



**SPECIAL REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday, May 7, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**St. Anne Secondary School**  
**1200 Oakwood Dr., SS #3, Belle River, ON**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT**

**Trustees:**

J. Courtney	J. Macri
M. DiMenna, Vice-Chair	B. Mastromattei
B. Holland, Chair	J. McMahan
	L. Soulliere
F. Dellosa Student Trustee	
Rev. L. Brunet, Board Chaplain	

**Regrets:**

Trustees Courtney and Favot. Student Trustee Ellepola

**Administration:**

P. Picard (Resource)	P. Murray
J. Bumbacco	C. Norris
M. Iatonna	J. Ulicny

**Recorder:**

B. Marshall

1. Call To Order - Chair Holland called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. Opening Prayer – Fr. Brunet began the meeting with a prayer.

Chair Holland assured members of the audience that the Board meeting was designed specifically to receive public input on the Director's Supplemental report, the grade 7 and 8 model for the Tecumseh area.

Chair Holland outlined the delegation process and time limit and also mentioned trustees will remain after the meeting to speak to the members of the community.

3. Recording of Attendance – Trustee Courtney sent her regrets due to a work commitment. Trustee Favot sent his regrets due to a work commitment. Student Trustee Ellepola sent her regrets due to attending a conference.

4. Approval of Agenda

**AMENDMENTS:**

Clerical error: Item 7g) Tellard should read Tellerd

**Moved by Trustee DiMenna and seconded by Trustee Macri that the May 7, 2014 Special Regular Board meeting agenda be approved as amended. Carried**

5. Disclosure of Interest - Pursuant to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

Trustee Macri disclosed interest in relation to agenda item 6a) Director of Education's Supplemental Report on the Accommodation Review Study for the Tecumseh Area, including St. Gregory, St. Peter, and St. Pius X Catholic Elementary Schools due to his sons' employment and did not participate in the discussion or vote on any question raised on that item.

6. Communications:

- a. Report: Director of Education's Supplemental Report on the Accommodation Review Study for the Tecumseh Area, including St. Gregory, St. Peter, and St. Pius X Catholic Elementary Schools

Director Picard indicated the supplemental accommodation option was two-fold in its intent. First, to engage the Catholic community in the Tecumseh area in a dialogue with respect to issues surrounding capacity, projections and fiduciary responsibility.

Second, is in response to the Town of Tecumseh's parallel engagement to the process suggesting that it was the will of all in the community to find a way to maintain two Catholic schools within two kilometers of one another.

Director Picard mentioned he looked forward to receiving input regarding the possibility of consolidating grade 7 and 8 students at the St. Gregory site and JK to grade 6 students at the St. Pius X site. The consolidation could affect the necessary financial savings when coupled with a joint usage agreement.

**Moved by Trustee Mastromattei and seconded by Trustee Soulliere that the Board receive as information the Director's Supplemental Report on the accommodation review study for the Tecumseh Area, including St. Gregory, St. Peter and St. Pius X Catholic Elementary Schools; and**

**That the Board receive public input concerning the Director's Supplemental Report.**  
*Carried*

7. Delegations:

Delegations Regarding the Director of Education's Supplemental Report on the Accommodation Review Study for the Tecumseh Area, including St. Gregory, St. Peter, and St. Pius X Catholic Elementary Schools

- a. Parent, Danielle Chinnery from St. Gregory School to speak about possible sharing of staff and resources that may help reduce the Board's shortfall funding reported in the Director's supplemental report.

Ms. Chinnery spoke to the savings she believed could be realized by the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board if the Board would match the cost per student of the Director, Associate Director and the Superintendent positions with the coterminous boards. Ms. Chinnery discussed the possibility of French Immersion at St. Gregory school.

- b. Parent, Francine Herlehy from St. Gregory School and ARC member to address the Director's revised report recommending the consolidation of JK to 6 student to St. Pius and grades 7 and 8 students to St. Gregory.

Ms. Herlehy commented on the ARC process and requested to maintain the schools as is with continuing monitoring.

- c. Parent, Cynthia Vilella from St. Gregory School does not support the Director's amended report.

Ms. Vilella compared the ARC process to receiving diagnoses of a life threatening disease and supported French Immersion as a compromise moving forward.

- d. Parent, Mike Rohrer from St. Gregory School to speak to community partnerships.

Mr. Rohrer commented on the necessity to work together as partners to develop a strategy and find common ground. Speaking to reports in the Globe and Mail that suggest a 12% increase in French Immersion, Mr. Rohrer also suggested French Immersion at St. Gregory school.

- e. Parent, William Altenhof from St. Gregory School to speak about the financial and emotional burdens of the supplemental recommendation put forth by the Director.

Mr. Altenhof, from a financial and emotional point of view, does not support the grade 7 and 8 model. Mr. Altenhof also does not support the Town of Tecumseh using tax dollars to assist with cost of the grade 7 and 8 model. He suggested French Immersion at St. Gregory school.

- f. Parent, Dr. Geoff Butler from St. Gregory School to speak about the effects of the supplemental option on large families.

Dr. Butler spoke to family complications that may arise if the grade 7 and 8 model was implemented and requested trustees to consider the options presented by the community.

- g. Parent and Parent Council Member of St. Pius, Karen Tellerd to speak about the before and after school effects of having a separate school for grade 7 and 8 students.

Ms. Tellerd spoke to the potential complications of before and after school day care, leadership, mentorship and planned activities/events if the grade 7 and 8 model was implemented for St. Gregory and St. Pius.

- h. Parent and Parent Council Member of St. Pius, Joelle Long to explain how separating the senior grades in a JK-8 school impacts the daily activities of the teachers and students, as well as the burden to the parent volunteer base.

Ms. Long voiced concerns regarding mentoring, grade 7 and 8 extra-curricular activities offered at the St. Gregory site, morale and spirit of senior grades, specialty programs, parent volunteers and the mental well being of students, staff and parents.

- i. Parent and Parent Council Member of St. Pius, Scott Briscoe to speak to the effects of a potential two year deferral and the effects on the grade 7 and 8 students.

