

# Trustee Questions: Accommodation Reviews

May 12, 2014 – Standing Committee

# Questions of Clarification from May 6<sup>th</sup>

# Trustee Questions



## Elementary Accommodation Reviews

### West Flamborough

# **Please clarify why bussing times are over 60 minutes for all secondary schools and more specifically to Highland and Parkside.**

The data highlighted 12 bus runs that are currently scheduled in excess of 60 minutes out of the 1153 total HWDSB bus runs. Seven of these 60+ minute bus runs are for Secondary schools (6 Parkside/Highland and 1 Waterdown). All of the remaining HWDSB Secondary bus runs are scheduled for 60 minutes or less.

For 2013-14 all school buses service both DVSS school sites and incorporate at least ten minutes of additional run time that will be removed once the students are consolidated into a single school site. During planning for 2014-15 ,HWSTS staff will review run time durations for the system and seek to ensure all HWDSB runs are scheduled for less than 60 minutes.

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

West Flamborough

**Does the money allocated to build a new secondary school include both construction costs as well as all soft costs?**

Yes

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews  
East Hamilton

**East Hamilton shows a total utilization rate of 58 per cent in 2022 – is this based on all seven schools or the reconfiguration to five schools?**

See Updated Handout # 1

**Trustee White question**

East Hamilton – Scenario 2:

Can staff please revise scenario 2 to address the latest top-up funding announcement and adjust the boundaries accordingly? In scenario 2, can staff please consider the latest enrolment impact of FDK on the remaining schools?

Hillcrest	OTG: 690										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	12	25	27	34	25	26	27	105	86	83	33	483	70%
2015	52	55	51	43	48	56	64	56	58	62	40	586	85%
2018	52	55	52	49	45	45	40	52	65	68	40	563	82%
2022	52	55	51	48	45	46	45	52	53	53	40	541	78%

Parkdale	OTG: 291										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	28	29	31	23	23	22	19	0	0	0	0	175	60%
2015	31	31	33	35	31	32	24	0	0	0	0	216	74%
2018	30	30	32	33	30	28	30	0	0	0	0	213	73%
2022	30	30	32	32	29	27	27	0	0	0	0	206	71%

Rosedale	OTG: 236										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	16	15	18	31	31	20	18	0	0	0	0	149	63%
2015	24	24	31	22	22	25	37	0	0	0	0	185	78%
2018	24	24	24	24	25	31	21	0	0	0	0	174	74%
2022	25	25	25	25	25	24	24	0	0	0	0	171	72%

Roxborough Park	OTG: 371										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	28	31	37	31	27	31	35	0	0	0	0	220	59%
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%

Viscount Montgomery	OTG: 469										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	31	28	21	33	14	34	21	55	53	55	0	345	74%
2015	27	27	25	34	30	28	37	47	57	46	0	357	76%
2018	27	27	26	26	24	23	32	52	51	72	0	360	77%
2022	27	27	26	26	24	24	25	50	51	56	0	335	71%

W.H. Ballard	OTG: 837										SE	Total	Utilization	*Plus 65	
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8				Total	Utilization
2012	50	56	38	51	44	36	44	74	69	77	38	577	69%		
2015	48	51	43	50	56	41	54	62	54	70	43	572	68%	637	76%
2018	48	49	41	42	45	45	49	73	64	73	43	570	68%	635	76%
2022	48	49	41	42	43	43	43	63	67	67	43	547	65%	612	73%

Woodward	OTG: 201										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	18	17	19	18	16	19	16	0	0	0	8	131	65%
2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%

Totals	OTG: 2,523										SE	Total	Utilization
	JK	SK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
2012	183	201	191	221	180	188	180	234	208	215	79	2,080	67%
2015	181	187	184	184	187	181	216	165	170	179	83	1,917	76%
2018	180	184	175	174	170	172	173	177	181	213	83	1,880	75%
2022	181	184	175	172	165	163	164	165	171	176	83	1,799	71%

\*Subject to post ARC boundary review

# West Glanbrook

None

# West Flamborough



# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews  
West Flamborough

## **How important is the closure of Millgrove to support the business case for a new school on Spencer Valley/Greenville?**

The Ministry has no set criteria for what makes a strong business case.

The more surplus pupil spaces eliminated, reduction in future renewal needs and operational savings, the stronger the business case to the Ministry.

# East Hamilton

## Elementary Accommodation Reviews

### East Hamilton

## How does safety fit in the transportation plan to move students from Woodward to Hillcrest?

### 4. Safety Hazards

a) It is recognized that extraordinary circumstances related to safety hazards may warrant an exception to the walking distances for the determination of transportation service eligibility.

b) Parents have the primary responsibility for the safe arrival of their children to and from school. The safety of children is also the joint responsibility of communities, municipalities, and policing authorities. Consequently, Board administration will catalogue identified issues and forward the related concerns to:

- The City of Hamilton
- Hamilton Street Railway
- The appropriate policing authorities
- School principals in order to bring students' and parents' attention to the issue
- Other related agencies that may be of assistance.

c) A request for an exception to the walking distance for the determination of transportation service eligibility may be submitted in accordance with the procedure regarding the identification of extraordinary circumstances related to safety hazards.

d) Administration is prepared to work with school principals and school councils to develop programs that may assist students' safety when coming to school or going home.

*Section 4 from HWDSB Transportation Policy (2011-03-28)*

# Central Mountain

# Trustee Questions



## Elementary Accommodation Reviews

### Central Mountain

**Please identify the capital needs of each remaining school in order to make them JK-8 (from the sentence found on page 11-35 of the Central Mtn Staff report – “...the capital needs at each school that will be remaining open to ensure proper student accommodation and best use of funding.”**

Pauline Johnson (JK-5), Queensdale (JK-6) and Ridgemount (JK-5) all would need to be converted to JK-8 schools.

