

SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

ACCOMMODATION REVIEW 2013:01 MIDLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL/

PENETANGUISHENE SECONDARY SCHOOL

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2014 – 6:00 P.M. - ROY EDWARDS ROOM

AGENDA

- A. (1) Roll Call
- (2) Approval of Agenda
- (3) Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

PUBLIC SESSION

B. **DELEGATIONS**

1. Mayor Gord McKay
2. Bill Irwin
3. Lynn Morton
4. Elise Holt
5. Mayor Gerry Marshall
6. Tracy Mitchell-Ashley
7. Georgia Grundmanis and Carly Gardiner
8. Gerard Desroches
9. Diana Dorion
10. Benjamin Bestvater

C. **FUTURE BUSINESS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Excellence in Education Evening – May 6, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. – Roy Edwards Room
Business and Facilities Standing Committee Meeting – May 7, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
Roy Edwards Room
Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting – May 12, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
Georgian Room
Human Resources Standing Committee Meeting – May 14, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
Roy Edwards Room
Program Standing Committee Meeting – May 14, 2014 following the Human Resources
Standing Committee Meeting. – Roy Edwards Room
Character Education Awards Night – May 15, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. - Roy Edwards Room
Parent Involvement Committee Meeting – May 20, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. - Georgian Room
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting – May 26, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. - Georgian Room
Regular Meeting of the Board – May 28, 2014 at 6:00 p.m., followed immediately by the
Committee of the Whole in Closed Session (Georgian Room), Public Session will resume
at 7:00 p.m. (Roy Edwards Room)

SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL ARC BOARD MEETING

ACCOMMODATION REVIEW 2013:01

MIDLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL/PENETANGUISHENE SECONDARY SCHOOL

PUBLIC SESSION

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2014 – 6:00 P.M. – ROY EDWARDS ROOM

RECOMMENDED ACTION

REPORT	FYI	Decision Req.	MOTION
			Call Meeting to order. Roll Call
		√	That the agenda be approved as printed.
			Declaration of Conflicts of Interest
PUBLIC SESSION			
Delegations	√		1. Mayor Gord McKay 2. Bill Irwin 3. Lynn Morton 4. Elise Holt 5. Mayor Gerry Marshall 6. Tracy Mitchell-Ashley 7. Georgia Grundmanis and Carly Gardiner 8. Gerard Desroches 9. Diana Dorion 10. Benjamin Bestvater
Future Business			
Adjournment		√	Motion to Adjourn

Mayor Gord McKay

ARC Special Board Meeting

Tuesday, April 29th

Presentation by Mayor Gord McKay, Midland

Concerning High School Configuration for North Simcoe

An ARC process is an exceedingly difficult experience for any community or group of communities. It forces citizens to confront the cold reality of change for a matter that we all hold very close – the education of our children.

Change is never easy. Change that causes immediate upset and is unlikely to show benefits for many years is even more problematic. On top of that, the change contemplated by this ARC process pits the high school in one Town against the other. It is no wonder our communities want to stop the ARC process. But the situation demands that we must bring it to conclusion.

The Compelling Need for Change

So why must we change?

When I first came to Midland, many of the old timers told me that Midland and Penetanguishene would never cooperate on anything. Wasn't in their blood. Then in 2010, with some new leadership, the municipalities recognized that things had changed around them – that they had to cooperate or face an increasingly bleak economic future. We looked at joint policing (unsuccessfully), sharing sewer and water services, and most successfully economic development. Over four years the four communities have built a progressive economic partnership that has attracted the attention of the province and many other municipalities. So yes we can change.

Why the need to change our high-schools?

The School Board has told us our local high school environment has changed significantly:

- The two high-schools are both significantly under capacity. Given feeder school projections, that situation will remain for at least a decade
- Both high schools require significant capital investments. There is insufficient funding for both schools
- The Board is funding improved delivery. Funding the status quo – that is paying for two sub-optimal schools – will be moved well down the priority list
- Small poorly funded rural schools are increasingly unlikely to attract quality teachers and programming. And with that our area will not be able to attract families who are increasingly selective about the school they choose for their children.

There is a compelling need for change.

Advantages of Change – One Area High School

I believe that North Simcoe will be best served by one area public high-school, built to accommodate the educational needs of the modern student.

My primary reason for saying that is based upon what I hear from our educators – the best model is to have a modern scale-appropriate school that has the range of programming and activities needed to fully meet the needs of the modern student.

All the other arguments are secondary to this. They include:

- The one high-school model is the one that is most likely to be funded
- Modern families are most attracted to modern schooling – both breadth of programming and facilities
- It breaks the status quo where both schools are bleeding students to other area and non-area schools

The one area school model delivers many benefits, especially the most important – providing our area children with a quality modern education.