Mr. Briscoe expressed his opposition to the potential two year deferral and questioned the logic of the grade 7 and 8 model in terms of disruptions to families.

- j. Parent and Parent Council Member of St. Pius, Connie Kempe to address the grade 7 and 8 model and the effects on the family.

Ms. Kempe rejects the grade 7 and 8 model and supports the original recommendation of consolidating St. Gregory and St. Pius students at St. Pius based on the resources and supports that would be available at the school for all of the students. She provided assurance that everyone would be welcomed at St. Pius.

8. Future Board Meetings: *Unless stated otherwise, all meetings will be held at the Windsor- Essex Catholic Education Centre - 1325 California Avenue, Windsor beginning at 7:00 pm.*

- MONDAY, May 26, 2014 – Additional Board meeting at the Catholic Education Centre.
- Tuesday, May 27, 2014 – ***Meeting will be held at Holy Names High School, 1400 Northwood St., Windsor at 7:00 pm.***
- MONDAY, June 23, 2014

*Committee of the Whole Board In-Camera Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm (closed sessions).*

9. Closing Prayer – Fr. Brunet closed the meeting with a prayer.
10. Adjournment - There being no further business, the Special Regular Board meeting of May 7, 2014 adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

*Approved*

***Barbara Holland***  
*Board Chairperson*

***Paul A. Picard***  
*Director of Education and Secretary of the Board*

Presentations  
from the May 7, 2014  
Special Board Meeting  
at  
St. Anne High School

Good evening,

Danielle Chinnery

I am going to speak to savings that could easily be realized by the WECDSB if this board was to match the cost per student of the Director position, the Associate Director (this position does not exist within the public board) and the Superintendent positions to those of the GECDSB.

We have approx. 15,000 fewer students in our board, but according to figures found in the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Document, prepared by the Ministry of Finance for the Province of Ontario -- we pay approx. \$37.00 more per student in salaries associated JUST with the positions listed previously.

If you multiply the \$37.00 by the approx.. 20,000 students in our board -- the realized savings would be just over \$740,000.00 -- nearly ¾ of a Million dollars....

What do we receive for this additional administrative cost: reduced resources, reduction of teacher and support staff, loss of our libraries and now the possible closure of our school(s).... Doesn't seem like money well spent....

Seems like we may have too many Shepherds compared to the amount of Sheep in our flock....

There is however, another VERY viable option, that could be easily implemented following the mold of St. Mary's school (which was also previously slated for closure, and is now seeing growth) -- the addition of French Immersion -- and the grading out of the English. This would benefit not only our school, but also PIUS and St. Annes -- a win/win for our children, three Catholic Schools, our Communities, the WECDSB and Catholic education as a whole and help secure future enrollment numbers....

Instead of handing our children over to the public board either due to closure of schools or programs such as French Immersion -- not being offered -- Let's become PROACTIVE and bring our Catholic children back into the fold....

Both TECE and LAKE are under boundary adjustments for the school year beginning September 2014 due to the growth of the French Immersion program to the extent that in addition to TECE and LAKE, now BRPS and FG will also have the French Immersion track.

ALL of the students attached to these schools, would be within boundary for a French Immersion program should it be implemented in our School.

Since its conception in September of 2011 -- TECE has seen a growth in the FI program to the tune of a realized 55% increase in enrollment to date....

How many of these students are from Catholic families that would love to have the element of a Faith based education for their children, but currently have to make a choice French OR Faith -- WHY not give them BOTH?

Within the WECDSB you have realized the viability of this program with the growth that has been realized at ANNFI to the extent that CTK (which was well-under the 85% utilization rate) is having FI implemented for September of 2014 to help reduce the over-population at the ANNFI location and bring the utilization rate up at CTK.

If it is viable solution/option for CTK , it SHOULD also be a viable option for St. Gregory?

This program as stated previously would be beneficial to St. Gregory, St. Pius and St. Annes in that:

St. Anne's would finally have a French Immersion feeder school

The St. Gregory site would implement the FI program, beginning with JK/SK and Grade 1 (as has been done previously within the board) with the existing English program students being graded out....so that they can graduate as Sabres from their beloved school....

AND

The St. Pius site would see increased enrollment in becoming the English site and accommodating ALL NEW English students within the combined boundaries.

This would be a tremendous benefit to our board, our children and our community.

You have stated previously, that it would be irresponsible to do anything other than close our school -- based on the above, it would be irresponsible for you not to implement this very viable program and keep our Catholic identity flourishing.... Our school and school community have too much to offer and you have too much to lose by not giving this recommendation strong consideration.

DO NOT let the Public board reap all the benefits of being the ONLY French Immersion program available to our Catholic families.

Let's realize the benefits of FAITH and FRENCH combined and not make it a choice that sadly, currently, our Catholic families are having to make....

**Presentation to Board of Trustees – May 7, 2014**  
**Francine A. Herlehy, Parent/ARC Member, St. Gregory**

- My name is Francine Herlehy and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the Director's revised recommendation;
- I appreciate the complexity of the issues before you and I remain optimistic that you, as Trustees of catholic education, will make a decision guided by faith, reason and integrity;
- I am I opposed to the consolidation of St. Pius and St. Gregory in the manner proposed by the Director;

**By way of background, I offer the following information to enable you to have some context for my remarks in relation to this recommendation.**

- Last spring, I was selected to represent the St. Gregory school community in the ARC process; it has been inspiring to see three school communities, parents, principals, non-teaching staff representatives and community stakeholders come together to undertake the tasks entrusted to us;
- As an ARC Committee, we were assisted by members of our school communities and the broader community who shared their views, their concerns and their research at public meetings, town hall type gatherings, by emails, through phone calls and also random meetings around town;
- We prayed before each meeting; we worked tirelessly, collaboratively, and creatively; we stayed true to our catholic values and our commitment to catholic elementary education;
- As an ARC, we also had access to Board staff at our meetings and were told that additional Board staff would also be available to assist us as we gathered information and formulated our recommendation;
- Trustees, you should know that as ARC members, we often felt unsupported by the Board staff in our work; we were told that



information was not available; we were promised information that was only provided after significant delay; we were often told to be patient; we were told that the staff was supporting 3 ACRS simultaneously and did not have time to address all of our concerns; we were told that there was difficulty identifying board resource people in a position to respond to our inquiries; in fact, by the end of the process, we had met only one staff representative from the Board;