Items that would have to be adjusted for students are:

Washrooms	Black boards
Counter tops	Tack boards
Sinks (hardware)	Millwork

Estimated cost is \$250,000 – \$300,000 per school

# All Accommodation Reviews

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

## **How much in parkland dedication has HWDSB paid to the City of Hamilton since amalgamation?**

We have paid approximately \$520,000 since 2003 (the most recent information available).

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

## **When was Rosedale, Woodward and Linden Park first suggested for closure?**

The 1998 HWDSB Accommodation Review Report (October 22, 1998) to Trustees indicates the recommended closure of Linden Park and considering the closure of Rosedale and Woodward schools.



# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

**With the use of technology will we have less of a need for subject specialists in our intermediate grades? Can staff please comment on 21<sup>st</sup> CL technology and the impact it will have on subject specialist for our intermediate students.**

There will still be a need for subject specialists in our intermediate grades.

Technology is a tool that has been shown to accelerate learning when used in conjunction with effective instructional strategies (i.e. inquiry based learning) with classroom teachers that have a content knowledge in their subject matters.

Even with technology, we need our teachers to collaborate in learning teams. This will allow knowledge to be shared throughout the intermediate division and for students' tasks to reflect a multi-disciplinary approach of integrated subjects.

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

**What relationship will we have with the City and how will we work together based on the closures and heavy traffic and the need for crossing guards.**

HWDSB staff requests crossing guards through the City of Hamilton Parking and By-law Services Division. City staff complete a viability study for crossing guards at the requested intersection in cooperation with HWDSB. City staff determine the necessity based on the data collected and assign the crossing guards as needed.

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

**In terms of partnerships what challenges or barriers exist that has prevented partnerships from being fully implemented?**

- Compatible partnerships that align with student achievement
- Cost prohibitive to organizations in existing buildings (organizations must pay for lease space and their portion of overhead costs)
- Space requirements
- Costs to renovate the facility (i.e. separate entrance, bathrooms)

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

## Requesting a copy of the People for Education article – Small Schools Report

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Ontarios-Small-Schools-2005.pdf>

or

See handout #2

# Ontario's Small Schools

PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION

Revised January 2005

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People for Education is a charitable, non-partisan parents' group working to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

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# Ontario's Small Schools

## Summary

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There is a crisis in Ontario's small schools. The combination of a poorly designed funding formula, national demographic trends, and chronic funding shortages have undermined the viability of thousands of small schools across the province.

### The facts

- On January 25, the Lakehead District School Board announced its intention to close 7 schools in 2005 and 7 more in 2007. The board currently has 36 schools in its jurisdiction.
- The Thames Valley District School Board is beginning a process to consider the future of 28 elementary and secondary school communities.
- The Toronto District School Board is predicting an enrolment decline of more than 25,000 students between 2002 and 2006.<sup>1</sup> This will result in a funding loss of approximately \$150 million, or the cost to fund more than 35 elementary schools and 10 secondary schools.
- In December 2003, the province requested school boards to impose a moratorium on school closings. Since then, boards have been unable to close small schools that constitute a disproportionate drain on their funding, yet they are increasingly unable to balance their books or adequately staff all schools in their jurisdiction.
- Ontario's funding formula was designed in 1997 and geared to fund an elementary school of over 400 students. At that time, the average elementary school had 365 students. In 2004, that average dropped to 344 students.
- In 2003/04, only 73% of elementary schools with 300 or fewer students have full-time principals. In 1997/98, 86% had full-time principals.

### The impact

Schools play a central role in their communities. They are essential to economic development and they make communities more attractive to newcomers. Businesses are more likely to move to communities with schools, and families will not move to communities without schools. When a community loses its school, it loses its viability.

Since 1999, 275 schools have closed in Ontario, almost all of them small schools (elementary schools under 300, secondary schools under 600). In the last five years, close to 74,000 students have been affected by school closings. Because Ontario's smaller schools do not have sufficient students to generate funding for many staff, they are less likely than their larger counterparts to have teacher-librarians, music specialists, full-time principals or guidance counsellors.

### **The causes**

Ontario's education funding formula, designed in 1997, funds most staff and programs on a "per pupil" basis. For example, funding for one full-time principal is generated for every 364 elementary school students. Funding for one elementary teacher-librarian is generated for every 769 students. But 60% of Ontario elementary schools have fewer than 364 students, and only 2% have more than 769. Because the per pupil amounts in the funding formula have so little relation to actual school sizes in Ontario, school boards are forced either to close smaller schools or to subsidize them by making cuts to programs like specialist teachers and library staff.

Over the next ten years, school enrolment in Ontario is expected to decline by as much as 78,000 students.<sup>2</sup> In Ontario's secondary schools, declining enrolment has been compounded by the loss of the OAC year. The average secondary school size declined by 12% from 947 students in 2003 to 829 in 2005. While declining enrolment will reduce some costs, and some schools must inevitably close, education costs do not decline in lockstep with student numbers because many costs for schools are fixed, no matter what the student population. The loss of revenue that results from the decline in enrolment will affect all schools and programs across the province.

In other provinces, steps are being taken to save small schools. In Ontario, a patchwork of grants has been added to attempt to address the funding needs of rural and northern schools, but the essential flaw in the funding formula remains – the formula was inadequate for an average school size that existed in 1997; it is disastrous for small schools and their boards in 2005.

### **The solution**

Extensive research over the last decade shows that small schools make excellent learning environments for students, and that, despite economies of scale, they are often cost effective because of their higher graduation rates.

