

Board of School Trustees
School District No. 57 (Prince George)

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

HERITAGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

February 20, 2003

MINUTES

Present:

Bill Christie, Chairperson
Lyn Hall Vice-Chairperson
Michelle Marrelli, Trustee
Fred McLeod, Trustee
John Rustad, Trustee
Patricia Wick Thibault, Trustee

Bryan Mix, Secretary-Treasurer
Kerry Firth, Assistant Superintendent
Wendy De Marsh, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

Absent: Carlene Keddie, Trustee

Approximately 55 people in the audience.

1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Christie called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., reviewed the agenda and the rules of order for the meeting and then gave a brief overview of the district's budget and enrolment situation.

2. Board Presentation

Mr. Firth gave a presentation comprised of information about:

- the consultation process
- the decline in the district's enrolment
- the district's budget shortfall
- the components of the budget solution
- the savings to be achieved by closing Heritage Elementary School
- the reasons for selecting Heritage Elementary School for proposed closure
- a summary of written submissions received to date
- when the decision about closing the school would be made

3. Heritage Elementary School Parent Advisory Council Presentation

Nancy Petryshyn noted that in the District Configuration Committee's report, Heritage was named as a receiving school in every option. She commented on the size of the school and its convenient location, and noted that if the school were closed, the students would have to be divided among three receiving schools.

4. Speakers' List

Chuck Fraser commented on his positive experiences with the school and how much the school has helped his handicapped son.

Tessa Fraser spoke about having attended the school and commended the staff for providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for students.

Tim Roots noted that Heritage met all of the criteria in the District Configuration Committee report and was an ideal receiving school. He suggested that the Board, rather than considering which schools should close, should determine which schools are in the best locations and offer the best facilities.

Brian Larsen spoke about how well his sons have done at the school and noted that Heritage was the only school on the proposed closure list that would have to be amalgamated into three other schools.

Norman Ricard questioned the closing of elementary schools without discussing secondary schools and what happens to the proceeds if a school is sold.

Ann Godon spoke about the multicultural mix and the positive atmosphere at the school and noted the quality of the building and its ideal location.

5. Other Speakers

Mr. Christie opened the floor to anyone who wished to speak. A number of people came forward and raised the following concerns and questions:

- Comments about the close relationship with D.P. Todd and how the two schools work together.
- Suggestion that the school should stay open to accommodate the students from closing schools.
- Comments about the excellence of the school and its staff and the students and their families.
- Comment about the positive reputation of the neighbourhood and school.

- Comments about children's happiness at the school.
- Comments about the positive multicultural atmosphere of the school, its good reputation and the quality of the facility
- Comment that younger families are moving into the area, so enrolment can be expected to grow.
- Comment about the benefits of the partnership between the elementary and secondary schools.
- Commented about the multicultural aspect of the school and how positive it is for children.
- Comment about the quality of the facility.
- Concern about selling property if the school closes.
- Expressed happiness with the school and wants to retire there.

6. Closing Remarks

Trustees commented on the district's declining enrolment, the difficulty of making decisions to close schools and the need to put more resources into classrooms instead of buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.