

South – Accommodation Review Committee

Correspondence for the Meeting of May 17, 2011

At the meeting that the board held in which Judith Bishop launched an accusation against trustee Peddle I asked for clarification about the investigative procedure. It was made clear that the investigator is an independent, non partisan who is looking for the truth. The outcome may well show there was a breach. Or, it may show that there wasn't. This process is set out by the education act and we should welcome it. It is what sets a democratic society apart from others where no fact finding missions occur.

Trustees were elected and put in place to make decisions. In our free democratic society, we can make changes with our vote. Let's keep in mind; it was a **majority** of Trustees who made this decision, not just "the Bishop gang" as quoted in a letter to the Spectator editor March 31. Some times we do not like the decisions. I haven't in the past. Our family has lived through school closure once already. So we should follow process, and change our votes in the next election if we are not content. It makes no sense to elect people to do a job, and when they make the tough choices, descend into this mess we are in now, that has turned so personal, seemingly school against school.

Winston Churchill said "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." What we should concern ourselves with is the lesson we are teaching our children... If you don't like the answer, then fight till you get your way. We then can't turn around and wonder at rebellion with the example we set.

I do see why we may question not disclosing the reason for Westmount to stay open earlier in the ARC process, but I think that would have little bearing on the feelings of upset from parents whose schools are slated to close. Trustee Peddle's actions have caused disunity in a board that should, after a vote is made, present a united front. There was another ARC meeting last evening. Questions were asked about repairs, enrollment, etc. All issues I am sure the board took into consideration when making their original decision. Along with the financial decision in regards to the new recreation centre. Decisions the public elected the board to make! We the public cannot be involved in every minute detail the board discusses. That is why we elect you, the trustees, to do a job so we can all do our own jobs. If the tables turned, and Westmount was now slated for closure, would this entire process start again with upset Westmount parents? Then what? Do we ask you, the board to turn around and reconsider that decision? I am writing to support that the board, who voted by majority, to continue with your original decision to keep Westmount open. The decision was not flawed, even if the disclosure process was. Westmount remains with 100% of students, in a program of choice, with 100% commitment by 100% of staff, and 100% of parents choosing this program for their children, with a new recreation centre that the school and community will be able to enjoy.

Kathi Potter  
Westmount Parent,  
Sherwood Alum

Greetings to all Public School Board Trustees:

I would like to thank you for your efforts in reviewing the school closures and giving the communities and taxpayers an opportunity for input.

I sincerely hope that the decision to close Sherwood has not been made and that the trustees will consider the comments from the public meetings and emails/correspondence etc.

My husband and I were at the first public meeting and will attend all future public meetings; we didn't get a chance to speak.

I would like to thank the chair, Scott Sincerbox for his competent facilitating of the meeting.

We live on Woodside Dr., which is down the street from Sherwood.

This is a beautiful community and a beautiful property that Sherwood sits on.

The property is very large and bodes well for traffic during school hours and space for the students and community.

We have one son that has graduated from Sherwood and is continuing his education.

We have one daughter in grade 10 at Sherwood.

We have one daughter attending Highview Elementary in grade 6.

Our family agrees with many of the comments last evening.

I would like the committee to consider the following:

1. I wish I would have brought my young daughter to the public meeting. This is all about the kids...and I would like you to see her young face and tell her that she will be attending 2 or possibly 3 high schools during her secondary school education. If you saw these kids and told them that, there's no way you would move forward with this current proposed plan. You can't do this to kids, can you? Do you really want to be responsible for putting them through this stress/trauma of attending 2 or 3 schools during their high school years?
2. The proposed plan has Sherwood closing in 2013, Barton closing in 2015. **We may or may not get a new school.** This is a "pie in the sky" school. If this new school doesn't open or doesn't open on time, my child is "stuck" at Barton. I'm sorry to be blunt...but Barton is a dump. Sherwood is lovely in comparison. I will not allow her to go to Barton. Totally different community/culture than we have here at Sherwood. An option I would consider is a catholic school. I never thought I'd be faced with a decision like this.
3. **I would ask the community to thoughtfully consider closing BARTON first in 2013, then if you get the funding for this new school that may or may not happen in a timely manner, deal with Sherwood's future at that point.**

Thank you again for your efforts and I hope and pray that you will save Sherwood. You heard the outcry of support at the meeting. Walk our streets, walk the halls of the feeder schools, this community cannot lose Sherwood. Please, please think of the kids and taxpayers in this community.