Creative and proactive strategies must be developed now to recognise the value of small schools and to ensure their viability and that of their communities.



## Declining Enrolment

During the 1990's, most school boards experienced strong enrolment growth while Ontario's total enrolment increased by almost 192,000 students. By contrast, over the next ten years, enrolment is expected to decline by as much as 78,000 students.

The government recognizes that declining enrolment boards often face additional financial pressures.

*Assistant Deputy Minister  
Norbert Hartmann to Directors of  
Education, May 17, 2002*

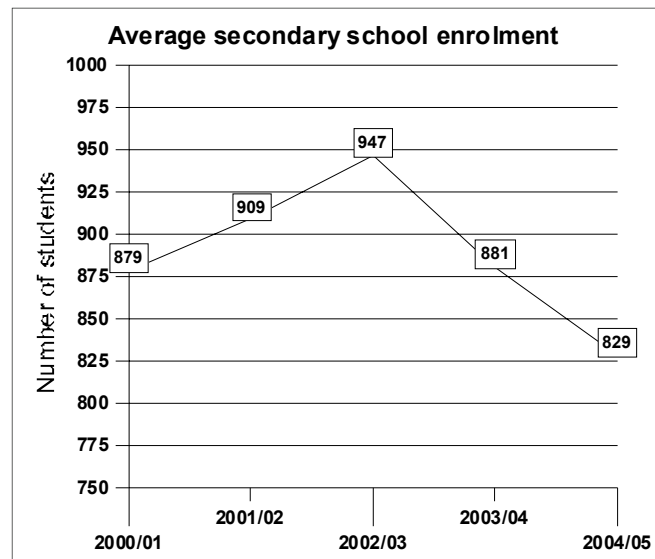
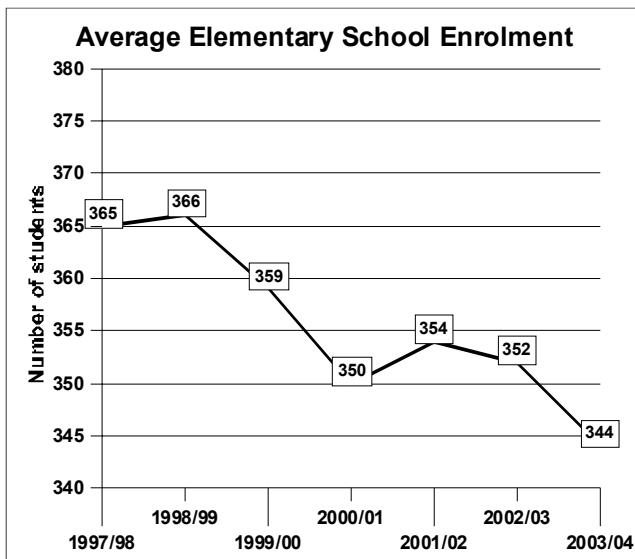
Statistics Canada reports that student enrolment is declining across Canada. Only Alberta (where the difference is due to economic migration) and Ontario's suburban areas report enrolment increases.<sup>3</sup> Most school boards across Ontario – urban and rural, large and small – are experiencing a decline in student enrolment in their schools.

A number of factors are driving this trend.

- The last of the baby-boom generation's children (who have created an enrolment swell since the 1970s) are now completing their secondary education.
- Across Canada and in countries around the world, people are leaving rural and agricultural environments for urban centres.
- Ontario's secondary school curriculum was reduced from five years to four years resulting in the loss of a whole grade of students.
- With the growing industrialization of agriculture, the loss of Ontario's family farms has added to the exodus from rural areas.
- People are moving from inner cities to suburban areas.<sup>4</sup>

Enrolment in Ontario schools is predicted to decrease by as many as 78,000 students over the next decade. Because funding for schools is based primarily on numbers of students, this enrolment loss could result in a decline in funding of just under \$500 million.

Having fewer students may reduce some costs over time – for classroom teachers, for example. But many costs for schools remain the same no matter what the size of the student population. Whether a school has 300 or



500 students, it still needs heat, light, custodians, a principal and a library. The funding formula – which bases funding strictly on student numbers – does not recognise this downward shift across Ontario.

To attempt to address this problem, the provincial government introduced the Declining Enrolment Grant in 2002. The grant provides school boards with a gradually decreasing “funding cushion” to allow them to adjust to the loss in revenue resulting from steep enrolment declines. In the first year, the grant limits the board’s loss of revenue to 58% of its per pupil funding decline. Over the course of the subsequent three years, the funding cushion is reduced by half each year.

The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association has stated that the grant has “serious shortcomings” and that the government should review the funding formula to re-examine these shortcomings and “to make the grant more responsive to the actual experience of most boards”.<sup>5</sup>

The ramifications of declining enrolment and corresponding lack of funding will mean more schools will be closed by boards unable to fund adequate staff and maintenance or to keep schools with reduced student populations open.

## Education Funding in Ontario

“We are a small rural school that is strongly supported by our community, but as a small school experiencing declining enrolment, we cannot provide enough staff or special programming for students due to the funding model. We rely heavily on fund-raising. I'm concerned that being a 'teaching principal' does not serve the school or student, but again, our Board's hands are tied. Very few schools are large enough for funding for a full-time principal.”

