

Sc 3 EF  
Box 2 File 7

---

# CIVIC AFFAIRS

School Closures:  
Are They the Solution?



Bureau of Municipal Research  
Better Government Through Research



# Council

David Freeman  
*President*  
Eric Hardy  
*Past President*  
Lorne Almack  
*Treasurer*  
Dr. Murray Frum  
*Vice President*  
Mrs. Mary Ann Miller  
*Vice President*  
Russell J. Morrison  
*Vice President*  
D. Geoffrey Armstrong  
Maryon Brechin  
Mac A. Chown, Q.C.  
Alan P. Cole  
A.H. DeMille  
Robert F. Fellner

James L. Franceschini  
Jack W. Fraser  
Matti Gering  
Neal Irwin  
Rev. Richard D. Jones  
Leon R. Kentridge  
Arthur J. Langley  
Geoffrey Milburn  
James A. Mizzoni  
William B. Moore  
Jay P. Moreton  
William Reno  
Alan J. Scott  
Lorne C. Stephenson  
W.L.S. Trivett, Q.C.  
D.J. VanAelst  
Michael B. Vaughan  
Mrs. A.H. Wait  
Professor John C. Weaver  
F.E. Whitehead

# Advisory Board

Douglas C. Matthews  
*Chairman*  
Jay P. Moreton  
*Past Chairman*  
R. Barford  
Dr. J. Stefan Dupre  
G.M. Gore  
G.C. Gray

F.W. Hurst  
J.J. Leroux  
Donald McKillop  
D.G. Neelands  
Peter Oliphant  
J.B. Purdy  
J. Bryan Vaughan  
G.T.N. Woodrooffe

**School Closures:  
Are They the Solution?**

# Staff

*Executive Director* ..... Mary Lynch  
*Research Associate* ..... Ute Wright  
*Office Manager* ..... Judy Milne  
*Librarian* ..... \*Mrs. Alice Bull  
*Administrative Assistant* ..... \*Susan Hawkins

\*Part time



CIVIC AFFAIRS IN BRIEF

The Ministry of Education has asked that each board of education across Ontario submit its policy regarding school closures to the Province by fall 1980. For this reason, even those areas which have not been faced by a closure, will have to take a serious look at closures and the process of decision making.

This Civic Affairs addresses the closure issue from both a theoretical as well as a process point of view. The general policies of the larger boards across the Province are briefly reviewed as well as the role the Province plays in closure.

A case study of one Board is presented which shows two types of procedures they have used to determine whether a school should close. The first process involved the board making a decision to close and an advisory committee helping to implement that decision. The second was the board and community together trying to decide whether a closure should take place and how to implement that decision.

These two examples serve as excellent guides to the aspects of a process which work and those which do not. The breakdowns that occurred are documented and recommendations are made for this board as well as all boards involved in closures.

Regardless of the process used, however, most boards have accepted closures as a fact of life. By this acceptance many have also accepted that closures are beyond their control. Closures in fact do not necessarily have to be either inevitable or uncontrollable.

The Bureau believes that closures should be viewed as a last resort, not as inevitable. Automatic closure is not a long term solution but is many times an incremental one. Closures can create more problems than they solve. What is really needed is to have boards in Ontario widen their perspective and deal with closures in a comprehensive and organized manner.

**Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Main entry under title:  
School closures

(Civic affairs, ISSN 0045-7027)  
ISBN 0-919066-18-6

1. School Attendance — Ontario. 2. School management and organization — Decision making — Ontario. 3. School management and organization — Decision making — Ontario — Case studies. I. Bureau of Municipal Research (Toronto, Ont.). II. Series.

LC145.C2S36 371.2'19'713 C81-094177-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II	PRESENT LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	3
III	FACTORS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL.....	6
IV	CLOSURE CASE STUDY.....	10
	Background.....	10
	Green Meadows.....	13
	Richview Junior School.....	16
	Where were the Breakdowns in the 1979 Process?.....	20
V	OTHER FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED.....	23
	Collective Agreements and Public Willingness to Pay.....	24
	Financial Considerations.....	25
	Neighbourhood Effects.....	27
VI	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
	General Board Policies.....	30



## I INTRODUCTION

The 1950's and the 1960's were a period of great growth in the education field. The number of students increased dramatically as the results of the baby boom were felt on the school system. School boards went through a period of great prosperity and fairly easy decisions: where to locate schools; how to allocate the money being provided by the Province for the new facilities; where the next demand for schools would be felt.