Perceived Problems with Change

Are there problems with the one-area-school approach? Absolutely. Otherwise we would have settled the question some time ago.

The loss of a school in any community is upsetting. It is the loss an educational asset; it strikes at community spirit and diminishes economic development. It causes people to question whether their Town is growing or falling back. All understandable concerns.

These concerns parallel those of the four North Simcoe municipalities when they set out to build their economic partnership. Our strength and our future lay in coming together for common purpose. We had to give up the historical notion that each community had to have their own. And we did so - we gave up the mindset of four separate development offices because we profoundly understood that we would all gain more by coming together – by sharing a common vision and pooling our resources and energies. That same argument applies just as strongly to the challenge before us – the education of our children.

And while many of my comments seem to have been directed to Midland and Penetanguishene they apply to the whole catchment area. They embrace the common vision we must share in Tiny, Tay, Christian Island as well as Penetanguishene and Midland.

What will preserved of the status quo

So what we get out of this is the best educational outcome for our children. Something we have always valued and will continue to value. We will have our own area school that represents our combined community – something that we all own collectively and equally. And as a side-bar we can turn our collective attention to working on related concerns that all communities want to resolve such as transit for students among the communities or pursuing improved educational funding with a louder combined voice.

Summary

For me the bottom line is education – what best prepares our children for the future? What decision can we make today that will have parents choose to educate their children in our area as opposed to moving to Barrie?

Our one new school must deliver the best in modern education and seamlessly serve the entire catchment area - Tiny, Tay, Christian Island, Penetanguishene and Midland. Our two schools must become one.

So in summary, I recommend:

- That the one area high-school solution be adopted
- That available funds be used to construct a new school, or failing that to extensively refurbish the existing school
- That the school represent the entire area and be named accordingly

- That the school be located in Midland due to its central position in the area and access to school related infrastructure
- That the School Board provide budget to improve after hours transportation for students to all areas, allowing students to fully participate in all the school has to offer. Extending Midland transit to link to Penetanguishene should be considered
- That the school Board provide budget/staff to assist with the conversion of surplus high school real estate to other useful purposes
- And finally, bring the ongoing ARC process to an end – make a decision

Bill Irwin

Robyn, Lena

From: Bill Irwin <birwin6@uwo.ca>
Sent: Sunday, April 20, 2014 9:18 AM
To: Robyn, Lena
Cc: Foster, Debbie
Subject: Request for delegation status: ARC 2013:01 - Midland SS and Penetanguishene SS.

Lena Robyn, Executive Assistant to the Board

Simcoe County District School Board

RE: Request for delegation status: ARC 2013:01 - Midland SS and Penetanguishene SS.

Dear Ms. Robyn:

I am requesting delegation status to speak at the upcoming ARC meeting to be held on April 29, 2014. As per your Board policy, I am providing the following outline of my presentation:

- The roles that schools play and the impacts of school closure, namely consideration of the long-term social and community capital costs of a community once the local school is closed
- The social purposes of the local school as defined by the community
- The lack of longitudinal data in terms of the transitional impacts on educational and psycho-social considerations of students resulting from school closures
- The need for a collaborative public policy decision making approach, where the *spirit* of meaningful citizen involvement in the process is valued most.

I believe that I have a useful insight to contribute to this process. I have researched and written extensively on school closures in Ontario, and have spoken at length with members of the Penetanguishene community developing a deep understanding of the underlying issues present in this scenario.

I look forward to your conformation.

Best

Dr. Bill Irwin

--

Lynn Morton

My name is Lynn Morton. I am a resident of the Township of Tay and a retired school teacher. I sat on Tay council for 11 years. As a supply teacher I spent many days in a number of the schools in North Simcoe. As a life long resident of the area I did attend the Midland Penetanguishene District High School.

I have attended a couple of the review board meetings and listened to the comments made by both the public and the committee members.

I have read with interest the recommendations of the ARC committee and see that the conclusion is the same as past recommendations from previous reviews to keep both schools open.

However, the recommendations have changed to include the demolition of parts of both schools to "utilize efficiencies in order to eliminate excess capacity".

Why would we spend tax dollars to create two smaller schools when space is available in one school to accommodate all?

Creating the two smaller schools still has major costs to the taxpayer for not only the demolition but for the maintenance and staffing to keep both schools open.

The review also recommends that the schools could explore the full sharing of programming opportunities.

Why do we need to share programs when they could be made available under one roof?

