

Madame Chair, Trustees

My name is Tim Knapp, and I am here representing the 17 members of the St. Clair School Council.

I do not envy the decision that you have to make. You have a difficult task to balance between the needs of over 22000 students across 65 schools in Lambton Kent and the wishes of the communities in which these schools exist. You have a mandate to ensure the safety and high quality of education for all of those students at a time where enrolment is declining and funding from the province is correspondingly decreasing.

As a taxpayer and parent of a current St. Clair student (and two students of the future amalgamated school), I am fully supportive of the decision to consolidate SCITS and St. Clair. The combined school will offer greater educational opportunities to all students while allowing the Board to reduce operating costs. This amalgamation needs to take place quickly to improve the quality of education for the students involved. Also, in the best interest of the students, I urge you to move quickly with naming the new school. This will allow them to gel as a new student body in the fall.

As you well know, the main point of contention is which school building to consolidate into, whether it be St. Clair or SCITS. Both facilities offer great advantages to our future students but, both buildings have their drawbacks as well. SCITS is a beautiful building with many amenities that will likely not be replicated in any new school. However, those amenities and the age of the building come at a cost of higher utilities, higher maintenance and, over the next 10 years, higher capital costs. St. Clair has its own advantages including more space, a greenhouse, and most importantly it has a far larger student population within walking distance of the school. This demographic cannot be ignored when you consider the positive health benefits as well as the social benefits of having a school close to where the students live.

It will be a hard choice for you to make but I trust that you will make the right decision that offers the greatest opportunities for all of the students under your charge. Whatever your decision on May 10th, myself and the rest of the School Council at St. Clair are excited for the future of our new combined school and the opportunities that it will provide to our kids.

In closing I would like to thank you for your dedication and passion for the success of our children. Thank you.

Tim Knapp