TAB 5
ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE
RCCDSB BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS
January 22, 2014

Peter Adam, Superintendent  
Chair of ARC  
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board  
499 Pembroke Street West  
Pembroke, ON K8A 5P1

Dear Superintendent Adam

I would like to address the Accommodation Review Committee by reflecting on the importance of retaining the status of our small rural schools in the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board.

As the old adage goes “it takes a community to raise a child”, the parents, the teachers, the church, the supportive individuals that help with school fund raising, the tax payers who earmark their taxes to the Catholic School system and the support of the school board itself. The efforts of all these individuals and organizations nurtures the growth of each and every child in the school.

Parental and community support for our schools has been nothing short of tremendous. Innumerable volunteer person hours and financial resources have provided materials for school programs and support structures for school yards. This comes from personal commitment to make our total school community strong. Mutual co-operation brings community members together.

With discussions of school closure, we now feel that all these efforts, by so many individuals, have been in vain. Now we feel a sense of abandonment.

The loss of a school is devastating. When you recommend to close a school, you recommend to close a community. We have our local municipalities working hard to sustain economic growth in so far as having staff in place to do just that. These individuals use creative means to attract industry, plan events and facilitate programs that retain and support the growth of our communities. The school board creates economic growth too by hiring teachers and support staff. I believe that the Renfrew County Catholic School Board has an obligation to be part of that economic growth that keeps our communities strong. Without a community school, what attracts families - without families, how do you realize community growth or even maintain the status quo.

Let me digress. When the then Separate School system of Renfrew County built St. Mary’s in Wilno in the early 1960s, it became a proud focal point of our community right next to the church. Along with many others, I was fortunate to be educated at St. Mary’s in grades 8, 9 and 10 – the first three years that the school was open. We had the most dedicated, quality teaching staff one could imagine. We had a playground that had been ploughed by a farmer the year before the school was built. We played on that furrowed field, it wasn’t disked or harrowed or what you can now call landscaped. There were no school busses. As a side bar here, in grade 10, when my sister was starting grade one, her and I drove a horse across the snowy fields to get to and from school. Random boulders in the ploughed field became our base pads during softball games. Us students were in our glory.

We have had many successes from that small school. From that first year in the early 60s, St. Mary’s has produced students who have gone on to further education to become doctors, nurses, professional foresters and loggers, farmers,
chefs, technological experts, security specialists, educators, members of our armed forces, business people, loving parents, and yes, even politicians. These individuals have become exemplary community minded persons who treasure the experience of being educated in a small school. In conversations with former St. Mary’s students, one can strongly sense that the memories they savour and relish are priceless.

At Vatican II, the Church shifted its emphasis from institution to community. Its “Declaration on Education” said a “Catholic school is distinguished by an attempt to build community, permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love.” In response to this declaration, our Catholic schools now have a triad of school, church and family. Catholic schools exist to assist committed families and their parishes to celebrate and live their faith. Again the Renfrew County Catholic School Board is one of the three points of this triad that has an obligation to ensure that this triad not only remains strong but that it never gets destroyed. We must realize that this Catholic and school community does not exist unless all three pillars, parish, families and school are in place and functional. In absence of a community school, students become disconnected from their home parish. At a time when we want our young people to become more engaged in parish and community activities, we must all have committal to this triad relationship. It cannot disappear.

We all can appreciate the basis of the Renfrew County Catholic School Board’s decisions is to save money in the long run, but we believe the Board must also consider saving the life of the community. Closing a school will still mean property owners in our community pay taxes.

The Catholic school system has to remain strong. We are being challenged from all directions by the undertow that parts of society present as there is always opposition to religious school funding. But, we have to prove that through excellence in programming, through excellence in teaching, through excellence in leadership, through excellence in promoting the essence of Catholic principles, the Catholic school system must continue to show leadership in making our school communities strong.

In conclusion, I would ask your Accommodation Review Committee to consider addressing a few inclusions in your report that would help to keep our Catholic schools in our communities:

1. derive creative means to share resources, share administration of schools, reduce the operational costs
2. adjust plant requirements, or, what it takes to keep our physical structures viable even if the complete plant is not required
3. determine the reasons why students from our Catholic communities are being educated in the Public School system
4. with the help of our parishes, continue to lobby that property owners, especially Catholics, support Catholic funding through their taxes

In summary, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this group. Your ARC committee’s activities are very transparent and you should be commended for ensuring the open communication that exists in this process.

Yours sincerely,)
Good Morning,

We are in receipt of a resolution from Madawaska Valley regarding school closures and before presenting it to Council I would it you would be able to provide me with any reports on school closures or legislation regarding the procedures for the closure of schools?

Thank you,

From mailto:
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2014 8:50 PM
To:
Cc: Michele Arbour; Peter Adam; Bob Michaud
Subject: RE: Madawaska Valley Resolution

Annette,

You will find information, policies, legislation and reports pertaining to the Accommodation Review Process (ARC) on the Board website http://rccdsb.edu.on.ca/. Once on the main Board webpage, you will find a link on the right hand side of the web page that will take you to a site set up for the ARC process.

Should you need further information or some clarification, you can also email the ARC committee at ARC@rccdsb.edu.on.ca or call 613-732-1469.

Regards,
Hi

We are in receipt of a resolution from Madawaska Valley regarding school closures and before presenting it to Council I would if you would be able to provide me with any reports on school closures or legislation regarding the procedures for the closure of schools?