Respectfully submitted,

Bev and Mike Russ

Hamilton

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Hello again to all Public School Board Trustees:

We attended the meeting last night at Sherwood Secondary School and you'll notice that my subject line reads POSSIBLE Closure of Sherwood School.

I say possible at this point in time because I know that you all are intelligent people and you now know that the community surrounding Sherwood does not want their community school to close. I trust in you people and hope and pray that you will listen to the community, elected officials (Tom Jackson), teachers, students, parents, Sherwood Alumni, principals, ARC committee members, senior citizens, tax payers etc. etc., and keep our community school open.

This is by far the most beautiful place in the city of Hamilton to live and we need and want our school to remain in the lovely location that it sits on.

As I mentioned before, the culture and community surrounding Sherwood is unique, solid, unified, etc. The scope of the people present at these meetings and signing over 2000 signatures on a petition are not just people with kids attending the school or potential students, but a complete community of people trying to save this school.

The culture and community surrounding Barton Secondary School is very different and you won't have these same issues if you were to **CLOSE BARTON FIRST**, then make decisions about a new school that may or may not occur, **OR CLOSE ONLY BARTON**, leave Sherwood alone!

By closing one mountain school, BARTON, the amount of students that would attend Barton can now be sent to Sherwood and the enrolment at Sherwood would increase, satisfying your enrolment numbers.

I also believe that you wouldn't have these enrolment numbers dropping at Sherwood if it were announced that Sherwood is staying open. Parents and students are enrolling in other schools (including the Catholic Board) because they don't want them to attend schools that may or may not be open for their entire high school years.

You, the trustees, have the power to do this. Imagine the impact and glory you would receive for listening to the public and general population of the city.

I understand all the ARC's are going well except the South ARC. I'm glad for you, but there's a reason that the South ARC isn't going well.....it shouldn't happen.

PLEASE, PLEASE, do the right thing; do not close Sherwood Secondary School. You can repair it; you can lower the improvements to be more cost effective. We are willing to accept Sherwood in any condition. PLEASE.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike and Bev Russ

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**Cheryl Gzik** has sent the message below.

**Comments**

Please support Ms. Peddle as she is representing her constituents in a democratic way when she requests that Westmount and Saltfleet be included in the review process. My husband attended the meeting yesterday, and previous meetings, and we do not feel it is fair or democratic when the terms of reference are not amenable to change when that is clearly what the community is asking for. It seems only fair that if it is a true review of mountain schools, those be included. Please reconsider your vote. Also, as a parent of students at Lawfield Elementary, which is only a few years old yet already overcrowded because of the success of French Immersion, why not have high schools on the mountain, like Sherwood, that could continue with French Immersion due to its overwhelming popularity? My understanding is currently only Westdale offers this.

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I saw the Program Strategy Recommendation sheets today and have a major issue with the way that this information is presented. With specific schools named and specific programs named to be relocated after schools close, it once again seems like decisions have already been made. I think that examples could have been used to demonstrate that programs can move without specific schools being named. The public will take this document as fact and this will in turn create further enrolment declines that have already started to happen in the schools named as staff recommendations for closure.

One would hope that this process is supposed to be fair and that the Board really wants public input and suggestions. It doesn't feel that way right now. It feels more and more like a done deal and that we are wasting our time examining information and looking at alternative suggestions. I truly do not understand how the Director and Chair thought that the public would feel better once this document was revealed. Why would the Board have worked on this program strategy for a year, when supposedly, they don't know what the plan for closure will be; unless of course they already do know.

As a parent who is very interested in this process, I would really like answers to these questions.

Thank you,  
Lynn Hicks

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I like this plan/document but am concerned about the children at the gifted end of the spectrum. There is not enough information and planning for those children. Children at the opposite end of the spectrum are getting additional supports and specialized classes, what support do the gifted children receive?