

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT

January 19, 2010

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

School District No. 57 (Prince George) must decide which of two worlds it wants to inhabit. One world ignores enrolment decline, imposed financial challenges and overcapacity. Living in this world is an unacceptable existence of inaction that deprives students of the educational opportunity they deserve. The other world offers the promise of sustainability, as challenges are explained, confronted and addressed so that learning continues to be provided that enriches the life of each student.

In response to the significant financial challenges and the anticipated impact of the structural deficit<sup>1</sup> on school district operations presented to the Board of Education at a special public meeting on September 22, 2009, the following motion was passed by the Board at its regular public meeting of October 13, 2009:

1. *That the Superintendent of Schools establish and chair a District Sustainability Committee to prepare a report to be presented to the Board at a special public meeting on January 19, 2010, with a progress report at an in-camera meeting in December.*
2. *That the report include recommendations and a mid-to-long-term plan to direct district operations with respect to, but not limited to, the following:*
  - a. *Support structures and services*
  - b. *School configurations*
  - c. *School viability, including recommended closures*
  - d. *School and feeder school boundaries*

The District Sustainability Committee (DSC) established the following filters to guide its consultation and work:

1. Effect on student learning
2. Financial viability
3. Equity<sup>2</sup>
4. Sustainability<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A structural deficit is the negative difference between anticipated revenues from all sources and anticipated expenditures that support current programs, staffing levels and number of schools.

<sup>2</sup> Equity refers to ability to access programs and services.

<sup>3</sup> Sustainability refers to the ability to fund an appropriate level of programs and services over time.

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The District Sustainability Committee spent the first half of November gathering input from the following education partners:

- Principals and vice-principals, in an open District Administrators' Meeting.
- The executive of CMAW Local 2106.
- The executive of CUPE Local 3742.
- The executive of the School District No. 57 District Parent Advisory Council.
- The executive of the Prince George and District Teachers' Association.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three Mackenzie schools.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the two schools in Valemount.
- Principals, teacher and CUPE representatives and parent advisory council chairs from the three schools in McBride and Dunster.

During the second half of November and through December, the DSC analyzed the district's financial situation in the context of enrolment decline and financial challenges. Emerging issues were fully explored. These included the Harmonized Sales Tax, the *Greenhouse Gas Target Reduction Act*, Medical Services Plan premium increases, Teachers' Pension Plan premium increases, employee benefits, including salary increases and increments, and other inflationary increases. The financial challenge facing the Board of Education for the 2010-11 school year is based on a number of underlying assumptions and is estimated to be \$7 million. This would leave, approximately, a further \$4 million of structural deficit to be eliminated in the 2011-12 to 2014-15 school years.

Schools and school operations were closely scrutinized through an analysis of class size, condition of buildings, enrolments and geographical locations. Optimal school size was examined at both the elementary and secondary levels, with the conclusion being that educational programming options and choice were enhanced in larger schools. Larger schools are able to provide greater levels of support, such as learning assistance, library resource teachers, resource teachers and teacher assistants.



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School closures, amalgamations and boundaries were considered and debated and a series of recommendations for closures were developed that would result in cost reductions of approximately \$3 million.

The first 14 recommendations are that the following schools be closed:

- Heather Park Middle School\*
- Lakewood Junior Secondary\*
- John McInnis Junior Secondary\*
- Austin Road Elementary
- Nukko Lake Elementary
- Springwood Elementary
- Salmon Valley Elementary
- Shady Valley Elementary
- Central Fort George Traditional Elementary
- Giscome Elementary
- Hixon Elementary
- Peden Hill Elementary
- Dunster Fine Arts Elementary
- Mackenzie Elementary

\* *School would re-open with different configuration and/or programming.*

School closures alone are not enough to sustain our district. They are, however, a pivotal first step. In order to meet all of the district's challenges, additional steps must be taken, including:

- **School reconfiguration**
- **School boundary relocations**
- **Single-track French Immersion and**



- **Secondary school and feeder elementary school re-alignment**

which are addressed in Recommendations 15-40, and

- **Class size target adjustments**, addressed in Recommendation 41.

Further, **structural right-sizing**, the extent of which will be dependent upon the cost reductions achieved in the previous recommendations, will also be required.

As noted above, the following recommendations address school reconfiguration and boundaries:

**Recommendation 15:** That Heather Park Middle School be reopened as a K-7 elementary school.

**Recommendation 16:** That John McInnis Jr. Secondary School be reopened as a K-7 French Immersion elementary school.

**Recommendation 17:** That French Immersion students currently located in dual track settings at Austin Road Elementary, Spruceland Elementary, College Heights Elementary and Heather Park Middle School be relocated to the new single-track French Immersion Elementary School in the John McInnis Junior Secondary site.