In the 1970's this situation changed. The number of school aged children declined rapidly. With this decline came a decrease in demand for school space and an accompanying decrease in financial support from the Province. The boards had little time to readjust their thinking before decisions had to be made on an ever increasing set of new and complex problems. Many of the decisions made were made as reactions to the situation and time was not available to carefully review the overall educational requirements in the context of these new facts.

The future of school enrolments does not look much brighter. The Jackson Commission on Declining Enrolment noted that there is a:

common pattern of declining elementary school age populations and enrolments into the mid-80's. This will be followed by a gradual increase until the mid-90's and then a gradual decrease into the new century. There will be declining secondary school enrolments until 1992 or 1993 followed by a gradual increase past 2001 (with an implied decline thereafter).<sup>1</sup>

School boards will continue to face the problem of fluctuating enrolments and decreasing funds. It is therefore essential that they develop a variety of methods to cope with these problems; ones which are well thought out, comprehensive in nature, and deal with the realities of education today. The solutions must go beyond the initial approach of reacting and must be based on solid principles and innovative ideas.

---

<sup>1</sup>The Implications of Declining Enrolment for the Schools of Ontario: A Statement of Effects and Solutions, the Commission on Declining Enrolments in Ontario, (Toronto, 1978).



This study deals specifically with one aspect of the problem - school closures. We review the process by which many schools are closed and determine the appropriateness of some factors that are considered paramount in the decision making process. We also pinpoint important factors which are not considered but should be.

Although this study focuses on school closures, some of its observations can be applied to other decision-making areas. The primary factor which we found to determine whether schools closed or stayed open was not the financial situation or the number of students attending the school. The determining factor was the basic philosophy of the board members towards small schools and quality of education. Those boards which made a political commitment to maintain small schools, assuming that the quality of education was in fact maintained, or even increased, kept schools open. Many times this was done by increasing taxes.

Those boards, however, who felt that small schools do not provide a proper level of education, automatically assumed that schools would and should close. The decision then became how to go about closing a school, as opposed to whether a school should be closed.

This philosophical question is reviewed in this Civic Affairs. As well, the actual process of school closures is examined and recommendations are made outlining factors that should be considered as well as who should be involved in those decisions. Outside influences, such as the role of the Province, are also considered.

## II PRESENT LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS

At some point every school in Ontario will be faced with the possibility of closing schools. To prepare for this many are developing policies, both formal and informal, for dealing with school consolidation. Even those school districts which have not been directly effected by a closure are feeling the pressure to consider and establish a workable policy. One board stated that "Media accounts of controversies surrounding proposals to close schools in other places have been frequent. While there was no immediate prospect of school closure in York, the Board was anxious to establish workable policies and procedures."<sup>1</sup> With the implementation of the Ministry of Education's requirements that every board will have to produce by fall 1980, some policy on how they will or have dealt with the school closure issue, policy formulation is becoming a crucial issue.

The steps leading up to a school closure vary between boards but most have adopted some interim measures to deal with declining enrolment before a closure decision is necessary. The Jackson Commission on Declining Enrolment (CODE) compiled a list of strategies which boards across the Province were either using or considering using in terms of school facilities. Within this list, a board could be using one or more approaches but few if any were using more than a couple of the options.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note the range of possibilities they found.

- (1) Adjust attendance area boundaries.
- (2) Supplement or upgrade programs in schools which do not meet the desired standards.
- (3) Relocate programs such as special education and French immersion.
- (4) Alter existing school organizational structures.
- (5) Establish split grades.
- (6) Pair or twin schools so they share one administrative unit
- (7) Establish special purpose open enrolment schools.
- (8) Use vacant classroom space for other needs of the public or separate school system.

<sup>1</sup>Board of Education for the Borough of York, "Handbook for Implementation of School Accommodation Policy (J.K.-8)".

<sup>2</sup>School Facilities, the Community and Declining Enrolment - A Handbook of Suggestions for Ontario Boards of Education, Information Bulletin #1, Commission on Declining Enrolment, Toronto, 1978.



- (9) Share accommodation with another board.
- (10) Lock one or more surplus classrooms.
- (11) Repatriate grades 7 to 8 to their own schools.
- (12) Close the schools and transfer the students and staff to another location.