We have a facility that can accommodate all of the students without major construction costs. Students needing to fulfil option selections would not need to travel from school to school during the day. Students who have to travel from one facility to another would have no sense of belonging to either school and we would have the additional costs of transporting them. Students have enough stresses in their lives without creating more for them.

This school board has amalgamated other small schools for good reasons. The future of our students should be first and foremost on the decision made by this board.

With more students, opportunities to provide more educational experiences would be available. We know that if you do not have a certain number of students applying for course options these options are then not possible.

It is wonderful to boast that your school has produced many doctors, lawyers, dentists and teachers but they make up just a small percentage of your enrolment.

All students should be given the opportunity to enhance their learning experiences in the trades and technologies as well. These courses could be expanded if there was a larger

enrolment in the school. Until changes are made in the option field the schools will continue to lose students to other boards as they are looking for these other opportunities.

The decision to keep both schools open is the result of the wants of the politicians and the parents not the needs of students. You don't need a school at your backdoor to get an education. The decision by this Board should not be about wants but it should be about needs.

There are communities such as Wasaga Beach with a population of over 18,000 that do not have a secondary school within the town limits. You can learn under any roof if the desire to learn is there. That desire is quite often lost because the availability of courses is not there.

I have also reviewed the Staff Report that recommends a single school on the MSS site. I would like to commend the staff for their report. The demographic information is very compelling. We can't change the demographics, they are what they are. The report confirms that with more students more opportunities for programming are available.

Retaining two schools simply does not provide our students with the opportunities they need to survive in our global economy. The staff report concludes that only one school is required. I strongly support the recommendations in the Staff Report.

It is time to move to the future and make the best decision for the students of not just Midland and Penetanguishene but also the students of Tay and Tiny. I charge you the Board members to make the decision that is in the best interest of all of the students of North Simcoe.

Elise Holt

Robyn, Lena

From: Elise Holt
Sent: Monday, April 21, 2014 3:32 PM
To: Robyn, Lena
Subject: Public Delegation for April 29th Meeting

Hello,

My name is Elise Holt. I am currently in grade 9 at Penetanguishene Secondary School. In my graduating year, the staff recommendation from the Simcoe County District School Board is to close my school. My age group is going to be affected more than any other grade by this decision. If the staff recommendation is approved, my classmates and I will be asked to switch schools in the most important year of our high school education. There is no guarantee from the Ministry of Education that a new school will be built within ten years on the current Midland Secondary School property. The students in my grade are being asked to risk our success in grade 12 for uncertain funding for a new school. Why would you want to change the current success at both MSS and PSS with no guarantee of future success for the students of this area? PSS and MSS should stay open as recommended by the ARC.

Here are some thoughts and concerns from my classmates and I that a classmate (to be determined) and I would like to present to the trustees of the Simcoe County District School Board on Tuesday, April 29 or Tuesday, May 13.

1. Enrolment:

-If PSS and MSS combine, student enrolment will decrease because many students are saying they will transfer to the catholic school St. Theresa's

2. Quality of Student Life: If PSS and MSS remain open,

- More extra help is available from teachers in each subject.
- Teachers will continue to know each student better, so they will understand each student's situation better.
- More opportunities to join clubs, make sports teams by keeping both schools open
- More opportunities to be student leaders

3. Facilities:

-There are two public high schools open in this area that students attend, why would someone want to close one of the schools, move every student into the other one, and then maybe have a school built in ten years or likely not given the 28 million dollars it would cost to build.

4. Programmes:

- PSS has Extended French, this program should stay in Penetanguishene because this town is historically a French community and currently has a French radio station, French elementary schools, and other French programmes that connect well with extended French in Penetanguishene.
- PSS has four AP (Advanced Placement) courses starting in the fall.
- There are more programs available at PSS now than there have been since 14 years ago, the amount of time I have lived here.
- MSS will have to speak about their own programs given I do not know enough about them, but the principles at both schools are willing to coordinate programs to expand course options at both schools.
- Due to the expansion of computer network access, students are now able to get every course they need online.

5. Transition Concerns/Concerns about moving in Final Year of high school:

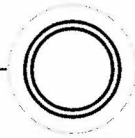
- Grade 12 marks are very important and new teachers and a new environment will throw many students off.
- Social conflicts between students could make bullying rates increase.
- A new school likely will not be approved for up to 10 years, due to the financial state of our government this building may not occur for 20 or more years, so why disrupt my group of PSS students now?

For the reasons given in my presentation and many more that others have presented to you, my final recommendation and of many students in my grade, PSS and MSS should both stay open. Thank you for listening to me, I hope you will not disrupt my future with making a rush decision.

