

Report to: Lambton Kent District School Board
From: Accommodation Review Committee Ridgetown Area of Schools
Date: April 13, 2010
Subject: Recommendations from the Ridgetown and Area ARC

Trustees passed the following Motion at the October 13, 2009 Regular Board Meeting as part of the October Pupil Accommodation Report:

"That the Board approve the commencement of the Accommodation Review process and the establishment of an Accommodation Review Committee for the Ridgetown Area of Schools, including Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School, Ridgetown Public School and Ridgetown District High School.

Committee Members:

The following members were appointed to serve on the Ridgetown Area ARC by the Trustees of the Lambton Kent District School Board at the October 27, 2009 Regular Board Meeting.

Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School Representatives:

Principal: Carol Kloostra
Parent Representative: Jane Lawton
Community Representative: Jim Brown

Ridgetown Public School Representatives:

Principal: Todd Tiffin
Parent Representative: Heather Simpson
Community Representative: John Ford

Ridgetown District High School Representatives:

Principal: Mark Hunt
Parent Representative: Susan Kelner
Community Representative: Renee Geluk

First Nations Representative: Katharine Hopkins

Municipal Representatives: Marsha Coyne, Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Facilitators: Gayle Stucke, Director of Education
Jim Costello, Superintendent of Education
Resource Personnel: Lorie Vandeschoot, Planning and Reporting Officer
Tracey Childs, Recorder

Public Meetings:

The Ridgetown Area ARC held four public meetings: November 23, 2009 at Ridgetown District High School, January 25, 2010 at Ridgetown Public School, February 24, 2010 at Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School and March 29, 2010 at Ridgetown District High School. Attendance of the public averaged approximately 50 individuals at the first three meetings while approximately 70 participated in the final meeting.

Additional study opportunities:

As a result of questions from ARC members and members of the public two events were scheduled: An interactive E-Learning workshop was held simultaneously at Dresden and Ridgetown High Schools on January 19, 2010 where parents and others interested learned about courses offered on line as well as experiencing a Virtual Classroom situation linking students from two or more schools within the district. An interest in learning about the experience of other boards which had reorganized schools into JK-6 and 7-12 configurations led to trips to Goderich on February 3 or 5 for members of the ARC and teacher and student representatives from each of the schools in the Dresden and Ridgetown study areas.

Communication:

An Accommodation Review Committee link was created on the Lambton Kent District School Board website (www.lkdsb.net). The October 2009 Pupil Accommodation Report and Appendices were posted there as well as the Agenda, Record of Action, School Profiles, handouts and power point presentations for each meeting. A section for Questions and Answers received from the public, committee members and via email was posted in this section as well. All questions received a response within a few days and were shared with the ARC members at subsequent meetings.

Meeting #1 November 23, 2009 held at Ridgetown District High School

- A folder of information was distributed and reviewed by the Director with the assistance of the Planning and Reporting Officer. The folder contained the following documents: Board Policy and Regulations on Pupil Accommodation/School Closure; Terms of Reference for the Accommodation Review Committee; and School Information Profiles.
- Committee members were encouraged to review the School Information Profiles in preparation for the next meeting.
- Demographic data including enrolment history and projections, birth rate trends, change in school aged population and school area catchment maps was provided and explained for each school.
- The importance of ongoing communication among the ARC and the broader school communities was stressed. Strategies discussed included: school newsletters; the LKDSB website link to ARC; School Council meetings; local media coverage; a standing agenda item providing an opportunity for questions and input from the public at every meeting; and letters or e-mail messages to committee members, Board staff or Trustees.

Meeting #2 - January 25, 2010 held at Ridgetown Public School

- School Profiles were reviewed for each school with input for changes or additions made by committee members. Representatives of each school spoke to the value to students, board, and community. It was evident that there is pride and confidence in each of the schools within the study.
- The following issues were identified by the committee: declining enrolment in both elementary and secondary schools; smaller budgets resulting in fewer staff and program opportunities; students leaving town to attend other secondary schools.

Meeting #3 – February 24, 2010 held at Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School

- Issues identified at the previous meeting were reviewed.
- A brainstorming session resulted in the identification of eight possible scenarios to address the identified issues. Further discussion then reduced the list to three options that the committee agreed to investigate further.

Meeting #4 – March 29, 2010 held at Ridgetown District High School

- A week in advance of the meeting, ARC members received the Agenda and a summary of the options identified at the previous meeting. For each option, pertinent data was provided, including projected enrolment for the 2011-12 school year, capacity of the schools and estimated transportation costs.
- Superintendent, Jim Costello, led the committee through the process of analyzing the pros and cons of each of the options with a record of the discussion recorded on flip charts and projected on the large screen. All members were involved in presenting their views and listening to the opinions of others.
- Members of the public were invited to share their opinions on preferred options.
- Options were gradually eliminated until the members reached consensus on a recommendation.

Options Studied

A – Schools Remain Status Quo;

B – Consolidate two elementary schools into one JK-8 school, leave secondary school 9-12;

C – Consolidate two elementary schools into one JK-6 school, with 7-12 in secondary school.

Note: Pros and Cons discussed and considered for each Option are posted on the website.

RECOMMENDATION

It was the unanimous decision of the voting members of the Ridgetown Accommodation Review Committee to recommend the following:

1. The two elementary schools are consolidated into one new elementary school.
2. Elementary education is structured with JK to Grade 6 students at the site of the current Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School and Grade 7 and 8 students at Ridgetown District High School.
3. To address concerns and enhancements that are required as a result of the school closure and reconfiguration of grades in the two remaining Ridgetown Schools including:
 - Safety issues, such as, bus area, crossing guards and sidewalks;
 - Continuation of special programs, such as, Special Education and Delaware Language;
 - Continuation of community partnerships, such as, Ontario Early Years and Day Care;
 - Naming process to include the word “Moravian” as part of the new school name;
 - Facility improvements at Ridgetown District High School, such as, new science labs and outdoor asphalt “play” area for grade 7 to 8 students;
 - Facility enhancements at the current Ridgeview Moravian Elementary School, such as, new gym and new washrooms.
4. Parents, staff, community members, and Delaware First Nations partners are involved in the transition process, including the naming of the new school, the design of the facilities, and the consolidation of programs, resources, school traditions and School Councils.