Thus a school board may institute split grades or may have a system established to share administrative staff between two schools. Boards rarely use more than a few of these options and also do not include these approaches extensively in their formal consolidation policies. Most of the items listed here are considered interim measures and are a way of deferring the closure decision until enrolments reach a specified figure. They are not considered by most boards as long range solutions for schools where enrolment is still declining.

Almost every board has set targets when a school consolidation policy will take effect. For example, when the enrolment at an elementary school (K-5) in the London jurisdiction drops to 150 pupils, a committee is established to begin to study its effectiveness and determine whether consolidation should be considered.<sup>1</sup> In North York, this review begins when enrolment in a JK-6 school drops below 121 and in the junior high schools when enrolment drops below 301.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the most commonly cited determinant when closure is to be considered, is a specific number below which a board begins to question the quality of education and the financial viability of the school. Closure policies use these figures as targets at which point the process of review is instituted.

There are a number of other common elements between many of the current Board policy statements. Although the closure decision (as it should be) is ultimately a Board decision, there is usually some form of review committee or study committee set up for each school which allows for input from parents and residents as well as administrators. The exact role of this committee varies between boards but it is usually the main source of outside input.

<sup>1</sup>"School Accommodation Guidelines", Board of Education, London, Ontario, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>"Education for North York in the Eighties", Board of Education for the City of North York, June, 1980.

Many times it is this committee which holds public meetings and receives deputations from other parents and residents. The success of the Review Committee approach is not consistent. Section IV presents a case study which pinpoints the problems inherent in this approach, and also highlights how it can be successful. The Ministry of Education states that this review process should take at least 18 months. Many policy statements agree with this time frame.

Another common element between many board policies is the principle of dealing with closures on a school by school basis. As enrolment declines, a Board will usually make a decision to review the particular school in question. Few school boards across Ontario, however, deal with larger areas or a number of schools at a time.

There are four basic factors which are usually listed as the fundamental ones to be considered before a school is closed. First is the financial situation of the school in question - how much money it is generating from the Province and local taxes versus its operating costs; second, the quality of the education in the school - this usually reflects the Board's feelings on whether or not an adequate education can be obtained at a small school; third, options in terms of other schools available to which students can be transferred; fourth, future enrolment patterns - will the trend continue to be downward for this area?

Other factors besides these four elements are considered by some boards. Few boards list all of them in their policy statements. Many do list one or two:

What will the effect be on the neighbourhood?

What will be the rate of student dropoff and transfers?

What is the true cost effectiveness of closure and transferring to another school including vandalism costs, busing, renovations to second school, etc.?

What can be done in terms of class size reduction and innovative distribution of teaching staff?

What other schools will be affected by the closure?

Are there safety considerations?

Should different age groups mix in a school?

What should be done with the closed facility?

What are the transportation requirements?



### III FACTORS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

As mentioned briefly in the previous section the Ministry of Education plays a role in a school board's decisions. The extent of this role has been argued by many boards and citizens who felt that the intervention is too extensive.

A public attitude survey done by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) asked 1025 Ontario adults and 114 top executives how much influence various groups had on local schools. 67% of those answering felt that the ministry had strong influence. This is compared with trustees at 57% and parents at 19%. The conclusion was that most people felt there was "little chance for those most directly affected locally to exert their influence on important educational issues".<sup>1</sup>

The Ministry does in fact exert its influence on school board decisions and the area of closures is not excluded. In December, 1979, the Ministry notified boards and officials that it would require that all Ontario school boards establish a policy on school closure that "allows for participation of all interested and concerned parties". The policy would be filed with the Ministry and would meet set criteria. The tentative criteria included:

- a procedure for identifying when and how a school becomes a candidate for closure consideration;
- a definite procedure for citizen involvement;
- an examination of effects of closure on the school area; on the need for busing, attendance at other schools, the social environment;
- an analysis and report on the program implications of maintaining versus closing the school considering not only the specific school but neighbouring ones
- analysis and report on
  - a) the financial impact of closure including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;
  - b) the financial ramifications of not closing;
  - c) the capital needs of other schools with increased enrolment;

<sup>1</sup> D.W. Livingston, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario 1978.

- a minimum period of 18 months from the time of identification to the time of the board decision
- a detailed study of the disposal of the school including accommodation of French Language units, leasing, mothballing, sale of the building, demolition.

