

Madam Chairman and Board Members

Written without prejudice or malice:

First I would like to open by pointing out that nobody challenges the fact that the two school bodies have to be amalgamated to sustain programmes and be economically viable. It is not about which school programme is better or more successful but about which building is better suited to house the combined populations and give the students the best opportunity to be successful and have an enjoyable time while getting their education.

The rest of my presentation deals with how I and most of the public perceive the justification by the administration of their initial recommendation.

The procedure as seen by the general public

The Board announced that SCITS would be closed. Then the Board announced that it would have public meetings for the public to have input and make recommendations. The announcement was that there would be two meetings open to the public and that a committee to make recommendations would be formed. No request as to who would comprise or be put on this committee or who would choose the committee.

First public meeting held in the gymnasium at St.Clair.

About two hundred people attended. There were no handouts or information for the public handed out. The people were informed that it was a committee meeting and they were not to interrupt it. For two and a half hours the public were forced to listen to an unending display of Mr. McKay's mythological figures on the costs of keeping SCITS open. At no time did he do an apple to apple comparison of the two buildings or what had to be done at to make St Clair viable. The members of this ARC committee, some of whom had only been appointed a week or less before, were being briefed on Mr McKay's choice and not given fact and figures by which they could evaluate both buildings. Meanwhile the public which had been invited had no way to challenge his figures. Only the chosen committee could ask questions at this point.

When finally some from the audience, who still remained, had a chance to speak they questioned about an auditorium. They were informed that an auditorium and track would be built only if the Board could get a Ministry of Education approval for a special grant. One got the impression that the answer was to appease the public but had no chance of success.

Many concerns were raised such as the boundaries and bussing and the impact on the community. None of which got an encouraging reply. The Board chairperson spoke to the meeting only to say that the board trusted the administration's advice and that those who were suspect of the figures and process should too.

Second meeting.

This meeting was well attended. This time there was an adequate sound system and a handout put out by the save SCITS committee which gave some comparative figures. At least the public attending had something with which they could get an idea of what the whole thing was about.

There were several good presentations and then Mr Girardi allowed open presentations. Many of SCITS student and former students spoke emotionally about several programmes at the school which could not be duplicated at any other school without an auditorium, swimming pool etc. They showed their frustration with the apparent one sided process and although some presentations were long I was proud of them for showing the love of their school and that they were not afraid to voice it.

Although the chairman of the board spoke in defence of the administration and that she supported their recommendations, she did not acknowledge any of the good presentations presented by the public. She did acknowledge the one or two people who openly criticized and challenged the administrations figures in her chastisement of the audience.

I did not attend the next Board meeting at which the administration from all reports again built a case for closing SCITS and nothing to inform the public what had to be done at St Clair.

I did attend the next meeting and heard two good presentations, one by the Sarnia Council's representative and one by Mr. Louie Mele. Two board member at least showed some interest and asked a very deep thoughtful question "Why did Sarnia not build sidewalk in the St Clair feeder subdivision when it was built?" and the other member wanted to know whether any city councillors were present. Mr. McKay was asked about funding for an auditorium and this time assured the public that the request for funding for an auditorium would be made in the one request for the upgrading of St Clair. When asked the size of the auditorium he did not quote a dollar figure but stated that the architect would determine the size. This was not too reassuring given the fact that no figures other than fourteen million for the complete restoration and refurbishing of St Clair had ever been given. We do not know how much is being proposed for renovations and for building the promised auditorium; track; and suggested parking lot expansion.

These are my observations as a member of the public and a tax payer about how your process has taken place. Not a very level playing field from the public point of view.

Based on these observations of an un level playing field plus the fact that the administration has not given any information with a balanced comparison of the two buildings or actual costs for making their decision or how much savings can to be had I would propose that the Board continue with their plan to move the St Clair students to SCITS for next year. In this way the administration can determine, really, what has to be done to upgrade St Clair and get the real figures. They can also decide what size of an auditorium they will build and a projected cost. In this way you would be able to show the savings the Board would actually have over the costs of keeping SCITS open and doing necessary repairs (not the over exaggerated repairs Mr McKay used)

This in my mind would at least be a reasonable approach to easing the minds of the public who believe that the Board is rushing the agenda. Nothing would be

lost for the students. The costs to the Board would be no different but the public would get the true picture of the actual costs and whether savings would be much greater by choosing to close St Clair or SCITS .

Respectfully

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