Sincerely,
Elise Holt

Mayor Gerry Marshall

Mayor Gerry Marshall



Town of Penetanguishene



Agree with the ARC Committee



- Recommend no school closures at this time
- Recommend 5 year hiatus on discussion
- This is about more than PSS and MSS – this is small/rural town Ontario education at risk. We need to think beyond our borders
- 5 years provides political time to make the required funding formula and creative curriculum changes

ARC recognized community well being



In terms of community well being –

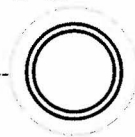
The ARC committee recognized that while the schools may belong to the board, the children and the students that are in them belong to the community

The ARC committee also recognized the need to heavily weigh what communities believe to be best for their students than they have done in recent years.

My quick Easter weekend petition survey found that support for the ARC recommendation to keep both schools open was very well distributed.

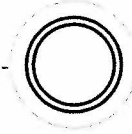
55% Penetanguishene and 45% from Midland, Tiny and Tay.

Engagement Efforts



- Trustees informed me they have not engaged with Ministry or Minister or Premier.
- Met with Education Minister Liz Sandals
- Met with Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal
- Met with Minister of Colleges, Trades and Universities, Minister Brad Duguid
- Met with PC Education Critic (MPP Leon)
- Correspondence with Premier.

Engagement Efforts



Penetanguishene resolution on a moratorium

Support across province.

AMO President

OSUM President

Across province news articles

Discussions will occur this fall.

Too many political clocks ticking



- Trustee election (October 27th 2014)
- Municipal election (October 27th 2014)
- Provincial election (May 29th 2014?)

Time crunch always makes for poor decisions

**At a minimum delay any decision until
post elections and have the new Trustees,
MPP's and Councils revisit**

Midland & Penetanguishene are tied together economically



Keeping both MSS and PSS open allows all four area communities to:

- Deliver to places to grow criteria
- Deliver Economic Development office
- Deliver Tourism Strategy
- Create municipal coalition to address funding
- Deliver funding changes for small/rural schools

One Public School – Facts to be considered



**Combined MSS & PSS student population is in and around
1,000 Students**

- Quality of education, funding, programming, teaching complement for 1,000 students is the same no matter if it occurs under the roof of a new school, the roof of MSS or the roof of PSS

One Public School – Facts to be considered



Regionally and for the overall good of both of our towns and their future, it makes sense that in a one public school scenario, that:

- Midland have a major high school (St. Theresa's)
- Penetanguishene have a major high school (PSS)

One Public School – Facts to be considered



A province = **11 billion in debt**

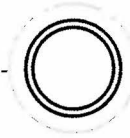
new school = **\$28 million**

MSS suitable = **\$21.6 million**

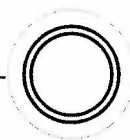
PSS suitable = **\$18.3 million**

A new school is an improbable outcome.

In the end



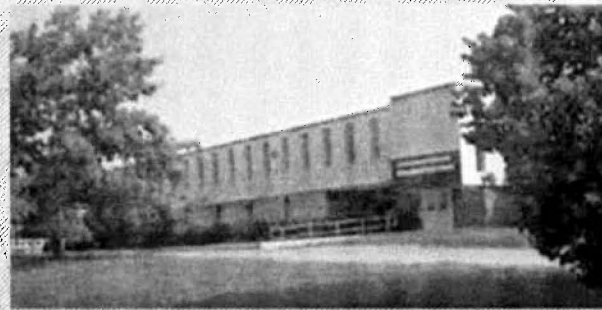
**Keeping PSS and MSS open
as the ARC Committee concluded
after 5 months of diligent work
Is the logical choice**



Thank you

Tracy Mitchell-Ashley

**Board Meeting
Presentation:
April 29th, 2014**



**Be INNOVATIVE:
Leave PSS Open**

Tracy Mitchell-Ashley

Parent
Parent Council Member
Community Member
College Faculty



**HOW we EDUCATE
needs to change**

**We need to prepare students
for THEIR future not OUR past.**
--Ian Jukes, educator

Canada's performance on the global stage

PISA results

- “ Math 518 (494 global avg.)
- “ Reading 523 (496 global avg.)
- “ Science 525 (501 global avg.)

DECLINING ↘ trend

- “ Math rank 13th (down 9 spots)
- “ Reading rank 6th (down 4 spots)
- “ Science rank 8th (down 5 spots)

**Canada needs to
be innovative**

“Canada’s poor international math performance has business leaders and some educators increasingly concerned about the country’s ability to innovate and produce in a global economy...”