Ted Bounsall, N.D.P. education critic, introduced a Private Member's Bill in 1980 to ensure these criteria were implemented. However Bounsall's Bill was definitely slanted towards ensuring that schools stayed open wherever possible. He included:

- not only that the need for busing be assessed, but that it be avoided where possible, and alternate schools within walking distance be used;
- a survey of parents' possible choices of other schools should the given school be closed;
- a method of appeal: citizens could appeal a local board's decision to the Ontario Municipal Board. (OMB)

The Bill was blocked. Members felt the Ministry's criteria were sufficient. Appeal to the OMB would prolong the local board's decisions.

In June 1980, the Ministry requested that all boards submit their closure policy to the Ministry in the fall of 1980.<sup>1</sup> There remains some concern as to whether or not the Ministry will monitor the implementation of such policies to ensure citizen input.

Despite the objective review process suggested by the Ministry's criteria, other ministry policies pressure local boards to sell school buildings rather than to maintain these schools. In the same document, Issues and Directions, the Ministry encourages the sale or leasing of "surplus" school buildings.

#### Article no. 3.7.4.

The Ministry will assemble an inventory of surplus sites and buildings held by the school board. Not only the need for a new project, but the availability of funding from the sale of surplus properties and the size of reserve funds will be given prime consideration<sup>2</sup> by the Ministry when allocating capital grants.

<sup>1</sup> Issues and Directions, the Response to the Final Report of the Commission on Declining School Enrolments in Ontario. (June, 1980).



In other words, if a board wants to expand in one area, or to make renovations on current buildings, it will be able to get Ministry approval more easily if it has money in its reserve funds. Those monies can be applied, with Ministry approval, to capital costs.

Article 3.8.3. states:

The Ministry will remove financial barriers to school closure that are in the current Capital Grant Plan. This will involve the use of the government's remaining financial equity in an existing building for the benefit of the board that is disposing of that building to public or non-profit agencies.

In this case, the original Provincial portion of that capital investment can be used by the board. This article reinstates the policy operating prior to November, 1979. It encourages the sale of buildings and property.<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry believes that if some school plants are not needed to meet the educational goals for the remainder of the century - then get rid of the surplus. Despite the suggested objective review process, there are strong financial pressures exerted on boards experiencing need for renovations or expansion. This pressure is reinforced when combined with the Provincial Grant structure.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.3

<sup>2</sup>The Capital Grants Committee meets on an on-going basis to design the implementation of Ministry policy. Many articles in Issues and Directions are in effect. In some cases specific details of their implementation have not been worked through. At present area boards under the Metropolitan Toronto School Board retain 40% of those funds from the sale of sites or buildings. The remainder goes to Metro. However, the revised "Incentive Plan for the Disposal of Surplus Property" currently under consideration by the Metro Toronto School Board's Finance Committee allows a greater percentage of the funds to remain with the area board. An area board that disposes of a site or a building and site is authorized to retain 100% of the net proceeds if the funds are used for the purchase of a new site(s) or site extension(s). Under these regulations the M.T.S.B. must approve the updating of facilities and the buying of new sites or site extensions. The application for approval of the use of these funds must be made within six months of the date of the approved sale or lease.

In the Metro Toronto area, there are even more constraints placed on area boards. The primary sources of revenue for the Metropolitan Toronto School Board are property taxes (76%) and provincial grants (24%). Grants are almost totally enrolment-sensitive. As enrolment declines grant revenue to the Metro Board also declines. In 1975 Ontario grants to Metro Toronto schools totalled \$202 million. By 1978 these were cut to \$168 million.

As enrolment declines small schools:

- generate less provincial grant monies for the Metro Toronto School Board;
- generate less budget formula money where funds are allocated according to enrolment and;
- generate the same amount of budget formula money where funds are sensitive to kind, area and number of buildings.<sup>1</sup>

The Provincial Grant structure and in the case of Metro boards, subsequent Metro budget formula put financial constraints on the local/area board. Board members work within these constraints in bargaining with the teachers' federations on issues such as salaries, benefits and the student-teacher ratio. These constraints also affect decisions about whether or not a school should close. Although the government suggested a process to decide the future of a school, and despite the fact that local or area boards designed policies to implement this, the outcome of these deliberations is strongly influenced by Provincial policies.

<sup>1</sup>See the Toronto Board of Education's assessment of revenues and costs to maintain small schools.



## IV CLOSURE CASE STUDY

To better ascertain how a board deals with these conflicting factors, it is important to review the specifics of a particular board. The School Board of Etobicoke was chosen since it offered two approaches to the process. Etobicoke was the first board in Ontario to institute a policy on school closures in 1972. This policy was in use until 1979 when a reorientation took place and a redefinition of the roles of the boards and citizens was instituted. A closing under the old system, as well as the new, pinpoints some of the successful as well as unsuccessful ways of handling closures.

