

Received April 25, 2016 via email
Hi Trish

I just wanted to send along a slightly revised version of my statement for the record.

Thanks very much

Brad Cullis

I have no children of my own. And I didn't attend s.c.i.t.s. I don't live or work in the neighbourhood. I have no personal connection to the school but, its importance is not lost on me. I speak from a planning perspective and as a resident who wants only what's best for this city and I view this potential school closing, as a watershed moment.

It should be self evident that the school board should work in conjunction with the city. After all, the success of the former is intrinsically bound to the fate of the latter. You should take into consideration the city's official master plan and the role s.c.i.t.s has in supporting that vision.

The community impact and assessment review, commissioned by the city, regarding a potential closure of each school respectively, and the wider implications to both areas of the city, was comprehensive and impartial, with the consensus supporting continued operations at s.c.i.t.s.

It's an important endorsement by the city that gives legitimacy to the grass roots support s.c.i.t.s has had from the beginning.

With that said, This neighbourhood is rough around the edges. Its decline fated by an act of God when in 1953 a tornado made its mark. Leaving much of the city's downtown heritage piled in rubble and ruin.

Soon after, The suburban tide came in. with the opening of the Lambton mall in 1971. The economic polarity of the city, shifted from downtown to the east and the city grew around it.

In the early 1970's The provincial government initiated the "Ontario downtown renewal programme" in response to creeping blight left by the exodus of business and residents, for the greener pastures of cheap land, surrounding these new suburban malls.

In the late 70's The city partnered with private developers and Eaton's department store to try and stem the tide in the diminishing downtown. Eaton's centre Sarnia opened in 81. These malls carved up downtowns and were in many ways, the antithesis to main street, quaint, boutique shopping. In the end, the malls couldn't compete with their suburban counterparts connivance and didn't realize the tide had already turned. Eaton's ultimately failed to account for the larger cultural trends that lead to the retailers demise. bringing down with it, ours, and many other downtowns across the province.

The decline has been slow and steady here. Hollowing out the city. Eroding public and civic space at the same time settling and expanding the perimeter. Leaving the centre to neglect and decay. S.c.i.t.s has stood witness through good times and bad. It's currently bookended by two examples of shameful civic negligence in the form of the former general hospital and Devine st. Public school.

Blight of this kind is a black hole that grows out of forgotten places. It's contagious. It deteriorates neighbourhoods and in that void other more serious social ills grow and expand.

Fertile soil for substance abuse, addiction, criminal activity and mental illness.

Property values decline. Business stagnates. People who can leave...do. The tax base contracts but the services required increase. More police presence, a larger burden on the health care system. We still have to maintain and light the streets. These cost don't show up on your ledger but, cost the tax payer just the same. It's a ripple that makes waves at a time when both downtown and Mitton village are experiencing a resurgence.

The art gallery, the announcement of a Major redevelopment of the bayside mall, first Friday, art walk, new housing developments and new businesses. the reopening of centennial park. Are all affirmations of the positive change taking place.

This debated school closure is in response to the unfortunate series of events stated earlier. Set in motion long ago, the consequences and legacy of those decisions, destabilized the neighbourhood. Apparent now in retrospect. The fate of S.c.i.t.s, and it's importance to the long term viability of the south end will be equally definitive. It should not be abandoned for any short term, perceived benefits st. Clair may offer

The A.R.C stated at the March 9th meeting that "the school board doesn't influence demographic change or where people choose to live" but, in this case, it most certainly does!

It's imperative that you, the trustees, acknowledge your part in shaping the city and hear the pleas of its citizens. This school, if it closes, threatens the tenuous gains that have begun to be realized.

S.c.i.t.s is ideally situated, located Between downtown and Mitton village, it bridges the two and unifies the whole.

Sarnia has had trouble retaining and attracting residents because our city has been culturally deficient. lacking an identity. S.c.i.t.s punches above its weight in this regard. It contributes much to the arts and cultural vibrancy of downtown and the surrounding area. The heart of any city, and a bell weather for its overall Health and prosperity, is a cities downtown.

A determining factor for retaining the soon to be mobile, student graduates of tomorrow and for attracting others to resettle here. If we don't commit and invest in culture, we lose out to other cities that are investing... and accept a lower quality of life than we might well have.

From a planning perspective, S.c.i.t.s. Is a primary contributor to the liveliness of the neighbourhood and district. The students, teachers and staff, parents and community that frequent the school make this area what it is. The nuanced interactions between people, the presence of feet and eyes and its self policing effect. The economic benefits derived from the ebb and flow of people in and out. The rhythm of the street and the life that result, are led in large part by the schools presence. This effect could be multiplied two fold by choosing s.c.i.t.s. over st. Clair.

The argument for its closure seems to be one of demographic decline and financial constraints. I'd argue that what savings you might realize by closing s.c.i.t.s would be trivial to the insuing socioeconomic and cultural fallout the tax payer would be left with to bear.

The stated "beliefs" of the l.k.d.s.b:

- public education is an investment in the futures of all peoples and community.
- all students can learn and are entitled to quality instruction -a safe and caring learning environment is strengthened by embracing diversity and respecting self, others and the world around us.
- student success is achieved through shared responsibility of staff, students, community and First Nations partners.
- accountability is obtained through open dialogue, transparency and fiscal responsibility.
- we are committed to innovation and continuous improvement.

I fail to see how those beliefs aren't endemic of what s.c.i.t.s and the neighbourhood surrounding it, stand for...

The capital expenditures required in renewing this building may seem prohibitive at first but Old buildings inform us of who we are and where we come from. It connects us to the past and brings context to our lives. It gives meaning and a sense of place and self, that only accrues slowly with the passing of years. The human side of architecture, all too often is discarded in the name of progress.

If underpinning is required and asbestos abatement to make the building safe and sound. Spend the smart Money that you and the city will get a return on...It's a symbiotic relationship. . . the resiliency of the city and school board are reliant on each other collaborating.

Decisions made with good intentions and on incomplete data and no regard for the unquantifiable benefits is foolish. Stepping into the unknown, and condemning this fine school on the hopes of "unassured" federal money, given the public outcry in this age of apathy is, contrary to the values and beliefs we should be instilling in the youth of today. You should consider what is mutually beneficial for the city, community, and students, that hopefully will identify with sarnia and choose to make it their home here when the time comes.

That being said, this building will stand long after your decision. Either as a beacon of civic pride. Illuminating hearts and minds for decades to come. or shuttered. Casting a very long shadow on the residents hopes and dreams for what this city could be.

Thank you for you time and your hopeful consideration.