- We recognized, at every stage of the process, the fiscal realities faced by the Board; we attempted to consider the business case for each option – as you know, at times we had 5 options before us and many other sub-options under consideration;
- We were hampered in our ability to really address those fiscal realities; we asked for actual and projected expenses related to staffing and operations and we were provided with “Cliff Notes” instead; summaries rather than data; it is hard to contemplate how a group of lay people could be expected to fully consider options and make recommendations in the absence of a true business case for evaluation;
- Only when Minutes of the meetings made their way to the Board website were we provided with much of this information. As you may know, one public meeting was delayed because the Committee had grown frustrated by the lack of timely production of documents and felt we could not proceed further without that information;
- For members of the ARC Committee, this process was never about a building – it was always about catholic education and maintaining strong catholic faith communities in our elementary schools;
- We were proud of our efforts and our final recommendation;
- We were lead to believe that our recommendation to maintain status quo, explore French immersion, consider boundary reviews in the surrounding areas and explore community

partnerships was sound and reasonable in light of the information made available to us;

- Our recommendation falls squarely within Board Policy P RA-05 which indicates the Director is authorized to recommend that the schools be maintained and monitored;
- We were disappointed with the Director's initial Report recommending the closure of St. Gregory's; we learned then that the Director never viewed status quo as anything other than untenable;

### **Now to the Directors' Revised Recommendation**

- The speaking notes from April 16 refer to "***frustration beyond belief that only when threatened with school closure does there seem to be a willingness to seek solutions***"; that was troubling to hear;
- as a tax payer and separate school supporter, I have always trusted the Board to "*make the best and most prudent use of all of the resources available to the Board*" (see Policy A:05 Pupil Accommodation Review);
- I am not sure when or how the fiduciary duty of the Board and its' Administration was transferred to the ARC or the Community at large;
- On April 16, 2014, we learned, as a community, for the first time, that the Director was altering his recommendation; it was apparent that the efforts of the ARC Committee had been largely ignored; it was interesting to hear that the figures we had requested for months during the public meeting stage of the ARC process had suddenly been available to those involved in the formulation of this revised recommendation - apparently over the course of a weekend or a matter of days;
- It appears to me that the promise of no portables is driving this recommendation; it is a temporary fix at best; I believe it to be

no more than a ruse to advance the Administration's recommendation and ultimate goal of closing St. Gregory;

- the Terms of Reference for the ARC process required consideration of the 4 components of the School Information Profile
  1. value to the student
  2. value to the school board
  3. value to the community
  4. Value to the local economy –with value to the student considered and weighed above all other components; it is near impossible for me to reconcile how those components are met in this proposed recommendation;
- This recommendation further divides our school communities and in many cases, divides families; it hampers any future efforts to recruit new catholic families to our area and to our schools; it places the blame on changing demographics or the failure to properly plan for those changes on the children attending these schools;
- It is troubling to see that we still have only a short term plan for elementary education in the Tecumseh Area;
- We have the heard the Public Board's short and medium term plan for their schools in our community; we have witnessed the community support behind those plans – largely because of the transparency of their process; their decisions have created stability for those families selecting public education; our process has done nothing more than create additional uncertainty about the future of catholic elementary education in Tecumseh;
- With all due respect to all Trustees and Board Staff, the division of our schools in this way is no solution; I would ask you, as our Trustees, to maintain the schools and to continue to monitor them – as is clearly authorized in your own Pupil Accommodation Review Procedure PR A -05 at paragraph 4.3 :

PR A O5 – paragraph 4.3 the Director's Report to the Board

reporting on the results of the public consultation process and providing an analysis and recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

The recommendation(s) contained in the report shall consist of one or more of the following:

**a) To maintain the schools and to continue to monitor them;**

- Just to be clear, I oppose the consolidation of St. Pius and St. Gregory in the manner proposed by the Director;
- St. Gregory is situated in a growth area for a School Board that has many schools located in areas where further development is not possible – I urge the Board to defer any decision on this matter for two years, to allow the benefits of the recent housing developments and the community's continued effort to generate community partnerships, and recruitment of new catholic students;
- I encourage the Board to fully consider the viability of French immersion at St. Pius and/or St. Gregory as there is an obvious demonstrated interest in this offering and it is not being met.
- That is not to say that we should compete with the French catholic board; I simply recommend the Board consider offering a full array of educational options to our Tecumseh families;
- French Immersion has generated untold increases in enrollment in the public school system;
- I note as well that while French Immersion is offered at St. Anne's High School, St Anne's currently does not have a feeder elementary school to provide French immersion candidates;
- Alternatively, the Trustees are urged to defer the closure of St. Gregory until such time as the implementation can be carried out without the use of portables at St. Pius;
- Obviously, this is an emotional issue for many of us; we are married to our school communities; it must always be about more

than just a building – it must be about our children being educated in a catholic faith community; it must be about recognizing and rewarding the successes of our principals and teachers and our children

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- Last time we gathered, we heard a parent say “if you show someone death, they will choose illness”; that has stuck with me in the days since that meeting; I believe we have options for healing;
- I am a taxpayer, I am a supporter of the catholic school board; I am a voter; I will always look for solutions; I will always do what is in the best interests of my children; I will always choose catholic education; but I will also demand that the Board entrusted to deliver these programs acts in a manner that is both fiscally responsible and in the best interests of our children, all the while keeping with our core catholic values;
- I continue to pray that our Trustees will give full and fair consideration to all information available and do what is right and defensible.
- I thank you for your kind attention this evening.

May 7, 2014

My name is Cynthia Vilella and I come before you again tonight as a parent and community member of St. Gregory School.

There was a statement made by a fellow parent at the last board meeting on April 16, that although I feel was an accurate analogy of our current situation, it has been quoted, misunderstood and used against us. That statement was "...when presented with death....one may choose illness" (Mike Rohrer).