Alphonso, Globe & Mail, Dec. 3, 2013



**Should start with our
School Boards**

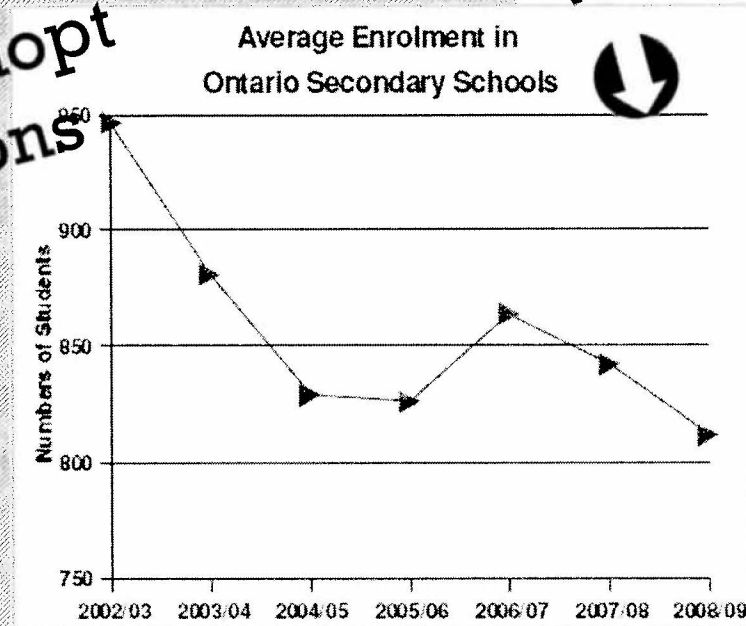
Local Issues

“ Chasing demographics is a never-ending cycle

“ Closing schools IS NOT innovative

“ SCDSB need to adopt innovative solutions”

Declining Enrollment



People for Education, 2009, "School Closings and Declining Enrollment"

**Why keep PSS
open?**

“ Benefits local students

“ Benefits the
community

“ Benefits the Simcoe
County District School
Board



Student Benefits



- “ Despite adversity
Still capturing students (1.12 grade 8 retention rate)
- “ Graduation rates are higher than some local schools (approx. 80%)
- “ Fraser institute results show positive standing in local boards
- “ Small schools offer great environments for learning

Community Benefits

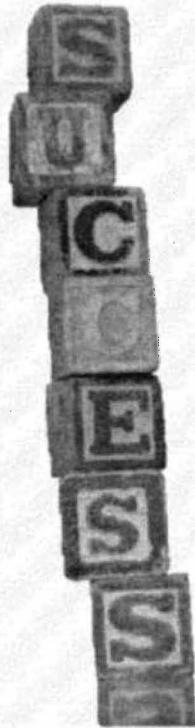


“ A school building and its grounds are more than a practical site for instruction and learning. They are also a hub for wider community activity. – Gov. of Ontario, “Ontario Education: Excellence for all, 2004

“ Closing schools quashes community vibrancy

“ To save small communities, start by saving their schools” – Paul Bennett, 2013

“ PSS links to community and adds to community well-being



SCDSB Benefits

- “ Cost savings
- “ Reduction in community upheaval and lack of confidence in board
- “ Exciting partnership opportunities
- “ Opportunity to focus on innovating CORE programs
- “ Establishment as an INNOVATIVE school board

**INNOVATIVE
alternatives to
closure**

Schools
become:

- “ Community Hubs
 (“anchor tenant”)
- “ Centres for
 Community Learning
- “ Community Partners
- “ Entrepreneurial



**Trustees and
Board Members**

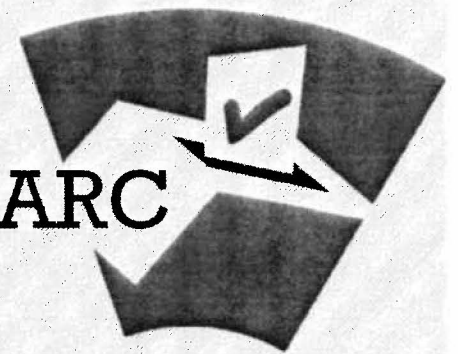
The mission of an ARC is to find the solution that

“ *Addresses issues identified*

“ *Best meets needs of communities and*

“ *Recognizes value to student as most important criteria*

“ Please respect the ARC recommendation :
VOTE for INNOVATION





**Challenge to the
SCDSB**

“ Given current research that clearly demonstrates the **BENEFITS** of keeping PSS for students, for the community and for the SCDSB, I ask the Board to rise to the challenge of supporting **INNOVATION**, and partner with us to revitalize our education system.



