



Renfrew County District School Board

Joint Session of Committees - Open Session

Action Report on Deep River Family of Schools Pupil Accommodation Review

October 14, 2008

Purpose:

To provide additional information regarding the Pupil Accommodation Review in the Deep River Family of Schools.

Background Information:

In June 2008, the Board received information regarding enrolment trends and facility condition for Morison Public School and the Mackenzie High School (including Keys Public School) which serve the Town of Deep River and North Renfrew area of the Board. Enrolment data showed a decline from 961 pupils in 2003 to 759 pupils in 2007-2008, resulting in 46% of existing school capacity being considered surplus. Annual operating costs of the two facilities are approximately \$675,000 and projected capital renewal costs for the next decade are in excess of 12 million dollars.

The Board adopted the following resolutions:

- THAT the Renfrew County District School Board conducts a review of pupil accommodation within the Deep River Family of Schools planning area, including Mackenzie High School (currently accommodating Keys Public School and Mackenzie High School) and Morison Public School;
- THAT the Renfrew County District School Board directs administration to prepare additional financial reports on Ministry grants in advance of appointing an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) in accordance with Board Policy 15 - Pupil Accommodation in the fall of 2008.

Current Status:

In September, the Board received a report indicating that closure of Morison Public School would result in an annual loss of operating revenue of approximately \$162,000 given the current grant structure of the Ministry. The report also indicated that the Board would avoid having to spend approximately \$172,000 annually over the next decade on capital costs identified in the engineering study done by the Ministry of Education.

Last spring, the Minister appointed a Declining Enrolment Work Group to study and report back with recommendations on how boards can plan for declining enrolment, adjust expenditures, and maintain the focus on student achievement. Part of the mandate of the group is to review all grant structures, including those for operating and capital funding and those for rural and supported schools, and to recommend strategies to improve the alignment of school board cost structures with reduced enrolment. The Minister will receive the report early in 2009 and there may be changes to the grants as a result.

Board Policy 15 - Pupil Accommodation provides direction regarding activities and minimum timelines for an accommodation review. The Board did initiate an accommodation review by resolution at its June meeting, and the requirement for a sixty-day minimum notice period before an ARC could begin public consultation would be satisfied at the end of October 2008. The Board intention was to appoint the ARC in fall 2008; however, in light of the financial analysis and the Ministry review, it may be more practical to appoint the ARC when additional information regarding grant structures becomes available.

Recommendations:

That the Renfrew County District School Board defers appointment of the Accommodation Review Committee for the Deep River Family of Schools until 2009, and that this decision with rationale is communicated to the Morison, Keys and Mackenzie school councils and to local municipal officials.

Report prepared by: Eleanor Newman