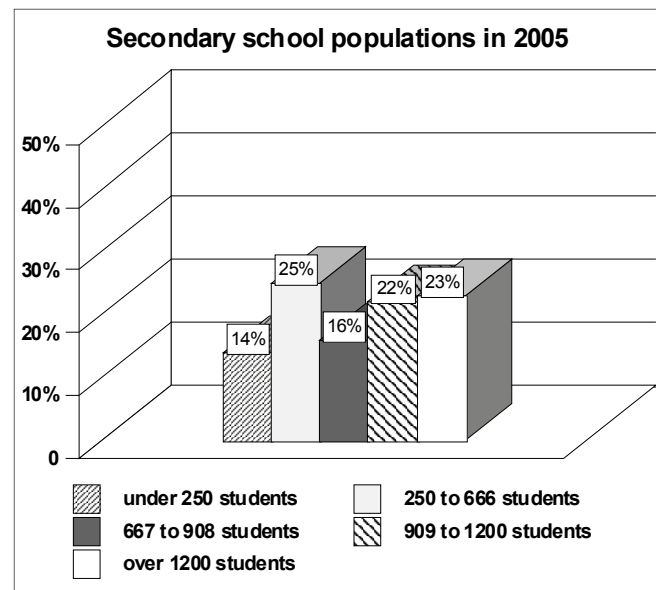
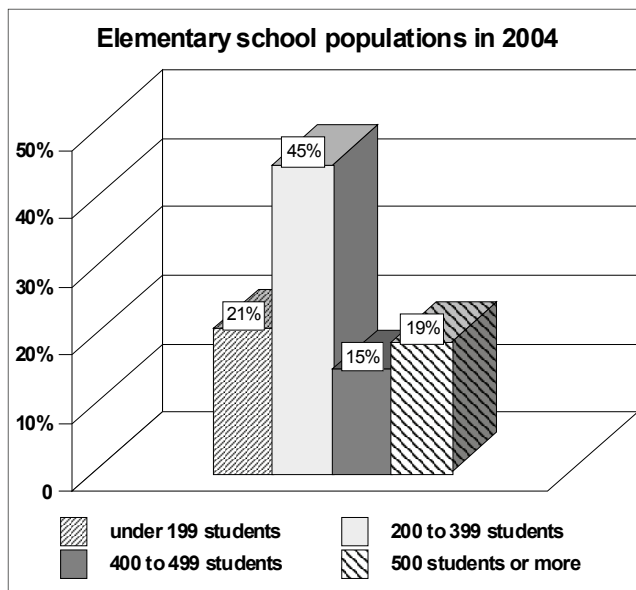
*JK-8 school,  
Avon-Maitland School Board*

Under the funding formula, student enrolment is the basis for most staffing and program grants. Despite the fact that almost half of Ontario’s elementary schools have fewer than 300 students, and 33% of secondary schools have fewer than 600, the provincial education funding formula is geared toward the small proportion of schools that are much larger than that.

Funding for one full-time principal is provided for every 364 elementary and every 909 secondary school students, but in 2004, 60% of elementary schools and 58% of secondary schools had fewer students than that. Funding for one teacher-librarian is generated for every 769 elementary school students. Only 2% of Ontario’s elementary schools are that size.

### Special grants for rural, northern, and distant schools

Over the last several years the province has added a number of grants on top of the base funding for schools to attempt to correct funding inequities for small, rural or northern schools. The grants are meant to pay for the higher costs of transporting materials to distant schools, purchasing learning resources for smaller schools, salaries for principals in schools with insufficient students to generate funding, and to provide boards with a



“funding cushion” to adjust to the loss in revenue resulting from steep declines in enrolment. The grants are dispersed based on:

- the distance of school boards from major urban centres;
- board-wide enrolment of less than 16,000 students;
- the number of schools that are widely dispersed - calculated by finding the average distance between schools, and the average distance between schools and the central school board office;
- the number of elementary schools that are more than 8 kilometres from the next elementary school and the number of secondary schools that are more than 32 kilometres from the next secondary school and that have low enrolment;
- the reduction in enrolment over the course of three years; and
- the number of schools that are designated rural by Statistics Canada criteria or with “O” in their postal code.

School boards report that the cumulative effect of all these grants has been inadequate. According the Thames Valley District School Board, in its submission to the Pre-Budget Hearings:

This is clearly not the kind of funding that is required to sustain a small school community, especially a small secondary school facility in a rural setting where the requirement is for extra staffing and resources in order to sustain full program opportunities. It is also not the kind of funding that is designed to sustain what is often seen as a major community imperative, to maintain a school facility that has economic as well as learning importance to the community as a whole.

While Thames Valley applauds any funding initiatives in this area it would make the point that neither the Distant Schools Grant nor the Good Schools initiative were specifically focused on addressing the long term needs of the small school environment where the delivery of program is in jeopardy and where school closure is an option. It also reminds the Government that school boards do not receive funding that addresses the economic impact of school closure.<sup>6</sup>

In December 2003, the Minister of Education requested that all school boards impose a moratorium on school closings until after September 2004. The Minister said that the government needed time to review and revise provincial guidelines for school closings and for building new schools. No new funding accompanied the moratorium to support the continued operation of small schools in the interim. As of January 2005, no new guidelines have been released.

School boards' reviews of school facilities are usually finalized in January or February, but many boards are waiting for promised new funding announcements from the Ministry. The Halton District School Board recently delayed closing at least four schools, the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board has postponed acting on recommendations for accommodation reviews, and the Thames Valley District School Board is waiting for provincial funding announcements that will affect its review of 28 schools. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has also placed the closing of a number of schools on hold, pending announcements of promised changes to the funding formula from the Ministry.