In conclusion

- ☑ **KEEP PSS OPEN**
- ☑ **RETHINK** consolidation and closure practices
- ☑ **USE** funds to hire a full-time partnership developer
- ☑ **EXPLORE** opportunities
- ☑ **ADOPT** a 21st century model of education that uses critical thinking, embraces **INNOVATION** and prepares our children

A collage of papers and a question mark. The word "Questions" is written vertically on a tilted paper. Below it, a 3D question mark is shown on a surface, casting a shadow. The background consists of various overlapping papers with different textures and patterns.

Questions

“

Thank you for your time.

Georgia Grundmanis and
Carly Gardiner

Delegation Outline

We are two grade eleven Midland Secondary Students and we are going to present a delegation in the form of a PowerPoint, outlining the following:

- The amazing facilities and programs at MSS
 - The program improvements if MSS and PSS were to combine
 - Increase in the Frazer report at MSS
 - Mundy's Bay closure comparison
 - Student Satisfaction (sports, clubs, and academic improvements)
 - How other options are less effective
 - We cannot streamline students
 - Bus complications
 - We will be a strong competitor with other schools instead of being two incomplete schools
- Georgia Grundmanis (geor6610@scdsb.on.ca) and Carly Gardiner (carl3630@scdsb.on.ca)

Gerard Desroches



REVIEW OF OPTIONS

Gerard Desroches

General Information

- MSS
 - OTG: 1401
 - Population: 601
- PSS
 - OTG: 705
 - Population: 407
- Total 1008
- Projections show population to remain stable for the next 10 years (between 1000-1100 students)

High School Students in Area

- MSS: 601
- PSS: 407
- St. Theresa's: 1041
- LeCaron: 150

- Total ~2200 students

- St. Theresa's and LeCaron aggressively recruiting and promoting their schools through advertisement which erodes more and more of the students population for SCDSB

Scenario 1: Staff Option

- 100% PSS students go to MSS

2014

$$601 \text{ (MSS)} + 407 \text{ (PSS)} = 1008$$

$$1008/1401 = \text{72\% Utilization}$$

13% below 85% target utilization in the best case!

- With no possibility of ever reaching 85% due to OTG

Scenario 2: Consolidate at PSS

- 100% MSS students go to PSS

2014

$$601 \text{ (MSS)} + 407 \text{ (PSS)} = 1008$$

$$1008/705 = 143\% \text{ Utilization}$$

Well above 85% target utilization and 43% over capacity

Scenario 1: Staff Option with losses

- 75% PSS students go to MSS

2014

$$601 \text{ (MSS)} + 305 \text{ (PSS)} = 906$$

$$906 / 1401 = \text{65\% Utilization}$$

20% below 85% target utilization

- With no possibility of ever reaching 85% due to OTG

Scenario 2: Consolidate at PSS with losses

- 75% MSS students go to PSS

2014

$$451 \text{ (MSS)} + 407 \text{ (PSS)} = 858$$

$$858/705 = 122\% \text{ Utilization}$$

Still well above 85% target utilization and 22% over capacity!

Staff Option

- ✘ Close newest school (MSS 1955, PSS 1969)
- ✘ Move students to a school that they don't want to attend
- ✘ Loss of even more students to surrounding schools (and school boards)
- ✘ No funding for new school, then still left with school of 1401 OTG, 85% target NOT achievable
- ✔ Find local partners to lower OTG capacity
 - Who's responsibility is it?

Staff Option

- Retrofit of MSS at a cost of \$21.6 million
 - Not all renewal needs fulfilled with this amount
 - Funding NOT guaranteed
- New School at a cost of \$28.4 million
 - Funding NOT guaranteed

Funding Projections and Requests

- MSS: \$23.7 million for renewal projects over next 10 years
 - \$2.37 million/year
- PSS: \$14.8 million for renewal projects over next 10 years
 - \$1.48 million/year
- Retrofit of MSS: \$21.6 million
 - Immediate request
- New school construction: \$28.4 million
 - Immediate request

Partnerships

- Need to review the requirements
 - 10 year lease
 - Lengthy approval process (years lost!)

Does this seem reasonable?