I would like to take a few moments and present a situation to the Board of trustees based on my background in healthcare, oncology and palliative care.

You are in your doctor's office for a routine appointment. You are confronted with a result from a minor test that indicates you have a malignant mass that is life threatening and will require treatment. They have not used the word CANCER....as this would give a different message....much like this ARS procedure....as it used to be named the School Closure protocol until 2009 when its' name was changed to decrease panic.

They have told you that the extensive treatment over the course of 10 months would be grueling, frustrating, time consuming, and take time away from your family, but would give you a chance of surviving your illness. They stress to you that despite the 10 months of hell that you were about to face it would be worth it, because this treatment has been studied and used in the past and you can trust that it will be effective. When you ask about the financial burden of the treatment, your physician states, don't worry, this will not effect finances.

The months carry on....you are not able to work, you are too sick to enjoy the things that make you happy, or spend time with family....and more importantly this promising treatment is not showing to have any improvement on your malignant mass....as your treatment nears the end, you are now being hit with the untold financial burdens...the expenses that if only your doctor told you about them....your plan and your decisions may have been different or in the least very much more thought out.

Your doctor tells you at your last visit that despite your efforts, you are going to die. So see the statement the Mike Rohrer made is actually quite accurate....when faced with illness or death....most of us would choose illness....however illness does not mean to have no quality of life, but the chance to live with our illness and prepare for the road ahead. Spend quality of time with our family and our friends. Plan memorable events knowing that they might be our last.

The families and community members of St. Gregory School have recognized that despite our well articulated research and comprehensive strategies to keep our school open as status quo, that this is not possible. Unfortunately, if our Accommodation Review Committee had been given more detailed information early on in this process about the financial goals of administration, our decisions and recommendations most likely would have been much more focused and possible more parallel on those goals. But like most communication, if key components are eliminated, it is very difficult to make an informed decision. Just like that patient that is not given the information that the drugs are still in the research phase so they are therefore not financially covered, the best supportive medications are not financially covered, you will be too sick to go to work, therefore you will have

to be on disability... the list goes on and I think you can all see the point I am trying to make. Accurate communication is what makes transparency equal TRUST.

So here I am today....clarifying that St. Gregory's school does not choose illness in the sense that we would choose our school to stay open only to see our families and friends separated from one another in the proposed K-6 and 7/8 model. We DO NOT support Mr. Picard's amended report. But what I am stating is that we would except illness in the sense that would like to have the opportunity to work with you, the administration on a treatment plan that would see a French immersion program started at St. Gregory School to benefit the entire Tecumseh community!

We as a community and school family have been forced to enter the grieving process. DENIAL, ANGER, BARGAINING, DEPRESSION and finally ACCEPTANCE.

We are far from acceptance but I feel we are getting closer to a suitable compromise that can be a win-win plan for both the Board and the communities. French Immersion is growing by leaps and bounds every year within our community. In discussing this plan with only a few individuals early this week, I already have a list of 12 children that would enter this program! And I am only one person.

Imagine if your physician gave you the name of your illness and told you that you needed to look into your own treatment plan. And if they didn't answer your questions at your appointments, but told you they would post the answers on the hospital website. Do you think that this should be an acceptable standard of care for yourself or a loved one?

This process is flawed, we know it, you know it and the Ministry knows it. We need a more constructive approach in certain communities to creatively maintain catholic education and possibly expand other programs into the system to create a product that will attract students back into our schools. The Town of Tecumseh is a French community....French Immersion is a reasonable program to bring to this community.

We were told at the beginning of this process to embrace it and trust it....we did....and we want to be given the opportunity to embrace a new French immersion program at St. Gregory school and are committed to work closely with administration to ensure it flourishes within our community.

The most important thing for any patient is HOPE!

We do not accept the death of our community's educational institution and catholic landmark, we want to continue to share in our academic achievements and our catholic faith together. Our treatment plan of French Immersion is a CURE! There will understandably be expenses associated with implementing this program, but like all successes the investment is worth the gain. The potential success for a French immersion program in the town of Tecumseh does not come with a price tag....it is priceless!

William Althouse

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014

I would like to firstly thank the Board and Trustees for their time and efforts in this critically important process and for giving me the opportunity to once again speak, specifically in addressing the Board's supplemental recommendation.

Firstly, from a financial point of view the supplementation recommendation is flawed. The shifting of all grade 7 and 8 students, from St. Gregory and St. Pius, to St. Gregory will lower the Utilization Rate from 79% to 54%, at this school. And with the new ministry funding 'top-up' model, will result in funding to 65% of the school's capacity. Consolidating all JK through grade 6 students at St. Pius, will result in a utilization rate of 89%, permitting funding, with the support of the ministry, to 95%. In the supplemental recommendation, a 41% short-fall in funding will be achieved. Compare this figure to the case where both academic institutions are left as JK through grade 8 will result in a short-fall of 15%. It is very clear and evident from an operating point of view, that it is far more appropriate to exploit the higher utilization rates.

On the topic of reduced teaching positions, to save costs, I question where this concept fits within the Board's Accommodation Review Study criteria.

As a taxpayer within the Town of Tecumseh, I support and acknowledge that partnership programs between the Town and various school boards exist. In many aspects of life we see how benefits are far greater when groups combine resources for communities. For example, I note the involvement of the Town of Tecumseh with the French School Board contributing towards the theater and soccer fields at L'Essor High School. Additionally, this own Board's involvement with the Town on the Baseball fields at St. Peter Grade School. However, I



provided solutions to strengthen Catholic Education and student enrollment throughout Tecumseh and potentially beyond to deal with declining enrolment.

The Tecumseh area needs a Catholic Elementary French Immersion school. St. Anne's High School has a French Immersion program but does not have a French Immersion feeder school. As a result, this program is not being run to its full potential. There is no effective way for this program to actively recruit students. The St. Anne's high school French Immersion program relies on students leaving the public French Immersion program or the Full French program from either the Public or Catholic Boards.