Thank you,

[Contact information]

https://outlook.office365.com/owa/
From: Wednesday, January 08, 2014 8:02 AM
To: arc
Subject: Public input to ARC re George Vanier closure

January 8 2014

Dear ARC Committee (RCCDSB)

I am writing to express my concern that the ARC proposal to keep George Vanier open past June 2014 will not address significant overcapacity in two schools and will not address significant additional expenditures that could be avoided by consolidating the 200 students of George Vanier and St. John Bosco schools into a single school (St John Bosco, Barry’s Bay). I note from the ARC data that if both school buildings remain open they will require investments/maintenance of more than $3 million each over the next five years and that education costs to keep less than 50 students in their own school will be hundreds of thousands of dollars per year more than educating those students in Barry’s Bay. The poor condition of George Vanier school approaches “prohibitive to repair” meaning a replacement facility will be needed in the not so distant future.

Reviewing the ARC information and newspaper reports, it seems that the primary concern against the consolidation of students in Barry’s Bay is bus travel time of longer than 45 minutes one way for elementary students. The actual distance travelled appears to be a secondary concern.

The bussing information posted on the ARC website does not seem to provide the ARC committee with simple alternates such as increasing the number of buses/bus routes/taxis to keep all ride times within the accepted/status quo of 45 minutes. For example, at $40,000 per bus per school year, two additional buses could easily be provided to reduce pickups/stops per route and thus greatly shorten total travel time to Barry’s Bay to under 45 minutes. In fact, the overall transportation costs may be reduced since some students will be able to travel on already established bus routes for secondary students travelling to Barry’s Bay.

Was the lack of provision of transportation options to the ARC just an oversight by the busing consortium? Perhaps there is an error in the software used resulting in excessive bussing times? — no student in a future catchment area of Barry’s Bay’s schools lives as far as a 76 minute motor vehicle drive from town.

It seems odd that the Ministry of Education would prefer that the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board spend millions on renovating a school instead of allowing for an extra $40,000 - $80,000 for additional transportation.
If the ARC feels that distance is truly why George Vanier should remain open, then it should recommend to the Ministry that all small schools across Ontario – elementary and secondary – that are 15 km away from the next school should remain open.

I hope that additional busing options can be presented to the ARC to support closure of George Vanier school in June 2014 - millions of dollars will be saved while shortening the travel time for numerous young children in Madawaska Valley. Finally, with immediate school closures the inevitable second ARC will be avoided.

Thank you for allowing public input to your ARC committee and best of luck with your very difficult task.

Sincerely,
January 16, 2014

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for your letter to the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) dated January 3, 2014.

As you are aware the Pupil Accommodation Review Process set up by the Ministry of Education Guidelines (2009) and the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Policy, requires a broad community consultation process. Throughout this process the ARC has diligently gathered information, considered resources and community input, analyzed data and formulated a Draft Accommodation Review Report that will be presented at a public meeting on January 22, 2014 in Killaloe. After this public meeting public input will again be considered before the Accommodation Report is finalized and presented to the Director of Education and the Board of Trustees.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in the ARC process. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

...as an inclusive Catholic educational community, we are called to express our mission as church, to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future.
Letter #17

From: January 03, 2014 11:16 AM
Sent: Friday, January 03, 2014 11:16 AM
To: arc
Subject: Concerned Parent

To whom it may concern:

I am writing as a concerned parent of St. Mary's in Wilno. I want to write to you so that you are aware of the importance of keeping our school open for the future students. St. Mary's has been and will continue to be an important school for current and upcoming students. As a parent with a child attending this school and one child to enroll in September, I have seen the impact of such a small school. It may be small in numbers but large at heart. I can't imagine my child having to attend another school and having some of the most important things taken away. With no indoor gym, these students get the most natural gym of all...the outdoors. With amazing outdoor physical activity for all four seasons, why take that away? St. Mary's is family. The students and staff are so inviting and make the kids feel like the luckiest kids in the world. Coming from a Polish community, I believe it is important to keep this cultural part of society open and running. I hope you take into consideration how students benefit from small schools....not only do they get one on one attention that some or all may need but I believe that bullying is nonexistent. These kids help each other out, they look out for each other and they become each others friends. I understand that this is not only what decides if the school stays open or closed but it sure means a lot to me to voice my opinion as a parent so that you know why we choose this school as our school.

Sincerely,
January 16, 2014

Undisclosed Addressee

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Dear

Thank you for your letter to the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) dated January 3, 2014.

As members of the ARC we recognize that St. Mary’s has been an important school for current students and past students. We agree that the inviting family like atmosphere cultivated by the staff and students make the students feel like the luckiest students in the world. There is no doubt that the outdoor environment at St. Mary’s fosters healthy and hearty student physical activity. There are many benefits to small schools. Many of our RCCDSB students have had the benefit of this educational experience.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in St. Mary’s and the ARC process. By your letter you can be assured that that your voice as a parent will be heard by this committee.

The Arc will consider your input!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
January 9, 2014

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for your letter to an ARC member dated December 18, 2013.

As members of the ARC we recognize that George Vanier Catholic School is an exceptional school. Many parents and grandparents have commented on the very welcoming and family orientated atmosphere at GVCS. We share your pride in the strong Catholic and academic legacy of this school community provided by the hard working staff and community volunteers.