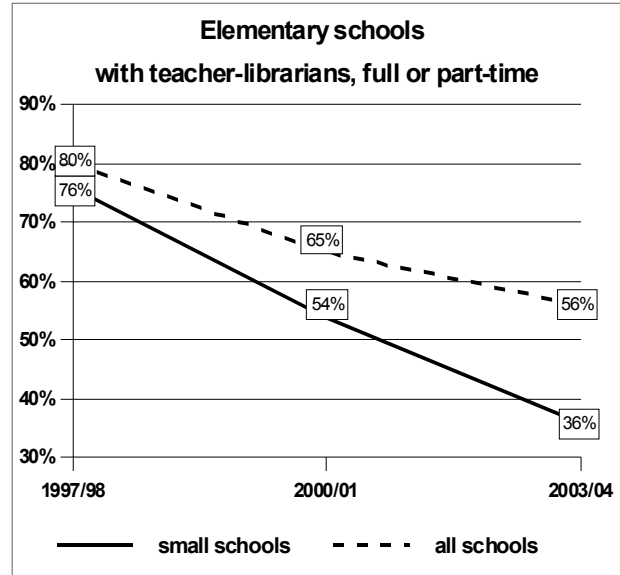
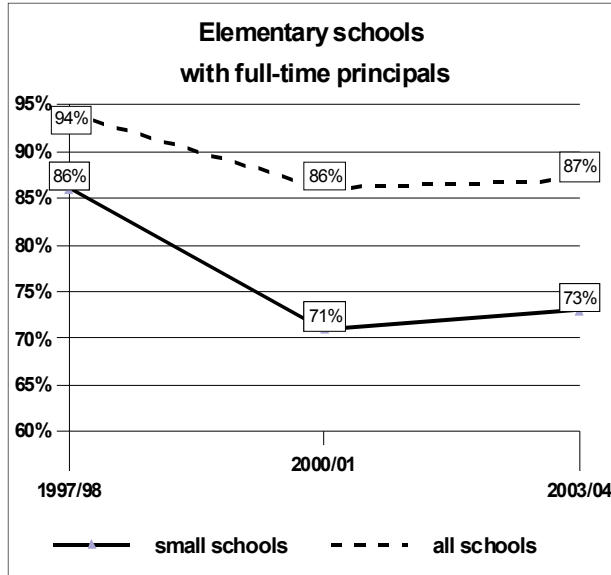
## **Staff and Resources in Small Schools**

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The majority of elementary schools do not have enough students to generate funding for full-time principals, part-time teacher librarians, or, in the case of 39% of schools, even a full-time secretary. In cases where school boards decide to provide funding for this staff, they do it in one of two ways. They use funding from special purpose grants, or they make cuts in other areas.

The People for Education Tracking Project keeps track of the effects of funding and policy changes on elementary and secondary schools. Students in smaller schools do not have access to the educational programs and staff available to other schools in the province. In 2004:

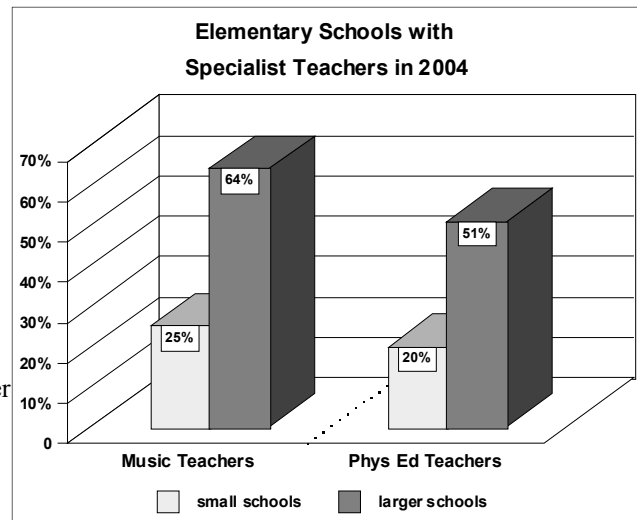
- The number of small elementary schools with full-time principals has dropped by 15%, twice the rate of the drop in all elementary schools in



the province.

- The number of small elementary schools with a teacher-librarian (full or part-time) has declined by 53% compared to a 30% decline in all elementary schools.
- Just 20% of small elementary schools have access to a physical education teacher, compared to 51% of larger elementary schools.\*
- Only 25% of small elementary schools have access to specialist music teachers, compared to 61% of larger elementary schools.
- All larger secondary schools have libraries that are open full-time, but 21% of small secondary schools had libraries open only part-time.

\*small schools – elementary under 300 and secondary under 600; larger schools – elementary over 450 and secondary over 1000



“As a small rural secondary school we continue to be concerned about our ability to timetable for all students. In particular, university-bound students often generate small classes of 9-10 for algebra, calculus, French, etc., courses that we must run or lose these students to other schools. School facilities are not on a par with city schools. No auditorium, small cafeteria, no drama room and a high cost of transportation for sports teams.”

*Secondary school,  
Kawartha-Pine Ridge DSB*

### **Secondary school programs**

Because funding for small secondary schools does not cover the cost of extra full-time staff, it is a challenge for school boards to provide an adequate range of programs. In the last two years, secondary school populations have experienced a particularly steep decline because of the the removal of the OAC year from high school curriculum. Many students in small secondary schools have access to fewer courses, classes delivered in double and triple grades, and courses available only by internet. Some must travel to another town to obtain adequate credits for graduation.

### **Special education in small schools**

The majority of funding for special education is granted to boards on a per pupil basis in the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA). But the percentage of students requiring special education assistance has increased across the province. Declining enrolment effectively delivers a double loss to boards because they lose funding for SEPPA despite the fact there is no decrease in the number of students who need special education support.