- 2 accommodation reviews could occur during this time
- Shorter lease periods should be explored
- With long approval process, potential partners have to time to look for alternative option
- Need to work with potential partners, not against them

Extended French Program

- Penetang has always had a large French population and presence
 - Even with LeCaron in town, PSS still actively maintains a strong French program
- PSS Extended French program students high performers
 - Students choose to attend PSS
- Program is successful at PSS because of support from the community

ARC Recommendation

- Keep both schools open
 - Students stay at the school they want to attend
 - Students stay in SCDSB population
 - Much smaller yearly funding requests than for new school construction
- Right-size buildings
 - Reduces OTG capacity
 - 85% target possible
 - With more community partners in the schools, trust is built, operational costs are lowered
- Shared programming
 - Program currently in place
 - Only running for the last 2 years – more time needed for this to be allowed grow

Summary

- Pupil accommodations can be called every 5 years
 - Limits should be set on the ability to be subjected to consecutive reviews
 - PSS and MSS have been included in the last 3 reviews
- 3 accommodation reviews in the last 10 years does NOT build trust for parents and students making decisions about choice of school
- ARC recommendation was developed with community members, parents, students and local governments input
 - Realistic cross-section of both communities
- ARC recommendation is the correct choice!

Diana Dorion

First I would like to acknowledge the work that the members of the ARC undertook. I feel that the elected members did listen to the community members and I would like to thank them for that. Mainly because I say give credit where credit is due, but also because I am thankful that someone has shown they have been listening to us. The ARC recommendation gives the best opportunity for any future success, and we should be afforded the same opportunities that other schools have been allotted and time to work on strategies to improve the current situation before any schools close. But we need to be supported in those opportunities and strategies at all levels. Solutions were provided by the ARC in 2009 that are similar to this ARC's recommendation, but the board took no action to address or prevent any of the concerns with PSS & MSS. Since then both schools have sought partnerships and solutions, but they need support at all levels. The board should be actively pursuing partners and helping the communities and schools with this approach. The board has held Partnership and information meetings in other communities and given them time to try to find solutions through collaboration. I think it would be beneficial if we could be given the same treatment. Perhaps even look into the option of an Outreach Coordinator through Ministry funding to explore options for sharing underutilized space and support our school as a community hub. This should take place first there may be options out there that the Board had not actively pursued through public meetings.

Certain motions brought forward over the years give me the uneasy feeling that the board has no interest in listening to public input or developing alternative ideas and pursuing options in regards to PSS/MSS. This feeling is reinforced and my distrust in the Board's direction of ARCs is low because of opinions I have read on past ARCs. In 2010, Michelle Locke was the School Council Chair for Penetang. At this time she stated that she had served on two ARCs and was questioning why she did "since the board doesn't even need to take the community's input into consideration." She also stated that "Public consultation is mandated by the Province, but it is redundant to some of the trustees that sit around that table." She advised people to make informed choices when they voted for trustees, because our kids are worth it. She convinced me that she was for the kids. I can only hope she remembers being on the other side and the frustration of not being listened to, when she felt like no one should participate in ARCs, "if only to prove that we are tired of being used and ignored." Now is the chance to prove that you are all listening, that we do have a voice, and it does matter.

Politics is what's wrong with the schools and system. Stereotyped judgements are made against smaller schools with the assumption that bigger is better. When trustee Jodi Lloyd brought forward a motion to close PSS she said that "trustees' primary responsibility is to manage resources to the best advantage of the students." What is more advantageous to the students than having a high school in the town they reside? Just recently, in the paper, a trustee was quoted as saying "we're not here to save communities...when it comes down to it; we have to do what's best for the students." Okay, a few thoughts on that idea...okay, I get you're not here to save communities, but you are also not here to weaken communities unnecessarily. Also, our community is not in trouble at this time, but removing PSS will definitely change things, it will bring a disadvantage to Penetang and to the students you are referring to. The value to the student and the value to the community are closely tied together. This is even recognized in the Good Places To Learn report where it states that "In recognition of the important role schools play in strengthening rural and urban communities and the importance of healthy community for student success, it is expected that decisions consider the value of the school to the community; taking into account the government initiatives aimed at strengthening communities. Removing PSS could have a ripple effect that you cannot anticipate, or worse, a scenario already forewarned but not heeded. Removing PSS will not only have a negative effect on our community, our families, property values, ect...but it may have a negative impact on the surrounding communities, the recognition of Midland/Penetang being a joint urban node, losses to the board in both numbers and funding.

I also don't think that closing PSS best resembles what the 4 municipalities are trying to accomplish through the Huronia Economic Alliance. We must support each other if all wish to be successful in all aspects of the economy. If one falls, the others may follow.