Thank you for sharing the news of the Christmas concert and Christmas bazaar! It is apparent to the ARC that the whole community supports GVCS. We are blessed with such community support in many of our RCCDSB schools.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in the ARC process. We trust you will continue to volunteer and support George Vanier Catholic School.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam

Chair, Accommodation Review Committee

Superintendent of Education

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Concerning the matter of the closing of some school in the Madawaska Valley and area.

Please keep George Vanier open!

I am a concerned grandparent who had 3 children come to school here. Two have graduated and gone on to high school. The 3rd one is in grade 6. We paid its fees. I do hope they don't close our school, I live 4 miles away. I hope they don't close our school. I drive 4 miles away and it's only 5 minutes from George Vanier.

George Vanier is an exceptional school. It's like a big happy family.

The staff works so hard to do extra things for the children. They sometimes don't have enough hands. That's when the community steps in to help. I have volunteered in the library for 3 or 4 years now and I don't intend to quit any time soon.

The Christmas program had a standing room only crowd. The whole community came out. The annual Christmas Bazaar had 40 tables rent for the day. The sugar plum cafe was a hit. Each class had their own table with things to sell. All proceeds went to the school to help cover costs. The staff, students & volunteers did.

Repeat! Keep George Vanier open!

Cafe anytime
S. 10-13 755-6305

Sincerely,
January 09, 2014

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The ARC members appreciate your wish not to have George Vanier Catholic School close. We agree that there are great teachers at GVCS! We are blessed with many great teachers in the RCCDSB. The possible closing of schools and the relocation of students is being considered by this ARC.

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thanks again for your input.

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
To Whom it may concern

I am writing this letter because I don't want this school to close because I have lots of friends and there is millions of great teachers that teach me and give me great marks and why don't you consider sending St. Mary's School to come here since St. Mary's School should close down, but our school does have enough people and we would all stay open.

Gr. 6 at GVCS

:)
January 09, 2014

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The ARC members agree that George Vanier Catholic School is an awesome school! We are blessed with many great schools in the RCCDSB. We also would like for you to graduate from GVCS! We trust that the friends and memories you have at GVCS will endure regardless of where you go to school in the future.

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thanks again for your input.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter because I have went to George Junior my whole life and I am only in grade seven. So I would like to graduate from it.

Also, I met all my friends here. So if it shuts down, the memories would be lost.

When I am older, I want my kids to go to this school because this school is awesome.

Grade 7

Grace
January 09, 2014

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The Partridge Run is a wonderful tradition that has been a part of St. Mary's Catholic School in Wilno for many years. If the RCCDSB of trustees decide to close St. Mary's, the members of the ARC hope that the tradition of the annual Partridge Run will continue in the Madawaska family of schools.

The ARC members agree that George Vanier Catholic School is a great school! We are blessed with many great schools in the RCCDSB. We congratulate you and wish you further academic success at GVCS and beyond.

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thanks again for your input.

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
To Whom it May Concern, Dec 17th 2013

Hello, I am writing this letter because I have some questions. If St. Mary's closes down, what is going to happen to the Partridge Run?

I don't want George Vanier to close because it's a great school! I have gone from a C's and B's student to a B's and A's student because of this school! Also, I have a niece who is 7 months old and my sister is planning on sending her here.

Thank you,

Evef yartha

Yours,
GVCS
Ladies and gentlemen, I come here this evening with joyful news. From the time our children enter our school system, the goal is to have them graduate successfully. The provincial goal is 85% graduation rate. In 2011/2012, the provincial graduation rate was 82%. Because the graduation rate at MVDHS for 2011/2012 was 94.38% (12.38% higher than the provincial average), the conclusion can only be that your terms of reference lack the empirical evidence that our students performances demonstrate. To address the first term of reference, we must change it to declining school or program enrolments have enhanced the students’ educational success. To address the second and third terms of reference, using these results, we can only conclude that the physical condition of the schools and any surplus instructional space must have enhanced their opportunities for learning and success. This is indisputable evidence that what we have now is top drawer. And so I assume that the necessity for an ARC Review, as its terms of reference are inapplicable to our schools, will immediately cease.

- Don’t bring our school closure to us when it becomes a crisis situation - you were already told that by the March 2009 — The Report of the Declining Enrolment Working Group. They told you that that practice serves to turn groups which should be collaborative into groups pitted against one another for their very survival.
- Long-term planning is needed to avert this situation.
- Community involvement, municipal partnerships, and innovative ideas to solve the problem require complex interactions which a school community on its own does not have the expertise to develop. Local municipalities need to be brought into the loop. The Declining Enrolment Group told you that. It hasn’t been done.
- The Ministry needs to shift to a modern approach which reflects the business model of the late 20th and early 21st centuries — diversification as opposed to factory model schools which reflect early 1900 beliefs. They followed the U.S. education model, which the U.S. discovered didn’t work. They’ve discovered economies of scale didn’t bring the expected savings, and in fact diminished student success. They’re going back to small schools. We are following a model which ignores empirical evidence. Ministry officials need to react to a changing global model, which will require updating and education on their part.
- Put the onus at the Ministry level to make our system be responsive to the needs and lack of understanding of small rural communities — divert some of the time and manpower at this level with an insistence that school closures stop, an awareness that we do not see the value in super schools, and a mandate for them to solve the problem. Bill Templeton told the PC Education Critic MPP Lisa MacLeod, “In 2012,” Studies show that there are no real savings by closing or consolidating schools. Increased busing and increased administrative costs quickly offset any savings. There is also both a community and economic impact from school closures that offset savings.” Read and listen to the advice given in government commissioned reports, such as Dr. Lauzon’s Report funded by the Federation of Agriculture, and the March 2009 Report of The Declining Enrolment Working Group. Find and read the document prepared by the Community Schools Alliance, and presented to the then Minister of Education, and now Premier, Ms. Wynne. And even though you think you hold the School Boards over a barrel because you allot their badly needed
funding, remember that those funds are from the taxpayer’s piggy bank, and we are the taxpayers. Listen to us!