## **The Benefits of Smaller Schools**

International research shows that small schools – commonly defined as elementary schools between 100 and 400 students, and secondary schools between 500 and 1000 students – are more successful when compared to larger schools. Small schools have proved to be such a superior and more successful model for educating children that the title of a research paper from the Centre for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin is, “The Ultimate Education Reform? Make Schools Smaller.”<sup>7</sup>

Research shows that smaller schools:

- improve student achievement,
- increase attendance and graduation rates,
- elevate teacher satisfaction,
- improve school safety, and
- increase parent and community involvement.

According to the Small Schools Workshop, a group of educators and researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago:

The concept of small schools is based on the premise that, in contrast to large, factory model schools, small schools can create a more intimate learning environment that is better able to address the needs of those within the school. Students, teachers, and parents may all be better served if the school is small enough to allow for

“Measured either as dropout rate or graduation rate, the holding power of small schools is considerably greater than that of large schools.”

*Kathleen Cotton,  
“School Size, School Climate  
and Student Performance”*

"Our school continues to be a wonderful learning environment. We are proud to have a committed and hard-working school council, an excellent rapport between home and school, staff and students. Students are, on the whole, polite, responsible, hard working and enthusiastic. It is a small school with a very big heart. Unfortunately it has been identified as one of the four schools in the system to 'enter into a dialogue of future pupil allotment'. In other words, the possibility of closure in a few years due to declining enrolment. It is a shame to lose our small schools!"

*JK-8 school,  
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic  
District School Board*

communication to flow, opportunities for collaboration to be cultivated, and meaningful relationships to be fostered.<sup>8</sup>

In larger schools, students are more likely to get "lost" because of the anonymity created by larger student populations; and they drop out of larger schools at a significantly higher rate than they do out of small schools.<sup>9</sup>

American studies have shown the dropout rate of a high school increases by about one per cent for every 400 students it adds to its enrolment. Incidents of violence and crime increase dramatically in schools with 1,000 or more students as compared with those of 300 or less. In urban American schools with fewer than 300 students, for example, 3.9% of the schools reported serious violent incidents compared with 32.9% of schools over 1,000 students.<sup>10</sup>

### **Cost effectiveness**

Much of the drive towards larger schools has been based on the concept of "economies of scale." Researchers at New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy found that, although smaller schools spent more per student than larger ones, (\$7628 compared to \$6218), the cost-per-graduate was actually slightly lower, as the drop-out rates at small schools were considerably lower than larger schools.<sup>11</sup> The study argues that, if one uses the business argument of economies of scale to support larger schools, then similar business standards of quality assessment and rates of success should also be applied. The higher graduation rates for smaller secondary schools are evidence of a higher quality "product" and a more successful output, thus if measured solely on a per graduate rate, costs are lower.

### **Schools and communities**

Schools are the hubs of their communities and have an importance that goes beyond education; they play a major role in the economic development of their communities and they make communities more attractive to newcomers. Businesses are more likely to move to communities with schools, and families will not move to communities without schools. As populations decline in northern and rural Ontario, boards reliant on per pupil funding close more schools. A vicious cycle ensues: fewer people move there, populations decline further, more schools close.

In many small towns and inner city neighbourhoods, small schools also offer space for community use. Three quarters of Ontario's small elementary schools and 83% of small high schools report that their schools are used by the community after school hours for everything from sporting events to ratepayers' meetings.



Because of the size of its budget and payroll, a school is often the major “industry” in a small community, and many businesses rely directly and indirectly on its existence. The presence of a school has an effect on residential and commercial property values. One study found that a rural, agricultural town in Nevada that lost a high school experienced an eight per cent decline in retail sales and a six per cent decline in the labour supply.<sup>12</sup>

## Closing Small Schools

Over the last five years, 275 schools have closed in Ontario, almost all of them small. At an average rate of 55 schools per year, this is more than double the rate of schools closing over the previous ten years.

<b>Ontario School Closings 1999 to 2004</b>			
	<b>Elementary schools</b>	<b>Secondary Schools</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Closed</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Slated to close or under review</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Number of Students affected</b>	<b>57,098</b>	<b>24,608</b>	<b>73,801</b>
<b>Average size of school closed</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>636</b>	

### **Ontario's school closing policy**

Ontario has no specific policy as to the optimum size of a school, nor is there any policy or funding to allow boards to maintain schools at a size that reflects the communities' needs. There is no policy to protect schools when they are the only school in their communities, or to ensure that those schools have adequate resources. There is also no policy outlining a consultation process for the building of new schools.

Ontario regulations for school closings state that boards must have in place a school closure policy covering:

- the procedures for identifying schools to be reviewed for possible closure
- the procedure for consultations,
- the minimum time period between the identification of a school and the final decision of a board,
- requirements for public presentation of reports on community impact, busing, and the impact on other schools.<sup>13</sup>



The regulation does not define what the procedures or time lines should be, it simply states that boards must have them. There is no requirement that boards consult with their municipalities or involve them in the decisions to build or close schools.

### **Building new schools**

New schools being built in Ontario are, on average, much larger than the present average school size. There is little academic research to support the creation of ever-larger schools; in fact, research shows that smaller schools are more effective. School districts across the United States are presently dismantling their “factory” schools in order to create better learning environments for students.

Ontario’s drive to build larger schools is solely a response to an education funding formula geared to larger schools – it is an economic decision rather than a pedagogical one.

## **Small school strategies in other provinces**

### ***Quebec: Saving the last school in the village***

In January 2003, the provincial government of Quebec received a report from the *Working Group on Maintaining Village Schools*. The working group was co-chaired by the President of the Federation of School Boards and the President of Rural Solidarity of Quebec. Included in the report were recommendations for the provincial government, school boards, and municipalities.

