended its recommendation to defer the closure of St. John and to consolidate the grade 7 and 8 students temporarily at St. John to allow for a transition period for planning for and implementing a school consolidation plan. In consultation with a Transition Committee, Administration will work with the community to address concerns. The transition into the middle school at Assumption and closure of the St. John facility will take place once the Assumption facility has been prepared and is ready to receive the grade 7 and 8 students. These students will have already come together as a Catholic middle school community at the temporary St. John site, making for a smoother transition into the facility at Assumption.

### **Proposed Plan – Final Recommendation**

Based on current enrolment numbers and forecasts, a 4 classroom addition would be required to accommodate all JK to 6 students from St. John and St. James at the St. James facility. In order to facilitate the consolidation of the combined student populations 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 a permanent

addition and associated interior renovations with the intent of having the work completed for start of school in September 2017.

In the short term commencing in September 2016, grade 7 and 8 students from both St. John and St. James would be accommodated at the St. John facility. In order to ultimately accommodate all grade 7 and 8 students from St. John and St. James at Assumption/CEC, the construction of a gymnasium would be required at Assumption/CEC, for the grade 7 and 8 students, as well as interior renovations to the existing facility. The Board would apply for funding approval from the Ministry of Education to proceed with these improvements with the intent of having the work completed for start of school in September 2017. St. John would be closed and deemed surplus to the Board's needs upon the relocation of the middle school from the St. John site.

Administration has considered the concerns of the community with respect to the earlier integration of these younger students into a high school setting and, as a result, is recommending the following:

- Structuring the facility so that both elementary and secondary components are run independently.
- Establishing different start and release times for the elementary and secondary students to facilitate the separation of transportation.
- Allowing supervised, controlled and monitored access by grade 7 and 8 students to specialized programming, technologies and specialty rooms particular to a high school, as well as associated academies and the International Baccalaureate program.
- Maintaining faith-based Catholic Education as the mission and primary focus of both elementary and secondary components, including the celebration of masses and sacraments, enhanced by the close partnership with the local Church community.

Administration recommends that the Board continue discussions with the City of Windsor and potential community partners to plan for continued expansion of the already existing specialty programs offered at the Assumption site, including the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, hospitality, aviation and aerospace, robotics, and science and technology.

The Assumption facility is situated on a large site available for expansion. Consideration should be given to partnerships that would foster the development of an academy dedicated to student athletic pursuits similar to that which is offered to our students in East Windsor and potentially to our students in Leamington.

In the JK to 6 school at St. James, students will benefit from focused, age specific programming. Grade 6 students will have the opportunity to assume leadership roles in the school, and all students will benefit from a model that allows for stepped, gradual transition from elementary, to middle school, to high school. The close proximity of the elementary, middle and high school will support the sharing of resources and programming.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

As detailed within Report.

**TIMELINES:**

As detailed within Report.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Presenter's Submission from the Public Consultation Meeting of January 21, 2016

**REPORT REVIEWED BY:**

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

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