Diversify the Ministry itself—reallocate their manpower and resources across the province. It is one thing to dictate from an ivory tower with no connection to the people you serve, and another to live among them to gain an understanding of their needs and circumstances. It is my opinion that the Ministry of Education has lost the trust and respect of rural Ontario. They must become more accountable in terms of accessibility and responsiveness to the tax-payer. We have trusted the Ministry to set programs to educate and train our children for the future, yet their projections have failed to educate our children in the direction of a successful field, or even employability in this economy (example: low priority given to technical/skills training in the ‘90’s, the waste of our tax dollars today on teacher training, with a history of large numbers of excess teacher graduates unable to obtain employment.) These core failures do not inspire confidence.

This is a call for the end to the “Crisis in Education” model, called for and created in the late 1990’s by former Education Minister John Snobelen, which has carried through to the present. What kind of leadership model calls for crisis to drive change? Do we want this type of leadership model to set policy to educate our children for a society that calls for team-players and collaborative problem-solvers? This has wreaked havoc in the education system. This is a call for the return to collaboration and common sense from our Ministry, and a reminder that they are responsible and accountable to us. We know that smaller classes enhance education. Research validates this. We know that parent and community involvement enhances education. Research validates this. We know that when we close schools, parental and community involvement from the closed school declines. Research validates this. We no longer have the time or money to finance this charade at the expense of our children and communities.

This is a call for a thorough independent government review of the failures of the Ministry of Education to manage schools to the maximum benefits—retention and graduation of children adequately educated for the future. Madawaska High School and its feeder schools have one of the highest rates of retention and graduation in the province—for which we can be very proud of our students, staffing, communities, and Boards of Education. Collaboratively, our local education system has met the goals the Ministry purports to be the desired outcomes. Yet, for these achievements, we are being shut down. I would call for consistency from the message to proven results. Based on these results, I would call on the Ministry of Education to demonstrate how they have arrived at a logical decision, with empirical evidence to close these schools, based on their own criteria for student success.

If a re-thinking of policy does not begin immediately, I would call for a name change from “The Ministry of Education” to the “Ministry of Transportation and Rural Destruction”, because their main function will be bussing our children from place to place, and with the closing of community schools, over-seeing the destruction of our communities.

Mme. Premier— if you do nothing to remedy this, how will future generations remember you? What legacy will you leave to our rural youth? Please consider the impacts on:

- The effective use of our education dollars and the long-term impact on society
  if we invest 12 or 13 years in a child’s education, only to have them drop out before graduation
- Student safety - serious behaviours increase in relation to school size
- Long-term increasing costs with the inability to reliably project long-term transportation costs
- Our environment due to increase in fossil fuel emissions
- Decline in parental involvement in our children’s education
- Decline in children’s involvement in their local community
- Stress on young children due to up to 2.5 hour PER DAY bus rides, and the long-term effects
- The devastation of the closing of a school on its community (human and infrastructure), and the cumulative effect that our legacy of school closings has had on our province’s economy

Perhaps it is time for the residents of rural Ontario to establish our own ARC - a review to determine if we are willing to accommodate our schools and communities demise. ARC – Accommodating the Ruin of our Community.

As a taxpayer, I would like to know the number of schools closed in this province since 1998. I would also like to have revealed the number of Ministry employees, consultants, and support staff and the corresponding number of employee reductions yearly since 1998, with the total fiscal savings (ie: spending cutbacks) since that date at the Ministry level as an indicator of the correlation to school closings and administrative savings. I would request dates and times the representatives of the Ministry of Education have visited the affected schools to meet with the community with the aim of establishing community partnerships. I would request the dates and times of meetings between representatives of the Ministry of Education and other government Ministries in order to develop a deep and broad understanding of the impact of their actions on rural Ontario. I would ask the Ministry to reveal how many rural taxpayers have seen a savings as demonstrated by lower education fees on their property tax bill. I would ask the Ministry to publish this data in Ontario newspapers, as they do with our children’s EQAO scores. However, our Ministry of Education does not listen to its own government funded advice, so why would I expect them to listen to us.

We need to thank our school board and trustees for their foresight in establishing the present model which has directly led to one of the most successful high school graduation rates in Ontario. In recognizing the success of small schools – we truly do have schools to believe in. The Madawaska District High School graduation rate is a model for the Province. The process leading to this success begins in our elementary schools. At the end of all of this, we are obtaining a graduation rate far superior to the rest of the Province. Why would we want to even consider jeopardizing this wonderful success story?