The provincial government was quick to respond. On March 5, 2003, the Minister of Education announced a policy to save “the last school of the village”, saying, “Having a school is a strong symbol for the development and vitality of rural communities.... Today we are taking new steps to give communities additional resources that will allow them to maintain village schools.”

The government is developing a comprehensive program to keep rural community schools open:

- Each school, depending on its size, will receive an additional grant of \$25,000 to ensure it is able to hire well-qualified teachers.
- Schools with 100 students or less will receive further grants to allow them to collaborate with other schools in their area on certain educational activities.

- The quality of these school buildings will be maintained by granting additional \$2M in funding.
- All school boards will be asked to put in place a school closing policy involving public consultation (if they don't already have one).
- School boards with a school closing policy are asked to review that policy.
- They will create a new law that requires reciprocal consultations between municipalities and school boards, when a school is going to be considered for closing, with the intention of maintaining schools in single school communities.
- School boards will be legally required to participate in centres for local development.

This new provincial policy also strives to ensure that future teachers will be trained and well prepared to teach multi-grade classes. The province of Quebec will also continue to experiment with information technology and communications to help small community schools. Their goal is to continue to find solutions that will assure the survival of schools, no matter where they are located in Quebec, and to maintain quality services for students.

#### ***Saskatchewan: Genuine consultation***

The province recognises remote small schools with a grant that includes an enrolment factor (small school) and a location factor (sparsity) for funding purposes. A K-6 school "isolated school" will receive funding when the closest appropriate school is between 20 and 40 kilometres away. A school with grades 7-12 receives extra funding when the closest school is 30 to 50 kilometres away.

A sliding scale of funding is provided for schools in which there are fewer than 12 students per grade. For instance, a grade with a single student would generate extra funding of \$7,100, while 5 students in a grade would garner \$21,500.

School boards must closely follow the stipulations in the *Education Act* regarding the closing of a school. These involve consulting with the community over a minimum six-month proscribed schedule. "These are intended to be genuine consultations," said Don Sangster, Executive Director, School Finance. "Boards vote to go ahead with about 60% of the closings after the consultations, but about 40% of schools stay open."

***Newfoundland and Labrador: Policy in the face of declining enrolment***

The provincial education system in Newfoundland and Labrador faces two problems: many small schools in remote communities, and a significantly declining population. The median school size is 228 students.

The province recognises that when a school in a small outpost is closed, the hub of the community is taken out, and its continued existence is endangered. People with children will not move to a small community without a school, knowing their children will spend many hours a week on buses. Consequently, there is a designation for “small but necessary” schools, which are allocated more staff than would be generated by the student numbers. All schools in the province, no matter how small, have a principal.

Distance learning is a successful strategy in dealing with small and remote schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. Every school in the province has Internet access, and courses are available that would be difficult to provide in a real classroom, particularly in small secondary schools. The same strategy works well for professional development for teachers in remote areas.

The process for closing a school is a provincially regulated one. (“Legislated not to be a dreadful process,” said Assistant Deputy Minister Eric Burry.) It takes place over a two-year schedule, with board officials consulting with the community and school council, and soliciting input on how best to manage the procedure.

## Conclusion

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"[The school] is a multi-use facility which links the town library, my school, the public school, the Daycare and the Leisure Complex together under one roof."

*St. Bernadette's Separate School,  
York Catholic District School Board*

### Looking for solutions

Over the last decade, Ontario has watched hundreds of schools close. When a small community loses its school, its viability is endangered. Some families with children will leave the community rather than have their children bused for long periods of the day, new families will not move to that community, real estate values will plummet, local businesses will suffer.

After years of stopgap solutions, it is time to reverse the trend and recognise that closing a school is not simply an educational issue, it has major social and demographic repercussions as well. As the Thames Valley District School Board asserted in its submission to the Government's Pre-Budget Hearings, "...the public education sector must not and can not be expected to be solely responsible for the economic well-being of rural communities."

We must recognise the reality of declining enrolment in Ontario, and come up with new and proactive solutions to maintain the viability of small schools and communities. It is time to develop creative ways to keep the school buildings vital and expand their role as the hub of their communities. We can take cues from other places: English small schools are inviting postal sub-stations to occupy a part of their buildings; Newfoundland has community schools that have on-site social service agencies, community radio stations, and seniors' programs. It is possible to modify school buildings slightly so that they can function as community centres as well, and, if provided with adequate funding, day care centres enhance schools and act as a draw for young parents.

There is an immediate need for our governments to develop a comprehensive, multi-level strategy to protect one of Ontario's most precious resources – its small schools.

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## Recommendations

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To ensure the viability of Ontario's small schools, People for Education recommends that the provincial government:

- 1) Appoint representatives from Ontario's school boards, federal, provincial, and municipal governments to work together to develop co-ordinated policies and programs to support and sustain small schools and their communities.
- 2) Implement the recommendation of the Education Equality Task Force to "establish a Cabinet-level advisory council on integrated services for children and families, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Community and Family Services, Education, Health and Long-Term Care, Public Safety and Security, and Tourism and Recreation, to meet on a regular basis to align the work and the funding mechanisms of the ministries that serve families, children and youth."
- 3) Develop provisions in provincial funding to reward rather than penalize school boards that enhance the function of school buildings by providing municipal services, health care, community services, social services, parks and recreation, libraries, and/or child care within their walls.
- 4) Implement each of the recommendations in the Rozanski report, including the
  - Provide core support funding for small schools in single school communities;
  - Update benchmark costs to provide boards with additional funding to sustain those small schools that boards decide to keep open;
  - Update the School Operations Allocation to provide boards with funds to ensure that their small schools are safe, clean and well-maintained;
  - Review the benchmark factors and capacity criteria to ensure that boards that have small schools in single-school communities are not penalized for keeping those small schools open.
- 5) Establish optimal enrolments for elementary and secondary schools based on research data, and supported with new per pupil funding benchmarks to ensure that schools have principals, secretaries, teacher-librarians, and guidance counsellors and to ensure that all students have access to viable physical education and music programs.
- 6) Adjust transportation guidelines and funding to ensure that no student spends more than 1½ hours per day on the school bus.
- 7) Enact a standardized review process for the construction and closing of schools to include:
  - mandatory involvement of municipal governments in decision-making,
  - mandatory consultation periods of no shorter than six months, and mandatory reports on the economic and social impact on the affected community.