Background

The Etobicoke Board of Education was formed in 1949. Its total pupil enrolment was 4,667. By 1968 enrolment in 74 elementary schools was over 41,000. This increase was due in part to the amalgamation of the Etobicoke Board and the Lakeshore Board of Education in 1967. However, most was due to the rapid development of residential land.

By January, 1979, enrolment was 26,536, a drop of 35%. The Board estimates a continual decline until 1986 when enrolment will reach 18,000 pupils in the public elementary schools.

Etobicoke began closing schools as early as 1965. It was also the first board to institute a closure policy in 1972. This policy was instituted as Policy Number 39 at that time. By 1972 the process of decision-making had evolved to follow five basic steps. These included:

1. The Controller of Planning and Plant collects enrolment data and prepares recommendations to close a school.
2. A report is prepared by the Executive Committee of the Etobicoke Board, comprised of administrators.
3. The Executive Committee appraises all superintendents of its decision and prepares a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
4. The Board considers a motion to close the school in principle.
5. When the motion is passed, Board Policy Number 39 is implemented.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report on Decreasing Enrolment in Etobicoke Public Schools, (1978)

Policy Number 39 required that one year's notice of closure be given where possible and that an Advisory Committee be created which would consist of a regional superintendent, an associate superintendent of supervision and personnel, the school principal, one teacher, five parents, and the principal(s) of the concerned school(s).

Clearly, the Advisory Committee's purposes were to be limited to merely carrying out a closure decision already taken by the Board. The Advisory Committee thus became the body which had to account to the public once a closure decision had been taken, a difficult task under the best of circumstances. The Advisory Committee's purposes thus included the following: to allay the concerns of pupils, parents and staff; to involve parents and staff in the implementation of a board decision; to protect the academic, social and emotional welfare of the students; to review the locations of the students' homes in relation to the new schools' locations and to make recommendations with respect to transportation needs.<sup>1</sup>

Working from these policies, in 1972, the Etobicoke Board of Education began to take the following measures:

1. Closing Very Small Schools - Five schools were closed due to declining enrolment:
 

Queensland Junior School	1974
Crestwood Junior School	1976
Cloverdale Junior School	1977
Kipling Grove Junior School	1978
Green Meadows Junior School	1978
2. Renting Vacant Schools - Six schools in whole or in part are leased by tenants. (Green Meadows is leased by the Separate School Board.)
3. Sale of Vacant Schools - Grand Avenue Junior School was sold in 1977.
4. Renting Vacant Classrooms - Board rents 21 classrooms in operating schools.
5. Adult Day Classes - This is the seventh year of adult education in day school program.

<sup>1</sup> Information Bulletin No.1. "School Facilities, The Community, and Declining Enrolment: A Handbook of Suggestions for Ontario Boards of Education", The Commission on Declining Enrolment in Ontario (1978).



6. Locking Unused Classrooms to reduce heat and maintenance costs.
7. Pairing Schools - Under this plan two adjacent small schools share one principal, one vice-principal and one secretary.
8. Reducing Central Staff
9. Long-term Planning - A comprehensive view of enrolment, accommodation and organization needs up until 1987-88. Trustees and staff receive monthly enrolment statistics for each school.
10. Decreasing Enrolment Committee developed and presented to the Board guidelines and policies to preserve the quality of education.

Dissatisfaction with this process grew. Beginning in 1978 the Etobicoke Board held sixteen public hearings to obtain input on a new revised closure policy. In February, 1979 the board approved a revised policy for the review of programs and the organization in schools that were experiencing declining enrolment. The policy after 1979, in theory, shifted from one designed to implement closure to one that required a review. Instead of having the Board make the decision with little input from the community and then having the Advisory Committee inform the public of the decision the new process instituted a mechanism for a public review and participation from the beginning.

According to the 1979 Board policy, individual public elementary, junior and middle schools<sup>1</sup> come under review when their enrolments decline to a set number. In September of each year if the enrolment is 110 or fewer for grades 1 to 5 in a junior school, 200 or fewer for grades 6 to 8 in a middle school, or 110 or fewer in the grades 1 to 5 component of a junior-middle school, a School Review Committee is established immediately.

