

**ARC Meeting – Tuesday, March 4, 2008**  
*St. Margaret Catholic School*

***This document is not a verbatim transcript. Questions and answers have been paraphrased for the sake of clarity and brevity.***

**Question and Answer Session**

**Question:** If one school closes, what effect over a five to ten year period would that have on the other three schools?

**Answer:** The board has not provided details about closing a specific school community, as we do not want to give information, which might influence the ARC and lead to a particular recommendation. The total capacity of the four schools is 1,484. If St. Therese, which has the largest student population, was to close and those students moved to the remaining three schools, we would still be below the 80% capacity level in the remaining three schools.

**Question:** Are you aware that when we close schools we lose students to another system?

**Answer:** Although in the past some families have chosen to leave the system when a particular school was closed, we have also had experience with students returning over time.

**Question:** If we build a new school will we be looking at portables on a new school site?

**Answer:** When you build a new school, you do not build permanent structure for the upper most population. A portable or temporary structure, which could be removed later, if no longer required, would probably be needed for a period. With the use of the temporary structures, we could accommodate 700 to 900 students at a new school site.

**Question:** We currently have two schools which could accommodate the 900 students with the use of temporary structures. This would not disrupt the school communities as much as other options – Option #4. Would the \$4.2 million be enough to retrofit the two schools for the next ten years?

**Answer:** No, the \$4.2 million would not be enough to retrofit two schools. In addition, capital funds and projected savings from the closure of existing facilities would be required. Financing may also be necessary.

**Question:** How will we pay for a new school?

**Answer:** The \$4.2 million would be available, in addition to capital funds and projected savings from the closure of existing facilities. Financing would also be required.

**Question:** The population of chemical valley will be increasing during the next five years and this will bring Catholic families into the area. Has the board taken this possible influx of families into consideration when doing their projections?

**Answer:** We are structurally ready for any influx which may happen. We are trying to accommodate the reality of declining enrolment by determining what we will do if there is no change in population patterns. The board looks at three year historical projection rates by grade at each school and the rate of growth/decline is factored into the projections.

**Question:** How dated are the statistics used to make these projections?

**Answer:** Projections are based on the board's enrolment as of October 31<sup>st</sup> each year, which is our Ministry reporting date.

**Question:** Can we look at having a junior and an intermediate school?

**Answer:** That is something which could be looked at.

**Question:** Can we look at accommodating community outreach opportunities in a new school as well as accommodating specialized classrooms and Best Start etc. which would make our school more inclusive?

**Answer:** Our system and Catholic schools across the province are recognized as being inclusive, rather than creating separate sections or whole schools for students with special needs. A new school would not be segregated and would provide for all students and their special needs. The Best Start program would also move to the new school.

**Question:** Can we get information regarding the OTG of the other schools in Sarnia?

**Answer:** We are not looking at the schools in north Sarnia we are only looking at the south Sarnia community.

**Question:** With the development of a new building would the boundaries change at that time?

**Answer:** The boundaries would be looked at with the opening of a new school.

**Question:** If we do close all existing schools and look at building one super school, could we see the cost analysis as this could make it more acceptable to the taxpayer?

**Answer:** That information will be provided to the ARC for them to use in their deliberations.

**Question:** If we go to one new school will we have to have a mortgage?

**Answer:** The amount that would have to be financed would depend on the \$4.2 million, how much capital reserve we use, and how much we sell the existing properties for. Then we will decide how much will have to be financed.

**Question:** If we close all 4 schools do we still get the \$4.2 million funding?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** If a new school is built and existing schools are closed, will parents get leniency to go out of boundary to a smaller school?

**Answer:** Logistically this would be disastrous for the system. The use of geographic boundaries allows the board to predict and determine programs and staffing. The request to attend a smaller school may be denied.

**Question:** How many students do we lose to the public system when we close a school?

**Answer:** The board has faced this issue in all accommodation reviews; however, the public system is also facing declining enrolment and possibility of school closures. Parents who choose to leave may find that they will be going through the same thing at the public system.

**Question:** How do we maintain our right to Catholic schools when we are closing schools?

**Answer:** Our Catholic schools are run more efficiently, and achieve a higher degree of excellence than other systems. If we do not continue to provide excellence and efficiency because we are propping up half empty schools, we will rightly be viewed as spending taxpayer money irresponsibly.

**Question:** Can the north Sarnia schools take some of our students?

**Answer:** There is no access to spaces in the north Sarnia schools for students from south Sarnia schools.

**Question:** If we cannot find land to accommodate a new school in south Sarnia will boundaries need to be changed in all of Sarnia?

**Answer:** This is not what this ARC committee has been instructed to look at.

**Question:** Can you clarify Option #2? When and how will the decision be made whether to build on new real estate or to build on an existing site?

**Answer:** The board will consider the recommendations of the ARC then make a decision.