- Perhaps it’s time to start a crisis in the Ministry of Education.
- Perhaps we should insist that they hear our collective voice.
- Perhaps it should start here, tonight.
- Thank you.
December 11, 2013

Dear members of ARC:

A Forest School is a place where the children spend part of every day learning outside, nature may be used to teach any subject and children’s learning is inquiry-based. Benefits have been proven for children’s mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health as well as their academic performance.

Forest Schools are very popular in Denmark and England. They are springing up across Canada both as public and private schools. Forest kindergartens are the most common but there are many forest elementary schools too. Teachers are specially trained to teach (math, science, language arts, history, geography, social sciences, etc.) outdoors using inquiry-based methods. Forest School Canada provides this training. http://www.forestschoolcanada.ca/

The Renfrew County Forest School Alliance is a group of local parents, teachers and community-minded people who want to see children spending more time learning outdoors. We are exploring different ways to make this happen and we would be pleased to speak with you more about how we could help each other.

We will be doing a survey in January to determine exactly how many local children would be enrolled in Forest School if it were available. We estimate 50-100 initially if it is a board-wide initiative and 20-30 if it is just the Wilno area. These are combined totals from the kindergarten, primary and junior age groups.

Sincerely,

MA Environmental Education and Communication
December 12, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Dear Ms. Kosnaskie:

Thank you for your e-mail to the ARC members dated December 4, 2013.

You have asked the ARC to respond to three very direct questions. Your first question asks us to "prove" that the quality of education will be improved or maintained if your children go from a small, multiple grade classroom to a much larger single/double grade classroom. This question is impossible to "prove" one way or another. There are far too many variables or unknown factors that could influence a child's education. All we can demonstrate at this point is that there will be more opportunity for your children to be in a single or double grade classroom and less opportunity for multiple grade classrooms. We agree that it is the RCCDSB's ARC policy "to support student achievement through providing quality education for all students". If you would like more information on how the RCCDSB accomplishes this goal please go to the Board's website and see the EQAO data in comparison to the rest of the province. This is but one example of an empirical measure of student achievement for all students in the RCCDSB.

Your second question also asks the ARC to "prove" that a student would benefit more socially, spiritually, in developing leadership skills and in community involvement. Again, this is impossible to "prove" one way or the other. We know that we have been truly blessed to have the highest quality of student leadership and community involvement from our students in these Catholic school communities. We would hope that that level of commitment would continue in the nearby Catholic School community.

The third question asks about the optimal use of school facilities and resources. The focus of this year's Board Improvement plan speaks to the Board's vision of stewardship and sustainability. When school communities are consolidated the economies of scale realized in both human resources and building maintenance resources provide the Board with savings that can be used to benefit all school communities.

The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in this process. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
forwarded this message on 12/9/2013 8:41 AM

Get more apps

Action Items

Dear Mr. Adam,

In the spirit of the ARC committee’s policy that the “value to the student” takes priority in this process AND the boards policy to “support student achievement through providing quality education for all students” can you please directly answer the following questions:

1. How can you prove that the quality of my children’s academic education will be improved or maintained if they go from a small, multiple grade classroom to a much larger single/double grade classroom?

2. How can you prove what benefits a student more socially, in terms of spiritual guidance and growth, problem solving with their peers, developing leadership skills, and community involvement—a smaller multiple grade classroom within their home community or a much larger single/double grade classroom in a different community?

The board policy also goes on to state that they endeavour to optimize the use of facilities and resources to provide this quality education. I think we can all agree that the staff at each school uses their building and resources to the best of their ability to educate the students that attend them. That being said,

3. How does closing a school optimize the use of the facilities and resources that they can provide?

Thank you,

George Vanier Catholic School
December 5, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Dear

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your e-mail to the ARC members dated December 3, 2013.

We agree that this type of survey data may be helpful for ARC members to consider in developing their recommendations. Your suggestion will be presented to the ARC on December 4, 2013 for consideration. If the ARC accepts this suggestion the board personnel with the help of the school principals will attempt such a survey.

Thank you for your interest and support of this important process. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
To:   arc;

You forwarded this message on 12/3/2013 2:36 PM.

Dear Members of the ARC Committee,

My four children attend George Vanier Catholic School. My wife is also a teacher with your Board.

I was wondering if it would be possible to conduct surveys with each family at each of the three small schools being considered for closure to find out what families might decide to do if a school is closed. For example, at my local work place there is a lot of talk about children, in case of closure, attending Maynooth Public School, Palmer Rapids Public School, or St. John Bosco, depending on where they live. I like that options are being presented in case of closure, but not all families may follow what is decided.

An informal survey might yield some data for consideration.

Thank you,

Combermere
December 5, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Dear,

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your letter to an ARC member dated November 25, 2013.

As members of the ARC we recognize that the atmosphere at George Vanier Catholic School is a very welcoming and family orientated. We also agree that many of the GVCS graduates have continued to post-secondary education and have become a positive influence in society as adults. We share your pride in the strong Catholic and academic legacy of this school community.

The ARC is aware of the bus transportation challenges of the current students and families of GVCS and how those challenges may be extenuated by attending St. John Bosco in Barry’s Bay. The ARC members are also aware of the difficult choices parents may make for their children if GVCS was to be recommended to close.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in George Vanier and the ARC process. You have demonstrated by your very articulate letter that the education you received at GVCS has served you well. Best wishes as you continue your education.