A phased in French Immersion program at St. Gregory School would be in the Board's best interest to attract more students to this school, especially at this critical time as new homes are being constructed and new and young families are entering into this area. Parents within Tecumseh are choosing French Immersion as witnessed by the rapid influx of students at Tecumseh Vista and Lakeshore Discovery. However, given a choice, many parents would prefer a neighbourhood community school like St. Gregory. The established positive reputation of this school with the added bonus of a phased-in French Immersion program would surely help to increase enrolment at this school. There is no other practical option available for families seeking Catholic French Immersion in this area.

Positioning of a French Immersion program at St. Gregory School is very wise as a large number of students, currently attending Tecumseh Vista and Lakeshore Discovery French Immersion, are located on the north shore of the Tecumseh/Lakeshore area. The position of the school, as well as its appropriate 'right-size' for an elementary school, should draw more students to St. Gregory.

In closing, the supplemental recommendation, offers no mechanism to provide value to the student, the board, the community, and the local economy. Nor does it promote sustainability of the schools. The splitting of the school communities will not only significantly reduce the values which the board, teachers, and communities have created but also result in no solid approach to increase enrolment. Options which have been presented to the Board, through the ARC, especially the concept of a phased-in French Immersion Program at St. Gregory School, should be considered as no one wishes to permanently close the doors to any exceptional Catholic elementary school. St. Gregory the Great, the namesake of our school, is the Patron Saint of students and teachers. There is no doubt that throughout this ARC process, St. Gregory has been instrumental in guiding our school community to find solutions to ensure that Catholic Education remain vibrant, accessible, and the best option for Catholic families and students in Tecumseh and the surrounding areas.

Thank you.

I'm Geoff Butler and I thank you for allowing me to speak. I have five children. Three currently attend St. Gregory's. If the proposed division of St. Pius and St. Greg's were allowed to unfold, next year I would have them enrolled in five different schools. Surely, all parents can appreciate the practical complications that having our children dispersed will involve. If this were the right decision, I would embrace it as a tool to teach my children about sacrifice for the greater good.

However, what is the greater good here? Should they see me go along with what I believe to be a faulty process and painful short-sightedness, or should I teach my children that they don't need to blindly follow where they are led, or accept actions that disrespect them or others?

At the last meeting my family wore shirts describing our intention to go to the public system should St. Gregory's close. I was informed by parents and members of this administration through multiple phone calls that it might be the wrong approach. If any of you would dismiss your objectivity and vote to oppose something simply because you were offended by the reality that some of us will face, then you have forgotten your purpose and are undermining this process. The duties of a trustee are many, but most importantly a trustee must:

- 1) Defend the trust
- 2) Be Loyal
- 3) Administer in the best interest of the beneficiaries (The children.)

The director has emphasized a number of times the need for the board to practice both transparency and accountability. I feel, this current process dishonours those very things.

First, I have spoken with administrative staff as well as trustees and the consistent opinion (off the record of course) was that this was a done deal and St. Gregory's was closing. If something is predetermined, then, irrespective of how much information is on a somewhat difficult-to-navigate website, this is not transparency.

Second, the purpose of the ARC committee was (I quote) "to report and make recommendations on future pupil accommodation options for the Tecumseh Area". To this end, the committee invested their time looking at issues that impacted on pupil enrolment. It is hard to reconcile this mandate with the solution put forth by the Director at the last meeting. There was no mention of savings as a result of no

longer 'topping up' to the golden 85%. No mention of savings for no longer running an inefficient building. This was simply the elimination of 7 jobs. If this process of pupil accommodation has been a smokescreen to justify cutting jobs then it should be reviewed. I guarantee you that the ARC committee and certainly the teacher's association would have handled this differently if the mandate had been "please report and make recommendations on the feasibility of cutting 5 teaching positions, 1 ECE position and 1 support staff position."

Furthering this sentiment is the minimal degree to which both schools are below the 85% threshold. They have both been hamstrung by the lack of full time JK and SK and yet still sit at a combined 77% capacity. If you simply apply the number of builds predicted by the town in the next couple years with the Watson report's rate of pupil growth you get 63-90 students entering the system. Please be aware that you, the trustees, will be closing a school that could sit at 83-85.6% enrolment. This is without considering border changes, french immersion, community partnerships or anything else.

However, is this what the board is looking for? I would ask the question and many others like it but there is no effective question and answer avenue to this process. Indeed, we are told in this 'open' process, what points of view this panel will indulge hearing. This only serves to frustrate everyone involved and reduces the ARC process to an exceptionally ineffectual posturing at public debate and parental involvement. It speaks again to the lack of transparency. Are we looking for 85% enrolment or is it actually 100%? How long does a school have to be below the 85% threshold before it is on the chopping block?

I have had to tell my children that it seems it's all about money. The solution to the current dilemma notes that eventually the portables at St. Pius will be replaced by a permanent addition. How much will that cost? Where are those numbers? Consider that the addition to Vista is estimated to cost \$13000000.

A large family operating at any household income must be aware of a budget. What can I teach my children about the budgetary priorities of this Catholic school board family? I can tell them that the budget for 2014-15 is \$239 758 463. A \$500,000 savings represents 0.2% of expenditures. I don't wish to dismiss the importance of this savings but to point out that this board chooses to spend this amount, the sum attached to the survival of our school community, 500 other times in one year. For example, the board offices cost 3.1 million dollars to upgrade. If that is worth a 3.1 million dollar investment then I think that 800 students, roughly

4% of your pupils, are deserving of similar commitment.

I pray that you recognize that the current process has been rushed, flawed and deserves more time if nothing else. You are, in haste, on the verge of throwing the babies out with the bathwater. There is a reason that faith development and student achievement are priorities above corporate management. You stipulate repeatedly that savings will allow the pursuit of programs that are good for the students but you fail to see that these programs are already in place at both St. Pius and St. Greg's.

You, are charged with a trust and a responsibility to be loyal to our children's best interests. Let them see an administration that invests in them... And in fairness... And in effective due process that is in alignment with this board's mandate and the spirit of Catholic education.