A Review Committee can also be established, however, in two other situations: at the recommendation of officials due to observed or anticipated conditions relating to a decline in the school's program and organization; or at the recommendation of the Declining Enrolment Committee following its study of a request from the community for the early establishment of a Review Committee

Regardless of which set of circumstances have led to the establishment of a School Review Committee, its terms of reference are outlined in the Board's

<sup>1</sup> Junior schools are Kindergarten to Grade 5; middle schools are Grades 6,7 and 8. Middle Schools are designed to gradually introduce a student to the high school rotation system.

policy. Its functions are to:

1. examine and report to the Board on the impact of decreasing enrolment on the school's programs and its students;
2. hold a public meeting or meetings to assist in providing information to the community and receiving and recording community input;
3. consider and make recommendations to the Board on steps that might be taken to assist the school and its programs;
4. consider and make recommendations to the Board on the possibility of closing the school;
5. consider and make recommendations to the Board on the provisions to be made for its students were the school closed;
6. consider any other related matters;
7. present interim reports to the Board when appropriate;
8. present a report to the Board by April of the next year on its activities, observations and recommendations.

The Review Committee is to consist of one principal, one to two teachers, three parents of students in the school, three residents of the school's attendance area (without children in the school, but public school supporters), two trustees, and two administrative staff (the director or his designate and the regional superintendent). The director (or his designate) is to chair the Committee.

The process is to be an open one which allows for considering a choice between alternatives to closing, and is far more responsive than the old system. It is a nine-month decision-making process from October to June, when the Board considers the reports. The Board then decides the future of the school, one year in advance of the actual closing. This allows parents and children to adjust to the closure. The total process from the setting up of the Review Committee to the actual closure itself is 21 months.

#### Green Meadows

Green Meadows Junior School in Etobicoke was chosen as a case study to reveal the decision-making process surrounding closures as they were historically implemented in Etobicoke prior to 1979. The problems and dissatisfactions which ensued will reveal the reasons for the demand for policy revisions



which arose by 1979 as well as the weaknesses in policy which can be avoided by other municipalities involved in closure proceedings.

Green Meadow Junior School was closed under the 1972 policy outlined in the preceding section. The minutes of Etobicoke Board of Education catalogued the following steps in this process.

Feb. 16, 1977 - The Board proposed to close Green Meadows at the end of the 1977-78 school year. Students in the area were to attend Valleyfield Junior School. There was potential for residential development in the Valleyfield area, whereas the Board foresaw a decline in enrolment in the Green Meadows area. Enrolment dropped and there were already double and split grades.

February, 1977 - An advisory committee was established. It met on six occasions. Discussions dealt with the integration of Green Meadows into Valleyfield and the question of student safety.

March 29, 1979 - Parents from Green Meadows made a deputation to the Board of Education regarding student transportation and pedestrian safety and the need for improved communication with communities where a school was to be paired or closed.

May 17, 1978 - Closing ceremonies for Green Meadows (it has since been released to the Separate School Board).<sup>1</sup>

As the 1972 closure policy was created, the citizens were not consulted on whether or not to close the Green Meadows Junior School. Rather, the Advisory committee was established in February, 1977 to help implement this closure recommendation already made by the Board of Education. There was thus no citizen voting process to consider closure. Instead, according to parents who were interviewed, their role was primarily one of bargaining. Parent efforts were directed at getting transportation and safety concessions under the new location. The Board Administrator who sat on the Committee listened to suggestions and then stated the Board's position. Given the 1972 policy, however, the Advisory Committee was merely acting within the limitations of its mandate; that is implementing and "softening the blow" of

<sup>1</sup>See the Minutes of the Etobicoke Board of Education, 1977-78; Minutes from the Education, and the Property and Finance Committees 1977-78.

the Board's decision already taken to close Green Meadows Junior School.

The impact of closing Green Meadows Junior School has been felt in parental and pupil discontent, particularly in terms of the decision-making process and in the quality of education at Valleyfield.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of parent pressure, some children who were just within the one mile school limit were bused along with those outside the one mile limit, seat-belts were provided in the buses, children were home for lunch at the usual time, a cross-walk was moved to a safer location on The Westway and a crossing guard was hired. The parents felt these services were gained because they voiced them with the Board; they would not have been provided otherwise.

Although the principals and staffs of the schools did preliminary work to assist the integration of the children, there was no committee that included parents to oversee the integration once the students were moved. Two years later there are still feelings of division between the children from Valleyfield and those from Green Meadows.