The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Peter Adam  
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee  
Superintendent of Education  
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

Dear Accommodation Review Committee,

My name is Shelby Voldock and I am a proud graduate of George Vanier Catholic School in the class of 2006. In my years at George Vanier the amount of students enrolled were very similar to the numbers today. The classrooms I was taught in consisted of double grades and triple grades. I felt that I was given the proper attention when necessary from both the education assistants and the teachers in my classrooms. Throughout my years at Vanier my grades were strong and among the class average. As I continued into high school my grades followed an annual trend of constantly being higher than the class average. After high school I continued to post-secondary education at Cambrian College in Sudbury, where I completed Pre-Health Science and Dental Assisting Levels 1 & 2 programs and received certification from both. I am currently a second year Dental Hygiene student at Cambrian College. During these years of post-secondary education my grades have remained strong and as a result I have been on the President’s Honour Roll. I wanted to share this with you to show that people that come from small community schools do become people with influence in society. I can also vouch for my graduating class as a whole and say that 7/10 of the students who graduated from George Vanier in 2006 went onto post-secondary education. I believe this shows that George Vanier Catholic School provided us with the same quality of education other local schools provided if not better. I could also argue that the education we received was better due to the healthier interaction and relationships teachers shared with the smaller classes. When comparing the results of the EQAO tests between George Vanier and the elementary other schools, I believe that this is still the case today.

The atmosphere that George Vanier has is a welcoming and family oriented environment. With all students coming from small town background they are often in a setting where everyone knows everyone in and out of school. I know that many of the younger volunteers at Vanier are former graduates that want to go back because they enjoyed their experience there. This is why I feel like the environment that George Vanier provides for their students is fitting for the local families. This does not mean that students who attend George Vanier are at a disadvantage or have trouble developing relationships with people outside of their community as there are many other opportunities to interact with students from other schools through extracurricular school events, sports tournaments, or
recreational sports outside of school. When entering high school these students have the same ability to develop friendships with others as students from a larger feeder school.

When looking at the ARC proposed option for George Vanier Catholic School to St. John Bosco for transportation, I noticed that there are only 7 student bussing times that will be decreased and 38 student bussing times will be increased from an additional 1 minute to 67 minutes, with some students’ daily bussing times being 2 hours and 30 minutes. I noticed that those children are in grade 1, and I feel like that is an extremely long time for them to be sitting on a bus. I understand that some St. John Bosco students share busses with high school students and if changing the bus routes would mean that elementary students from Vanier would also share busses with high school students, then in my opinion I believe that these students may feel intimidated and create occurrences of bullying. Another repercussion to the longer bus rides is the possibility of current George Vanier students transferring to the local public school in Palmer Rapids as it will without a doubt be a shorter traveling distance.

I wanted to write this letter to give you an idea of thoughts and feelings from the perspective of a former graduate of George Vanier. My years there were an important part of my life and I value the education, experiences, and memories that I have received. I wanted to share with you the outcomes of some former students of George Vanier to ensure you that we develop healthy relationships in our futures and find success in our endeavors. From the volunteers, teachers, and parish priest, I couldn’t imagine a more involved and passionate group of role models and it really did give me the feeling of a big happy family. At my grade 8 graduation I remember Father Ken O’Brien saying that when he looked out of his window he always had to smile because we did not play as individual groups, we always played together as a school. Please consider my thoughts and views towards George Vanier during the evaluation and decision process. George Vanier Catholic School is a school to believe in.

I thankfully encourage you to include my letter at your ARC meeting on November 27th at George Vanier Catholic School.

Sincerely,
December 5, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your e-mail to the ARC members dated December 3, 2013.

We agree that your current enrolment numbers are correct. There are 5 more pupils enrolled at George Vanier in 2013-2014 than originally projected. Our projections are based upon longitudinal data from a variety of sources that is submitted to the Ministry of Education. The most accurate projection data from year to year is provided by school principals based upon new kindergarten enrolment. This year the actual enrolment at GVCS is good news, however, the enrolment trend at GVCS demonstrates a continued decline in enrolment over time.

The issue of other uses of the surplus space at George Vanier and other schools is being considered by the ARC. Consolidating the students from St. Mary’s Wilno at George Vanier has been suggested at the public meeting held in Combermere on November 27, 2013.

The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your interest in this process. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
ARC review for George Vanier Catholic school

To: arc;
Bing Maps

Hello,

I am a former student, parent of 4 students who have since graduated and I am a continuing supporter of George Vanier Catholic School. I am looking through the SIP for George Vanier and on page 4 there is a table showing actual and projected enrolment for the next 5 years. I think this table is inaccurate. This table starts in 2012/2013 school year (Year 1) with 45 students. It then projects year 2 (2013/2014) as just 40 enrolment when the actual is 45. It then projects year 3 (2014/15) as just 34. If I look at the number of Grade 8’s for 2013/2014 it is 7 and the number of SK is 2 so the expected drop for 2014/15 is only 5, i.e. the expected enrollment is 5 less than the actual enrollment for 2013/14 which is 40 instead of 34. Similarly for year 4 (2015/16) looking at this year’s Grade 7’s and JK, the enrollment will only drop by 1 giving 39 as the expected enrollment instead of the 30 listed in the table.

Your projected enrolment: 45, 40, 34, 30, 24
my enrolment: 45, 45, 40, 39, ?