I think there are lots of opportunities to be had by leaving both schools open and providing support to seek out creative solutions that could better benefit everyone. I believe that the board has the opportunity to do some really innovative changes to address the needs of everyone; they just have to want to at least try. The ministry just announced 1.25 billion in funding over 3 years for school boards to address renewal needs of their facility inventory. Changes are being made to the funding model. Revisions will be made to improve support for small schools, boards with smaller average school size, and high declining enrollment jurisdictions. The ministry will no longer recognize closed schools as creating eligibility for new school grants. The majority of the items listed in the capitol plan have been listed for several years, and the indicators from the ministry don't show positive for funding of a new school. Two of the priority projects have been listed since 2008.

MSS has been designated as the "have" school and PSS as the "have not" school, and this is the way the two schools are presented by the Board, in the media, in their reports, and during this ARC and the history of the ARC process in this area.

I have never felt that PSS doesn't offer my children ample course choices. With a four year program, in order to have the required courses for future post-secondary choices, you need to ensure you are maximizing that time with the right pre-requisites. Offering more alternative courses takes the numbers out of the fundamental courses. There needs to be a healthy balance of course choices, not an overwhelming one.

Curriculum is important, but it is not enough. Schools must also focus on relationships between staff and students, strong links between the school and students' families, reflective connections to community-based services, and the physical environment of the school.

I truly believe that closing PSS is not in the best interest of the students. I know it is definitely not what is in the best interest of my own children and I feel that as their mother I have a better judgement and more concern in that area. Money is the most pressing factor in the staff option. It becomes an issue of good housekeeping – maintenance of the building, repairs before failure – taking care of what you have. PSS has done a pretty good job in this area. The Ontario government stated its intention to bring a greater focus to the management of its expenses and to delay or slow down some new spending. The solution offered by the Board doesn't utilize the best financial option available.

My child who is most immediately affected by this decision has expressed vehemently that he refuses to attend MSS – his opinion is important to me and thankfully on this topic we agree 100% - he will not attend MSS, as will none of my other children. If my children cannot attend school in the town I chose to purchase our home in, then I am left with two choices – move to another school board or home school my children. However it is unfortunate that neither of these options addresses a solution for the potential loss I will see in the value of my home, which is walking distance to PSS.

Choosing the staff option may be more detrimental to the Boards two high schools. I am worried about potential down falls and the scenarios the staff option may create. The Board is delusional if they think they will retain all the students that are attending PSS. We can guarantee that you will students, the question is, how many will you lose? Apparently there are approximately half the PSS population comes from different school boards. These students may choose to return to those boards, and new students may choose to just attend the secondary school under their current board. I am not of another school board but my children will be lost revenue for the board at the secondary level. How many other parents and students will think similar to the way I do. How many of your elementary kids will you lose at the high school level? That has the potential for creating bigger problems for MSS than they are faced with right now. When MSS doesn't improve their capacity numbers the way you are hoping to, where

will that leave MSS? When the numbers don't improve at MSS or only minimally, the funding continues to decline and the current issues remain.

The board will not get the money from the Ministry and they will not be able offer improved course selection. In fact, the course selection may decrease over time, which would see more students leave. And during this time general maintenance funding would not increase and the problems would only grow until MSS became unsustainable. Meanwhile, the students you lost have now flooded the other school boards and given them what they need for their funding strategies. Who knows, maybe our students will flood St. T's enough they might find it worth their while to purchase the old PSS building. Or there is the other possibility of the Protestant board wanting to scoop up the opportunity to have a way of retaining their students all the way to grade 12, and potentially attract new ones into a Protestant HS. And where will all of this leave MSS? Who knows, this decision could be what MSS will see as the beginning of its end. I have faith in my fellow community members and I believe Penetang will rally together to come up with other options for our town, ourselves, and our children.

Diana Dorion

Benjamin Bestvater

Argument - That the future of students in the Midland/ Penetanguishene district would be better off if Midland Secondary School and Penetanguishene Secondary School were consolidated on one site

1. The scdsb intends to introduce AP courses as an option for students, yet at MSS and PSS, the current programming is being cut. If more options are better for students, the school board should ensure that current programming needs are met
2. Proposals have been put forward to bus students between schools at lunch to allow greater programming, yet this model is not a viable option, because of low student willingness to participate. Students want to be at one school, and not have to spend their lunches bussing back and forth.
3. There is a proposal to tear down parts of both schools, but this may not be a good long term option, as both schools may need to be amalgamated in the future due to demographics
4. In order to ensure that students remain in the SCDSB as they enter secondary school, there must be a school that appears to have sufficient programming needs for all students. Neither MSS nor PSS fully fulfill this.
5. If both schools remain open, there is a risk that the two schools will progressively acquire certain characteristics, as one may be seen as “more academic”, “more technology based” “more spirited” than the other. This will not be good for students, as they enter secondary school.

Benjamin Bestvater