**Recommendation 18:** That the grade 8 and 9 Montessori Education program be relocated to Prince George Secondary School.

**Recommendation 19:** That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 10 at John McInnis Junior Secondary continue with the graduation program at Prince George Secondary School.

**Recommendation 20:** That Beverly Elementary students now in grade 8 and 9 at John McInnis Junior Secondary be moved into College Heights Secondary.

**Recommendation 21:** That Beverly Elementary catchment be included as part of the College Heights Secondary family of elementary schools.

**Recommendation 22:** That Lakewood Junior Secondary students currently in grade 8, 9, and 10 be relocated to Prince George Secondary School and Duchess Park Secondary School.



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**Recommendation 23:** That the Peden Hill Elementary catchment subdivisions of Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive be amalgamated into the College Heights Elementary Catchment.

**Recommendation 24:** That the Central Fort George Traditional Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Harwin Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 25:** That the students currently attending Central Fort George Traditional Elementary School be given the choice to attend Harwin Elementary or return to the school in their geographical catchment.

**Recommendation 26:** That Giscome Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Blackburn Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 27:** That the Hixon Elementary catchment be amalgamated into the Buckhorn Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 28:** That Blackburn Elementary, Pineview Elementary and Buckhorn Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

**Recommendation 29:** That Foothills Elementary and Quinson Elementary catchments be included as part of the D.P. Todd Secondary family of elementary schools.

**Recommendation 30:** That the Dunster Fine Arts Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the McBride Centennial Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 31:** That the Mackenzie Elementary catchment be amalgamated with the Morfee Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 32:** That the Nukko Lake and Springwood Elementary catchments be amalgamated with the catchment of the elementary school to be housed in the current Heather Park Middle School building.

**Recommendation 33:** That the Pinewood Elementary catchment be redrawn to include Westwood Elementary students who currently reside west of Ospika Boulevard.

**Recommendation 34:** That the Westwood catchment be redrawn to include the Peden Hill catchment, except for students living in the Starlane, Charella Gardens and Barnes Drive subdivisions and the area west of Ospika Boulevard.



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**Recommendation 35:** That Van Bien Elementary, Westwood Elementary and Pinewood Elementary be included in the Prince George Secondary family of schools.

**Recommendation 36:** That Spruceland Elementary, Harwin Elementary and Ron Brent Elementary be included in the Duchess Park family of schools.

**Recommendation 37:** That the Salmon Valley and Shady Valley Elementary catchments be amalgamated with the Glenview Elementary catchment.

**Recommendation 38:** That students currently in grade 7 and 8 at Heather Park Middle School be relocated to Kelly Road Secondary for grade 8 and 9.

**Recommendation 39:** That students currently in grade 6 at Heather Park Middle School remain on site for grade 7 in the elementary to be housed in the current Heather Park Middle School building or return to their geographical catchment school.

**Recommendation 40:** That the Valemount schools consider a configuration change which assigns kindergarten to grade 6 students to the elementary school and grade 7-12 students to the secondary school.

**Recommendation 41:** That cost reductions of two million dollars be achieved by using provincial class size limits in setting district class size targets and reducing school organization allocations to schools.

The measures taken with school closures and class size adjustments directly impact the scope of district infrastructure cost reductions. If structural savings from school closures and class size adjustments total \$5 million, then it follows that the savings needed from reductions in district infrastructure would be \$2 million. If the total of \$5 million is not met through school closures and class size adjustments, then the target for infrastructure reduction would need to be re-adjusted to a higher level.

It is difficult to separate the process of right-sizing district infrastructure without the identification of specific jobs and individuals. As a result, the work of right-sizing infrastructure will need to take place through a series of recommendations that would be addressed within the privacy of an in camera environment. Areas of targeted reduction will include all departments in the central administration office.



Cost reductions in these areas will come about because of service restructuring, efficiencies associated with sharing a centralized location, and personnel reductions. A recommendation that can be proposed at this time is:

**Recommendation 42:** That a District Service Centre be established at the Lakewood Junior Secondary site. Services relocated to this building would include, but not be limited to, the Centre for Learning Alternatives, District Resource Centre, and Special Education Area Support Teams.

The financial challenge faced by School District No. 57 is undeniable, unprecedented and enormous. The Board of Education, in forming the District Sustainability Committee, asked for a thorough dissection and examination of all aspects of district operation to find cost reduction strategies that could be utilized to solve financial shortfall and structural deficit. At the same time, the Board expects that the learning needs of our students need to not only be met, but, wherever possible, enhanced.

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2010.01.19*

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