My point is that the enrolment does not drop as quickly as is projected by your table.

My other point would be that the building is a really good building, which appears to be in very good shape, with a very nice gymnasium. It just needs something else to use up one or two of the current classrooms to reduce the OTG and provide much better “percentage of capacity” figures. Some other schools have daycare in their building to do this. Getting the students from Wilno would also give us better capacity numbers and keep us going for at least the next 5 years when it would become clearer if George Vanier would be a sustainable school.

Thank you for your time

Combermere, ON
December 5, 2013

Janice Visneskie
Mayor Township of Killaloe, Hagarty
And Richards
1 John Street
PO Box 39
Killaloe, ON
K0J 2A0

Dear Ms. Visneskie,

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) dated November 21, 2013.

As members of the ARC we agree that our local schools are extremely important to the growth, sustainability, and livability of our communities. We also share your concern of the negative impact that school closures may have on our residents and future growth.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for your offer of assistance as the committee works through the process of developing its recommendations. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
November 21, 2013

Peter Adam, Chair
Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
499 Pembroke St. West
Pembroke, ON
K9A 5P1

Dear Mr. Adam:

ARC Public Meetings – Review of School Closure/School Consolidation Process

In reference to the above, the Council for the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards would like to thank you for inviting us to attend the public meetings and provide input into this process.

Our local schools are extremely important to the growth, sustainability and liveability of our communities, and we recognize and appreciate the very challenging task that your committee has undertaken. As Municipal Councils we also recognize the very real and very difficult process of decision making with regard to the prioritization and funding of services.

This being said, our Council is very concerned about the possibility of school closures in our municipality, and the very negative impact that it will have on our residents and on future growth. If there is any way that we can assist your committee as you work through the evaluation and decision making process, I would appreciate it if you would let me know.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Yours truly

Janice Visneskie, Mayor
Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards

JV:lmh
December 5, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your letter to an ARC member dated November 20, 2013.

As members of the ARC we recognize that George Vanier Catholic School is a very welcoming, warm and friendly community. We also agree that many of the GVCS graduates have become accomplished adults. We share your pride in the strong Catholic, academic and athletic legacy of this school community.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. The ARC needs to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thank you for helping us “spread the good news” about our schools. The ARC will consider your input!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Nov. 20/13.

Letter #5

Dear,

I am away for 6 days and may not make it back for the meeting on the 27th.

I do want you to know I am very concerned that SVCs may close.

This school is a very welcoming, warm, and friendly community. It has been the starting point for many students and certainly has provided the local communities with many accomplished adults. We are proud of our graduates and want the strong Catholic, academic, and athletic legacy to continue.

Our Catholic students from Letchford Bridge, Ouachita, Palmer Rapids, Lower
Craigmont Road, Ohio Road, Sandhill/Defoe Road, Rockingham, Kanawhaeklake, Hopefield, Conkernere, Blackfish Bay Rd, and Purdy, deserve a Catholic Education in their own area. Please consider very carefully before closing George Vanier Catholic School.
Here, we are strongly connected to the Parish. We also have the added support of The Madonna House lay apostolate whose members pass in front of our doors daily always praying for the children & their families.
Numbers should not be the deciding factor now. Spread the good news about our schools first.
Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Dear [Name],

Thank you for attending the October 16, 2013 Public Meeting, held on October 16, 2013, and your follow-up letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

As ARC members we recognize the tremendous amount of information shared at our first public meeting at St. John Bosco on October 16, 2013. At this meeting we were obligated to present the mandate of the ARC, explain the issues to be resolved, review the School Information Profiles (SIP’s) and seek public input on the SIP’s. Much of the information in the SIP’s is related to past and projected enrolment and the costs associated with operating these schools.

You are correct that the RCCDSB policy on the ARC states that each school’s “value to the student” takes priority over the other priorities listed. The board policy also states that “The Board is committed to support student achievement through providing quality education for all students under its jurisdiction and by optimizing the use of facilities and resources.” The ARC members are keenly aware of these guiding principles of the RCCDSB policy.

As ARC members we will continue to emphasize the “value to the student” for each of these school communities. We will attempt to quantify and compare the SIP information under the “value to the student” for each school community where appropriate. We cannot share detailed EQAO information that is embargoed because of low enrolment.

The ARC will present its options at future public meetings for input. The ARC will prepare an ARC Report consistent with the objectives and reference criteria outlined in the Terms of Reference. This report will be presented to the Director of Education in February, 2014. The Renfrew County Board of Trustees will consider both ARC and staff options and make the final decision regarding the future of the schools.

The ARC will consider your input. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Peter Adam  
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee  
Superintendent of Education  
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
October 31, 2013

RE: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The ARC Members agree that St. Mary’s is a great school! We are blessed with many great schools in the RCCDSB. We also agree that Mrs. R. Lundy is great!

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Rest assured that next year you will continue to have a great school and a great teacher.

Thanks again for your input.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
We think St. Mary's is a great school. Our teacher Mrs. R. Lundy is great. We would hate for her to lose her job.

If St. Mary's closed, where would we go?

Please keep it open.
October 31, 2013

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your letter to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

As members of the ARC we recognize that St. Mary's Catholic School adds value to the Wilno community. In the St. Mary's Catholic School Information Profile, it is mentioned that Wilno is the first Polish settlement in Canada and that the students are encouraged to participate in the local Kashubian culture.