Initially all but one of Green Meadows' teachers went to Valleyfield. By the fall of 1980, all will have been moved but one. The enrolment in Valleyfield has continued to decline. Parents feel the insecurity of this situation; they sense the possibility of another review committee for Valleyfield.

Green Meadows had one double and one split grade. With the integration into Valleyfield there were still some split/double grades. Some parents felt there were few improvements gained in moving to Valleyfield.

Generally the parents were dissatisfied with the way the Green Meadows decision was handled. Furthermore, they pointed to a trend in Etobicoke's practice: pairing is often the first step to closure of a school. Green Meadows was originally paired with Valleyfield, then closed.

In the Green Meadows example the problems revolved around: the more or less automatic closure of the school based on low enrolment figures; no analysis

<sup>1</sup>The following data was gathered through interviews with members of the Green Meadows Advisory Committee.



of alternatives to closure; no mechanism for public participation in the closure decision; and feelings of frustration with the use of an "after the fact" advisory committee.

Under the 1979 process, it was hoped that closures would be handled more effectively and sensitively. A case study focusing on Richview Junior School will show whether this is the case.

#### Richview Junior School

In October, 1979 three review committees were set up for Fairfield, Castlebar and Martin Grove Gardens Junior Schools. A fourth review committee was established in January 1980, for Richview Junior school. In all four cases the decision was made to close the school; children from Fairfield and Castlebar would go to Norseman Middle School; those from Martin Grove Gardens and Richview would go to Dixon Grove. (See Appendix "A") In only one of these situations - Richview - was there open discontent with the committee system and the process. The major problem revolved around the new location for the children from Richview Junior School. This report focuses on the review process for Richview Junior School in order to highlight a case where there were weaknesses in the process and to suggest areas for improvement.

By December 1979, some parents in the Richview area had become concerned about Richview's declining enrolment and the quality of education should the enrolment continue to decline. In September 1978, Richview was paired with Silver Creek Junior School. Under this policy the two schools shared a principal, secretary and French teacher. Enrolment had dropped to 126 pupils at Richview in September 1979. The pairing system put extra stress on the teachers and did not ensure a stable enrolment.<sup>1</sup> In November 1979, parents requested the establishment of an early review committee. On January 17, 1980 the first public meeting was held to discuss whether or not to have a review committee. February 7th, at a meeting of 20-plus citizens,

<sup>1</sup>At the Feb. 21, 1980 meeting of the Richview Review Committee the vice-principal and two teachers stated that the pairing of the schools led to excess stress on them. The vice-principal had to assume responsibilities in case of emergencies. There was lack of flexibility in placing pupils, lack of mutual support for teachers. The process of pairing was used to ensure level of education with fewer administrative staff. It did not seem to be working. Enrolment was declining.

members of the Review Committee were elected. At the February meeting, community members were told that the Committee's discussion could go on for 16 months, but it could make a presentation to the Board earlier than that.

The Review Committee was composed as required by the written policy. It should be noted that the three parent representatives were, or had been, teachers.

The Committee began to have formal meetings in February 1980. The first attempts of the Committee were aimed at reviewing the enrolment situation and the alternatives to closure. The following possibilities were explored:

- group the local junior schools together;
- combine Grades 1, 2 and 3 in a local school; send Grades 4, 5, 6 to Dixon Grove Middle School;
- keep all Kindergarten pupils in one school; alter school boundaries;
- request traffic guards to protect children where they would cross busy traffic arteries;
- retain Richview Grade 6 pupils in their school during 1980-81;
- request maintenance of Richview for the 1980-81 school year with sufficient teaching staff to support the school program at an acceptable level.

After reviewing these alternatives it was decided that they would only provide a temporary solution. "The end result would be further disruption of the pupils in their school program through another move in five years."<sup>1</sup> The general feeling was that the school should be closed.

The first public meeting was held in April 1980. The Committee's intention was to have this be the main means of outside input. When advertising the meeting, the Committee did not mention the recommendations they were considering. At this meeting the principal of Richview outlined the current enrolment and organizational concerns. He noted that the number

<sup>1</sup>Minutes, Richview Review Committee, Feb. 21, 1980



is determined by the Metro formula. During 1979 Richview had been assigned five teachers. With the decreasing enrolment, however, it would be hard to justify this number. The second factor that had to be considered was the number of pupils per class which is decided by the collective agreement. In a small school such as Richview the Committee felt that there were fewer choices to allow for group or individual needs and abilities.