I tell my kids that too often, personal accountability is diluted in the anonymity of a group... Will *you* claim your vote without regret or reservation if years from now, a weaker board is scrambling to finance a new learning environment to replace the one it already had in St Gregory? If the Catholic board collapses into the public system, will you consider it a mystery, or be brave enough to identify the small missteps that lead us all there. Teach the children in this very large family; teach the community that watches, something good about the integrity of Catholic education.

**Good evening everyone,**

**Firstly, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you this evening. My name is Karen Tellerd. I have 2 children that attend St. Pius school and I am here to speak to you about why we do not support the supplemental accommodation option of a separate school for Grades 7 and 8 students.**

**Upon having many discussions with fellow parents about this new recommendation a re-occurring theme continued to present itself. We are asking ourselves what VALUE would this add to my child's life? What VALUE would this recommendation bring to my family? Upon trying to answer that question we are seeming only to find challenges instead of ways that this will add value to our child's life and enhance his or her learning experience.**

**Today I have chosen to speak with you about only one of those challenges. The effect that this proposal would have on the before and after school lives of families.**

**I am an active parent in the school community, I am also an active parent in my childrens extra curricular activities. However I am a working parent as well. Being a working parent., or any parent for that matter requires a great degree of scheduling to make the household run properly. When many families are presented with the possibility of an older sibling being at a separate location from a younger sibling it creates substantial issues within the household in regards to getting children to and from school and after school care, as well as causes many to have safety concerns for the younger children.**

**How will the younger child in a family get to school if the older child is unable to assist with this process? What we would be looking at in a split school scenario is a large increase in bus transportation for many students. Where traditionally many older siblings would be responsible for walking younger siblings to school, or taking them to the bus stop, this would no longer be an option. Families would be left with several challenging scenarios.**

- 1. The older sibling and the younger sibling are both taking the bus. With each student being at a different school we would potentially be looking at different pick-up times, or different bus stops, or different busses altogether. In many instances this would certainly leave a younger child standing alone waiting for the bus, or with nobody to walk them to the bus stop at all.**



**2. An older sibling normally walks the younger sibling to school. With both students now being at separate schools, and at least one of the students very likely to be taking a bus and not walking at all, how then, will the younger child get to school or the bus stop?**

**This brings me to my second point which is before and after school childcare. The last several years we have been seeing the phasing in of full day learning for JK and SK students. This initiative while giving many of our youngest students an enhanced educational experience, has also done wonders to ease the burden of childcare for many families. With the proposed supplemental accommodation many families in our school community would once again be looking at adding the burden of childcare back into their lives.**

**In many families it is very common for an older sibling to collect a younger child from school, see them safely home and care for them until a parent is able to arrive. With many of our families being split between 2 schools the older child would be unable to assist with the younger child leaving many parents no option but to find before and after school care for the younger child.**

**When we are discussing older children assisting in getting younger children home safely, this is not something that occurs strictly with siblings. We have many children that walk home from school daily. I walk my own children home from school most days and I have had the absolute pleasure of watching the natural dynamic of the students from our school. The kids are often clustered together in groups and they**

**look out for one another. I have many times seen an older student assist a younger student crossing the street. I often see an older child wait at the bottom of the driveway to make sure a younger child gets all the way in the door safely. I have even seen some of our older students stand up for a younger student getting picked on while walking home from school. The natural leadership that these children display is nothing short of amazing. If we were to take away the senior students from the school this makes the experience of children walking home much different and many parents, especially those just transitioning a child into walking home independently, will have safety concerns that they did not experience when the senior students were also walking home.**

**Reflecting back on what I have said this evening, it could certainly be said**

**that we rely on the senior students in our school for a lot. Yet time and time again I have personally seen these children rise to the challenge. They have stepped up to the plate, so to speak, and made themselves invaluable to us as a community in both their practical assistance as well as the leadership that they display each and everyday both inside our school walls and out in the community.**

**I would ask that you consider this when you make your final decision.**

**Thank you so much for your time this evening.**

Joelle Long  
St Pius X

Good evening, Trustees, Superintendents, Director and the Tecumseh school community. My name is Joelle Long, and I am the parent of three children currently enrolled at St. Pius X. I am here this evening to tell you why splitting our school diminishes the value of our child's education, and also the value of our Families as cohesive unit. The St. Pius community does not believe a split school is the answer. We believe strongly that our children's education will be impacted negatively by this decision, especially during the typical school day.

St. Pius X, as well as many other schools, take pride in the fact that the older students are mentors to their siblings, as well as other classmates in the school system. At St. Pius the grade 7's and 8's offer plenty of help for the teachers with primary grade students. The grade 6 and 7 students look forward to one day helping the students in the younger grades. How much mentoring will take place in the new 7-8 building? Peer Pals has been a terrific program for assistance and mentoring behavior in the school yard during recess periods. Senior grades at St. Pius X offer great assistance to the staff with general daily activities, Mass trips, lab time. The older children also help with houseleague sports which is a large program at St. Pius. Will there even be houseleagues in a K-6 school without the older students to support the program? What will happen to this mentorship when the two oldest grades are gone?

We as a community are extremely concerned about the extra-curricular activities that will be offered to the grade 7 and 8's in their new building. Currently, St. Pius X has a Chess Club, Math Team, Tech Team, Choir, as well as most of the major sports (basketball, soccer, vball, badminton) St. Pius math Team ranks 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> with monthly test scores in the Essex county. Some of these smaller teams and clubs offer a great team experience to those not involved in athletic sports activities. How will such a substantially smaller teacher base at the new school be able to support ALL of these extra-curricular clubs, activities as well as regular duties such as yard duty? This brainchild doesn't sound like it could provide an enhanced learning experience for our children.

Our Community believes the Morale and Spirit of the senior grades will be diminished due to their low numbers. Without as many opportunities to be on teams, the bond is not formed like those in larger schools, with more teams and clubs to foster school spirit. What kind of pride can the children have going to a building which may not be around in two years? The senior grades at St. Pius X are currently in charge of organizing and executing Spirit Assemblies for the entire school. The Muskoka Experience is one of creating leaders, who will these 7/8 students be leaders for during their Catholic school journey? We want our older children to have the same experience and pride in organizing events like this for the younger children in their school. For anyone; teacher OR student, it's tough to gain enthusiasm for a temporary assignment and have Faith in our Future.