The ARC process requires the committee to consider the school’s value to the student, value to the community, value to the board and value to the local economy. For more information on the policy and process of the ARC please go to the RCCDSB web site: www.rccdsb.edu.on.ca.

Regardless of the recommendations of this committee, we also hope to provide the very best educational opportunities to the children of Wilno and the surrounding areas.

The ARC will consider your input. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
October 16, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a concerned parent, about the possibility of some of our Renfrew County Catholic District Schools closing. I am particularly concerned about the school which my daughter is currently attending, St Mary's Catholic School, Wilno.

I was born in the Hamlet of Wilno and attended SS Number Four Hagarty, a one room school house.

I have been away from this area for over fifty years. My family and I decided to return to Wilno last year. One of our main reasons for returning to the Hamlet of Wilno was to return to my Kashub/Polish Cultural Roots. We wanted our two children, ages 7 years and 3 years to experience the Kashub/Polish Culture and attend school here. After doing our research, my wife and I decided that St Mary’s Catholic School would provide our children with the Cultural and Religious teaching that we were seeking.

It is indeed very disturbing that we now find ourselves in a situation where the possibility exists that St Mary's may close for reasons of Provincial Economics.

We would hope that the community stakeholders, representatives for teachers and non-teaching staff, principals and school board administration look at the Cultural and Religious training which is provided by St Mary's and respect the traditions which exist in this Hamlet. St Mary's is not just another Catholic School; it is a beacon which we hope will continue to shine for many more generations of Kashub/Polish origin children, providing a very high level of education to the children of Wilno and the surrounding areas.

Yours Truly,

[Signature]

Wilno Ontario,
Good Afternoon;

I just wanted to send an email as a parent, as a community member and as a concerned citizen with regards to the review of the 5 schools in Renfrew County that are under review.

Everyone has there own opinions as to why and where and whatever. Here is mine.

Although St. Mary's School is small it is truly a big part of the heritage for Wilno. It is situated atop the hills beside St. Mary's Church where the children are able to participate and have full access of the church and the priest who visits and is part of the Catholic Faith that our schools strive for.

With the serious global problem of childhood obesity, St. Mary's offers so many outdoor programs and encourages our children to be active, to be outside and to enjoy the outdoors. We have no gym, but we do have the hills, the trails, the cold winter air atop the hills which strengthens our kids. They skate OUTDOORS regularly, they are involved in SKIING regularly. St. Mary's has alot to offer for a small school.

Now educationally; our children have been receiving wonderful education, our kids are excelling as they move forward, despite the multiple grades per classroom. Our teachers, parents, and staff of St. Mary's are flexible, accommodating and we reap the benefits of this small school. If schools are closed then classroom sizes become too large and unfortunately it is the children who suffer academically.

We also have a wonderful Parent Association and COMMUNITY who support the school with things that the board cannot supply. We are unique in this way and will continue to support our children in any way we can to ensure they achieve.

I have not heard much information about school zoning, but there are many children in the area that travel to other schools for various reasons which is costly. Could we not look at zoning to see if numbers can increase if all children that were living in an area attend the closest school and perhaps decrease the large classroom sizes and the extra bussing costs?

Thank you for reviewing my opinion!
GUCS - Our school field is one of the largest and we are able to hold the annual Ultimate Frisbee Tournament for all area schools from both boards do accommodate everyone.

GUCS - Our parish of Holy Canadian Martyrs does not have a parish hall and they use the school often for parish activities.

The church & school share the land.

Thank you.
December 12, 2013

Re: Community Feedback to ARC

Thank you for submitting a comment sheet to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The ARC Members agree that George Vanier Catholic School is one of the most happy and safe places to attend school. We also agree that there have been a lot of great teachers over the years who have positively affected the academic, athletic and self-esteem of their students. We know that the current teaching staff continues with that tradition.

Congratulations on your exemplary academic achievements at GVCS since Kindergarten. We are confident that you will continue to excel at George Vanier and beyond.

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thanks again for your input. Best wishes for continued success at GVCS!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Our School is one of the most family friendly and safe places to be.

I have been an over average student ever since Kindergarten to now (grade 7).

I have had a lot of great teachers over the years that have really made a great influence in my life, whether it be academic or athletic or self-esteem. GVCSS along with all volunteers offers the whole package.
December 12, 2013

Undisclosed Addressee

Thank you for submitting a comment sheet to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Accommodation Review Committee (ARC).

The ARC Members are also very pleased that all those members of the public showed their support for George Vanier Catholic School at the public meeting on November 27, 2013. Members of the ARC were impressed with the tour they received at George Vanier. All students who helped with the tour should be proud of their efforts.

The ARC will continue to consider input from all school communities in developing its recommendations. The Catholic School Board of Trustees will then decide what recommendations to approve.

Thanks again for your input. Best wishes for continued success at GVCS!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter Adam
Chair, Accommodation Review Committee
Superintendent of Education
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
**NAME:**

---

**E-MAIL:**

---

**TELEPHONE:**

---

**SCHOOL AFFILIATION:**

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was happy and proud to give people a tour of my school. I am so glad all these people at the meeting loved our School as much as we do. They stood up for us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

---

---

---

---

---
Qu. to consider community comment:

What would our community, school of George Vanier, look like if we created a different educational model than the present one?