

Address to the Lambton Kent District School Board Concerning the Consolidation of Sarnia St. Clair Secondary School and Sarnia Collegiate Institute and Technical School

May 10th 2016

This is a picture of Walkerville Collegiate Institute in Windsor. It was built in 1922 and still thrives. It is a full secondary school for grades nine to twelve providing a variety of Ontario Secondary School curriculum courses. It also is home to the Walkerville Centre for the Creative Arts (WCCA) which has programmes in Drama, Dance, Visual Arts, Media and Vocal for secondary students. All of the WCCA courses require auditions to get into the programme.

This is a picture of Honourable W.C. Kennedy Collegiate which was built in 1929 and still thrives. It is a full secondary school of grades nine to twelve located in the heart of Windsor and affectionately nicknamed 'The Castle' because of its location and architecture.

The Greater Essex County District School Board has maintained these unique buildings with great pride, by adapting to the times. They have added a STEPS Programme (Community Living) to Walkerville Collegiate serving more than 30 developmentally-challenged students, as well as a co-op programme. Kennedy Collegiate was refurbished in 1996 to maintain its unique style of architecture – the towers were repaired, a new roof was put on the gym, there was chimney upgrade and brick restoration and library renovations. To quote its website it is “a school steeped so deep in its tradition and loyalty”.

Sarnia Collegiate is also steeped in tradition and loyalty, as you have heard and seen over the last six months in this community and beyond. But whereas the Greater Essex Board honours its historic schools' architecture and history, the Lambton Kent Board evidently does not, at least not in the recommendations of its administration.

In reading the final report of staff printed on April 12th 2016, I was disturbed to find for the first time, extensive information on pages 30 to 33, regarding costs to

bringing both schools up to code. **Yet Building Code Compliance is not required. SCITS is a legal non-conforming building. It is safe now, will be safe for the year administration suggests the combined student population work there. And it will be into the future.** 5.8 million dollars to eliminate asbestos which is behind laminated walls is not required. 7.6 million dollars to eliminate 'dead end corridors' is also not necessary. I quote from the Province of Ontario's 2012 Building Code Compendium section 1.1.2.7 re Existing Buildings – "This article describes the extent of renovation subject to the Building Code: only the areas or portions of a building being renovated, or other parts of a building adversely affected by that renovation need comply with the requirements of the Code: all other areas or portions need not comply with the Code and may remain unchanged."

Yet, as quoted in the local media, the Chair of the Board, Jane Bryce, talked about dead-end corridors. It seems to me that administration has created a solution to a problem which does not exist in order to bolster its agenda. And, in so doing it has bamboozled Trustees into believing such work is mandatory - to the tune of thirteen million dollars.

If every building in the country were brought up to code we would not have Toronto's Old City Hall, Queen's Park or the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

The basic problem here is that we have two student bodies that need to be amalgamated in order to save one million dollars a year in operating costs, regardless of which school is closed. The difference between operating SCITS versus St. Clair is only some \$250,00 more in heating and electricity at SCITS, but as has already been mentioned at earlier gatherings much of this could possibly be accounted for in the cost of air-conditioning at SCITS.

Spending fourteen million to upgrade St. Clair is nearly 56 times that cost and thus would take the equivalent of 56 years to recoup. I also found it disturbing that Mr. McKay talked favourably at an earlier meeting about the ½ billion dollars available to access from the provincial Consolidation Fund, as if tax dollars didn't all come from the same source, the tax-payer. It seems that some folk see the closing of schools and hospitals, offers an opportunity to building new schools and

hospitals. Also, Mr. Costello's comment that 44 million from the province to build a giant school in Kingsville was a 'game-changer', was disturbing.

Surely, whether from Kent or from Lambton County, Trustees have been made aware over the last six months of the feelings of our city in its report to the Board, and its citizens in their reaction in media and on lawns, to the staff recommendation; in how the closing of SCITS will impact our city and its 73,000 residents. Windsorites and their Board take pride in their schools' history and architecture.

Keep SCITS open, close St. Clair as a secondary school – and save tons of money. Include at SCITS a Sarnia Centre for the Creative Arts a la Walkerville Collegiate - and help our teenagers thrive.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Wood McDonald.