The St. Pius X computer lab is state of the art, and the students along with their Computer Specialty Teacher helped it develop and grow. Why should the same children that helped develop the lab, now be taken away from it? The senior lab helpers often help the younger students with "green screens" and videotaping. The Tech Team is an entity that has spawned from our Computer lab at St. Pius X. This team is currently in charge of setting up school masses, and assemblies at their school. This is a great source of pride for these students, a terrific asset for the staff, and is part of an enhanced learning experience

for all children. Will the 7/8 classes have a Computer Specialty teacher, and a state of the art lab assisting with these valuable skills heading into high school?

Last, but not least- the Parent Volunteer Base of split schools suffers greatly. At St. Pius we currently have a strong and committed volunteer group who donate their efforts during the day and throughout the year. You are now forcing parents to decide which event to attend, which sports team to drive for. We are now dividing our time between two schools; Pizza Day at one, OR driving for a field trip at another. Great school success comes from %100 investment in one school. One parent council, strongly motivated, highly involved and committed.

The drive to protect the Mental health of the child was supposed to be the focus recently in the Windsor Essex boards, with The ABC's of mental health website and Resources for teachers and Parents. Are we seriously focusing on the mental health of the child and their families by veiling their future with uncertainty? The St. Pius community interests do not reside in preserving a building, our interests remain with the preservation of our child's education and their family unit. We need to know our trustees can navigate us down the proper path, one of Greater enhanced learning in the Catholic school system together with our families at one school.

Good evening, Trustees, Superintendents, Director and the Tecumseh school community. My name is Scott Briscoe and I am a proud parent of two small children enrolled at St. Pius School. As a parent actively engaged in my children's school life, I felt compelled to attend every ARC meeting to keep abreast of what is happening.

I have spent my entire career working with businesses and organizations throughout North America and am now a Professor at St. Clair College. I must say, I have never before witnessed a process anything like what our local community is facing now in regards to these school closings.

I have been silent so far as I understood what was being done and accepted the outcomes based on the previous recommendations. The supplemental accommodation option put forth by the board involving splitting the schools into JK to grade 6 at St. Pius and grades 7 & 8 at St Gregory took everyone by surprise and I felt that I could not stay silent any longer.

You will hear and have heard many reasons why this is not a good idea and I would like to share my opinion on why I agree that this is not a viable option as it directly relates to the identity of each school and the students.

This process has succeeded in accomplishing only one thing - adding a divisive wedge into the collective of the community. It has pitted schools against schools and parents against parents. Instead of embracing change and preparing for an opportunity, students are now fearing the worst based on parental guided assumptions and hyperbole. It troubles me to see what has happened and the sad part is, it didn't have to be this way.

I grew up in LaSalle and moved to Tecumseh roughly 15 years ago when I got married. One of the main reasons I chose to move where I currently reside was the proximity to St. Pius School and the overall quality of the Catholic school system. I loved the "togetherness" of the community, the shared values and the core set of beliefs I knew would one day be shared with my children.

In the past ARC meetings, you have heard from countless people speaking to why moving children from a school is a bad idea. I am not going to begin to recap everything that was said because we have heard the same reasons at every ARC meeting. Yet, with all of the reasons stated and provided to the board for review, a supplemental accommodation option was put forth by the board that disregarded everything that was said. It was almost as if all of the "testimony" so impassionedly eloquated on the communities' behalf was overlooked without a second glance! Why is this?

How could the board feel that this is a suitable option? There is a reason why the ARC recommendations didn't include this option - it simply isn't viable for many reasons.

In our schools there is a large focus on school unity, cohesiveness, sharing, and mentorship. Our students are proud to be "Pacers" and I know that St. Gregory's are proud to be "Sabres".

The proposal at hand will single handily dismantle the identities of each school. You are going to take all of the lower grade students and place them at St. Pius and the higher grade students at St. Gregs. Not only

are you eliminating the peer mentorship element that is so important to the students but in many cases, you are separating siblings from one another.

This proposal includes a probationary period of two years to see if this works. I ask what the dominant criteria is for this evaluation. Increased enrollment? If so, enrolment where? I know the theoretical intent behind this (waiting to see if St. Gregs enrollment increases) but how does the Board envision this working if prospective incoming students of lower grades of St. Gregs will not actually be going to St. Gregs but rather to St. Pius! If this is the case, what if the parents don't want to uproot their children and disrupt their lives and just keep them at St. Pius? What do you do then? Force them to change schools?

I am trying desperately to understand the logic behind this proposal. For this two year period, where does St. Pius start and St. Gregs end? Where is the school spirit? The common cause? How vested will the students be if they know that in a short period of time, they may be gone? We are moving our older children to an island and robbing them of their chance to experience and grow as a leader. What about sports teams? Clubs? Assemblies, helper programs? Who will the younger grades aspire to? Who will they look up to as an example? A leader?

Scott Williams was once quoted as saying "*leaders develop more leaders*". I believe this is why students participate in the Muskoka Woods leadership trip. Who do you expect to lead the way for our younger children as no one will be left to fill this void. Younger students wait for the day when they will become the "*leaders*" of the school. With this proposal, these students will now face an entirely new reality. How excited will these students be if they know that when they reach grade 7, they will be shipped off to a different school?

I truly believe that this recommendation is an exercise in futility as any attempt to increase enrollment will be dampened by the reality of the situation. What family would enroll their children in a dysfunctional setup as the one proposed? Imagine a family consisting of children in grades 4 & 6 potentially moving into the area. They will both start in the same school, then they will be separated and possibly uprooted again in 2 years to end up where they started! Why would anyone choose to enroll their children and subject them to this type of atmosphere when alternative stable accommodations are available elsewhere? If you are entirely honest with yourself, would you? Would anyone here?

School is supposed to provide a solid foundation for our children, not one built on shifting land. I remember in one of the past ARC meetings, a St. Gregs parent stood up and said that the board hindered the schools efforts of increasing enrollment because parents were not willing to enroll their students in a school that could be closing in the very near future. How would what's proposed here change this?