## Appendix

In the following chart, elementary schools with 300 students or fewer and secondary schools with 600 students or fewer, are small schools.

<b>Per Pupil Funding</b>			
<b>Staff</b>	<b>Funding Formula Requirement</b>	<b>% of Ontario Schools Qualifying</b>	<b>% of Small Schools Qualifying</b>
<b>Principal,</b> full-time elementary	<b>364</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Principal,</b> full-time, secondary	<b>909</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Vice-principal</b> full-time, secondary	<b>667</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Secretary,</b> full-time, elementary	<b>272</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Secretary,</b> full-time, secondary	<b>188</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Teacher-librarian,</b> full-time, elementary	<b>769</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Teacher-librarian,</b> full-time, secondary	<b>909</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Guidance counsellor,</b> full-time elementary	<b>5000</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Guidance counsellor,</b> full-time, secondary	<b>385</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>43%</b>

## Resource Materials

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### Websites

Small Schools Network, [www.ssta.sk.ca/research/small\\_schools/95-09.htm](http://www.ssta.sk.ca/research/small_schools/95-09.htm)

Strengthening Strategies for Small Schools, [www.ssta.sk.ca/research/small\\_schools/97-01.htm](http://www.ssta.sk.ca/research/small_schools/97-01.htm)

National Association for Small Schools, [www.smallschools.org.uk/page2.htm](http://www.smallschools.org.uk/page2.htm)

Small Schools Workshop, [www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/info3.html](http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/info3.html)

The Montana Small Schools Alliance, [www.ael.org/eric/](http://www.ael.org/eric/)

The Small Schools Project, [www.smallschoolsproject.org/](http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/)

PACERS Small School Cooperative, [www.pacers.org/](http://www.pacers.org/)

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools, [www.parss.org/](http://www.parss.org/)

### Papers

Cotton, K. (1996). School size, school climate, and student performance. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved April 23, 2003, from <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html>.

Gregory, T. (2000). School reform and the no-man's-land of high school size. Indiana University. Retrieved April 23, 2003, from <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/articles/download/gregory.pdf>.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and The Rural School and Community Trust, *Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools*. <http://www.ruraledu.org/docs/dollars.pdf>

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Toronto District School Board, *Student Retention Report*, p. 2. [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/boardroom/bd\\_agenda/uploads/Oct\\_6\\_2004/Chairs\\_\\_6\\_00\\_p\\_m\\_/41006\\_Retention\\_598.doc](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/boardroom/bd_agenda/uploads/Oct_6_2004/Chairs__6_00_p_m_/41006_Retention_598.doc)
- <sup>2</sup> Norbert Hartmann to Directors of Education, May 17, 2002 Overview of 2002–03 Student-Focused Funding, [http://www.haltontsb.on.ca/download.asp?sMenuID=389&filename=Grant\\_Regulation.pdf](http://www.haltontsb.on.ca/download.asp?sMenuID=389&filename=Grant_Regulation.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada reports that over six years, enrolment has fallen by over 20%, and by over 5% in the other Atlantic provinces and Saskatchewan. It has also declined in B.C., Manitoba and Quebec. *Summary of Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 1996/7 to 2002/03*. (released September 8, 2004), <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-004-XIE/200409/newrel.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> Toronto District School Board, p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> OPSBA's Submission to the Ministry of Education – Re 2005/2006 Grants, [http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/busing/OPSBA\\_Grant\\_Submission.pdf](http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/busing/OPSBA_Grant_Submission.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Thames Valley District School Board, *Submission to the Ontario Ministry of Finance Pre-Budget Consultation Committee*, 2005 January 20. <http://www.tvdsb.on.ca/news/2005/2005jan20.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Chicago: Small Schools Workshop, <http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/info3.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/info1.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and The Rural School and Community Trust, *Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools*, p. 11. <http://www.ruraledu.org/docs/dollars.pdf>.
- <sup>10</sup> T. Gregory, *School Reform and the No-Man's-Land of School Size*, p. 6. <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/articles/download/gregory.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and The Rural School and Community Trust, *Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools*, p. 11. <http://www.ruraledu.org/docs/dollars.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> *Center for Rural Affairs Newsletter*, May 1999, p. 3. <http://www.cfra.org/resources/Publications/caseforsmallschools.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> Ontario Regulation 444/98, under the *Education Act*.



# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

## **How many K-5 schools have extra-curricular activities in general and what are they?**

All K-5 & 6 schools have extra-curricular activities. In general, art clubs, music clubs, drama clubs and game clubs are common.

Most schools offer sanctioned sports supported by the system such as cross country and track & field. Some schools also offer basketball and soccer.

# Trustee Questions



Elementary Accommodation Reviews

All Accommodation Reviews

## **How can the funding formula be changed in a short period of time to address the situation HWDSB is currently facing?**

School boards are funded through Ontario's "funding formula." The ministry allocates funding to each board using a formula that's based on student enrolment and the unique needs of the students in each board. The number of schools, their distribution and their physical condition are also factors.

The funding formula would need to be changed through Ministry regulation.