I ask you, isn't that argument true here? Even more so? Not only could the school close, but the school itself will no longer be a school, rather a "layover" stop for students of grades 7 & 8 waiting for the inevitability of this doomed experiment. What is the incentive for these parents? Where is the connection for the students? There simply isn't one.

This recommendation is not viable for many reasons and at the end of the day, the only real winners here will be A.V Graham & DM Eagle. Thank you for your time and consideration.



## **St. Pius X Feedback to the Supplemental Accommodation Option Presented April 16, 2014: Explanation of the Silent Position and Follow-up**

I understand, until now, you have not received feedback from our St. Pius X community. Please do not mistake our silence as one of indifference. You have had our attention since this process began. We have been observing and listening and opted to avoid the awkwardness your process generates by creating a school verse school mentality. Until now our St. Pius X community, aware of the fiscal reality of the WECDSB and the need for maximizing the effective use of Board resources, understood and welcomed both the plea for status quo as well as your original recommendation of consolidating the two Schools. However, today we cannot express strongly enough our opposition to your recommendation to split up our children for the reasons presented here tonight.

I can't comprehend how a Board who has historically supported the "grandfather rule" when making boundary changes to avoid splitting families, recognizing the negative implications, can now recommend such an action. Not only is this option less feasible and lacking sustainability, the negative impact will affect more families than either the status quo or full consolidation.

Our children grow so quickly and will be separated soon enough. Don't cause this to happen prematurely and lose valuable bonding opportunities as they care for each other both at school and at home. I urge everyone here to consider for a moment the value our children and families can derive from a larger school, such as less need for split classes, increased resources, activities and special programs, to name a few.

Unfortunately, the status quo was deemed an unreasonable option by the Board and although change is uncomfortable we adamantly cannot support this latest accommodation option and urge you to reconsider in favour of family and community unity. To be clear, in the best interest of our families, we at St. Pius firmly reject this recommendation and fully support the original recommendation of consolidation.

We have chose not to view it as a change to fear, but as an opportunity to revitalize and strengthen our children's learning environment. To quote my 12 year old son "it will be so cool to have more kids at school...I hope they like to play soccer". Behind his words were obvious feelings of excitement and optimism. Like my son, and others at St. Pius, we sincerely welcome and open our doors to the St. Gregory's community and invite them to join us in creating a positive Christian learning environment for all our children.

Thank you,

Connie Kempe  
St. Pius X Parent  
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Written submissions  
received at the  
May 7, 2014  
Special Board Meeting

Writer: Shirley Dion, Parent, St. Pius

Friends and Families,

*Rec'd at the May 7th  
meeting*

My son is a kindergarten student at St. Pius. Chances are that any outcome of this accommodation review will not directly affect him now. However, I am still compelled to speak to you tonight.

First, I want to clearly say that I do not support the recommendation of Kindergarten to Grade 6 at the St. Pius site and Grades 7/8 at the St. Gregory site. I agree strongly with the many reasons being presented this evening.

In the event that there is no other option than to merge the two schools, I want to express how important it is to have enough time to make a smooth transition for the sake of the children.

I can speak from our own experience. Our oldest son started kindergarten in 1992 in the Bishop Cody French Immersion programme and over the last 22 years as our other children have passed through their elementary years we have experienced our share of pizza days, family nights, PAC meetings and sadly—2 school closures.

The first closure came as the neighbouring school, St. Christopher, was outgrowing their aging building. It was decided to move the students into the Bishop Cody building and merge the Bishop Cody and St. Anne French Immersion communities at the St. Anne site. Although the decision to move was not easy for parents to accept, care was taken to ensure that the transition would be a positive experience. The students had the opportunity to meet several times, both in the Bishop Cody site and the St. Anne site. Parents were welcomed into the new facilities to become familiar with the new surroundings and teachers. By September, the children were excited to start school with all the new friends they had met. The time also allowed for logistics to be sorted through. This included portables being moved in, equipment and other French materials moved in, classrooms rearranged, class lists set and bus routes reorganized. Parental input was always respected.

The second full school closure was the closure of St. Andrew. This was a very rapid closure with no preparation for the children. This resulted in only a small number of parents accepting the Board's recommendation and moving their

children to St. Angela. A great number of parents moved their children to Hugh Beaton which is the neighbourhood public school.

Experiencing the two situations, I can tell you that the time invested to unite the two school communities is well worth it.

Next, I want to say that I am strongly in favor of exploring ways to bring the French Immersion programme to the St. Gregory site.

The French Immersion Programme at Bishop Cody started as a small school of children from Kindergarten to Grade 4 and expanded to its full program as the children advanced. It quickly grew to the point where a north/south boundary was established and St. Anne French Immersion opened. Families who enrolled their children in this program were very dedicated to it and sincerely appreciated the value of having French as a second language.

At the time when Bishop Cody and St Anne were consolidated, I was very involved in the school. I had the opportunity of knowing many parents personally. The biggest concern of the parents I spoke to, who decided not to follow the French Immersion programme was simply the distance and bussing to St. Anne.

I have always thought the growth of the French Immersion programme was stunted due to its location and limited capacity. I think that if French Immersion schools were more accessible the program would quickly gain momentum again.

I think that another French Immersion site at Christ the King is great! However, I think that the population of Tecumseh is growing and that a French Immersion presence is needed here too. I think that the proof is in the enrollment in the public schools and in their French Immersion programs.

You have the building, town support and a great group of parents willing to make this happen. I agree that French Immersion is a viable way to bring enrollment back to St. Gregory.

In concluding, I do recognize that due to shifting demographics, and ever-changing policies and budgets, tough decisions need to be made. I am concerned

at the effect this is having on our Catholic education. Numbers are constantly dropping and schools are continuing to close. I know that some of it is due to declining population, but there are far too many catholic children in public schools. We need to ask "why". Maybe now is the time to start thinking "out of the box." We need to stand up for our Catholic education and live up to the mission statement: "Learning together in Faith and Service". Schools are precious and we should be ashamed to let even one more gem slip away.

I strongly support education based in our Catholic Faith. I think it is our moral mandate to promote it!