Some parents who attended this public meeting raised strong objections to the move to Dixon Grove. The Trustees and the Review Committee had not spent time talking with their neighbours about the terms being considered. As a result the parents were uncommitted to the solution and unconvinced that closure was necessary. They expressed these concerns and asked to have more time to consider the alternatives. After presenting a petition representing 85% of the parents of the children involved to the Review Committee and the Board another public meeting was scheduled for May 11, 1980.

The parents came to this meeting prepared. Their immediate objections centered on the school to which the students would be moved - Dixon Grove School.

- Dixon Grove would be the only junior-middle school with a high ratio of older children to younger (780 in the middle school, 150+ in the junior school).
- Dixon Grove's physical location at a very busy intersection - Kipling Avenue and the Westway - presents dangers for younger children.
- Will there be proper segregation of the junior school and the middle school?
- Are renovation costs presented accurately?
- Will the facility for a junior/middle school be adequate during the first year or two?

The parents also presented what they felt the factors to be considered were.

- The September 1980 enrolment would be 123, still above the targeted 110;
- The Review Committee was requested by parents to study the whole of the Dixon Grove community, but there has been no involvement from parents from Silver Creek, Westway, Kingsview or Parkfield, all part of the community.

(The Richview Review Committee did have access to data about these schools. Much of it was provided by the Martin Grove Gardens Review Committee. However, there was no involvement of parents from these schools to discuss alternatives that would affect the entire community.)

- The first objective of the committee should be the education of the children and the security of the teachers. The issue of "Etobicoke Education", (April 1980 listed reduction of the student-teacher ratio as a method used by the Board to improve education. The ratio predicted for Richview was 27.5 to 1. The parents recommended the reduction of the teacher/pupil ratio.

They cited the fact that at the first committee meeting, February 21, the motion was passed that "the Committee look at the possibility of (i) maintenance of Richview Junior School for the 1980-81 school year with a sufficient number of teachers to provide quality of education for the pupils and (ii) the closing of Richview Junior School in 1981 with a transfer of the pupils to Dixon Grove Junior/Middle School". This motion represented to them an early orientation of the Review Committee which influenced the seriousness with which the Committee examined other alternatives.

They asked that the Review Committee not make a presentation to the Board until the enrolment declined to the Board's minimum enrolment guideline; meanwhile the Committee should review other alternatives. In the end, they felt their questions and concerns were not answered.<sup>1</sup>

The Review Committee sent its recommendation for closure to the Board who approved the closure for June, 1981. The whole review process had lasted four months and had covered four study meetings and four public meetings. (Of the four public meetings, two were taken up with organizing the committee and elections).

Those parents who were on the Review Committee felt involved in deciding what should happen to Richview. According to one parent representative (who is also a vice-principal in a Toronto elementary school) "The decision came

<sup>1</sup> Presented to the Review Committee May 12, 1980. A similar presentation was made to the Board of Education May 16, 1980.



after much discussion and involvement. The Board was good at providing the necessary information." Some felt the decision to close the school was inevitable. That was the only solution to the problem.

There was a definite feeling that the Board would not impose a solution but would go along with the decision of the Review Committee.

In contrast, the parents objecting to the decision felt they could not influence the decision. They felt the Committee and Board ignored them completely. They interpreted the Committee as simply implementing an already agreed upon solution. They also felt the Committee composition supported this. The Committee seemed weighted with school and borough professionals, since the parent representatives were, or had been, professionally involved in schools. These parents brought a particular expertise to the Committee, but the non-committee parents felt the Committee did not represent a cross-section of the community. Parents with no professional stake in the current school system were not represented. The Committee in their view was weighted 10-3 with school related professionals. Their own trustees were not responsive to them.

#### Where Were the Breakdowns in the 1979 Process?

1. It was unclear to community members the time horizon they were working with - 4 months or 16 months. What began as an early-established review committee with ample time, ended in a comparatively quick decision process.

2. Non-review committee members felt they had no method of recourse. Their elected trustees were involved in the review committee and committed to its proposals.

3. Parent representatives and community representatives were elected at a relatively small meeting. Of the four parent representatives, including one alternate, one was a teacher, two were former teachers, and one was not a teacher. The parent representatives did not represent a cross-section of the community geographically or professionally. However, these were the only parents to volunteer.

4. Board and administration were overloaded with the review committee work and their full workloads. The trustees involved sat on two review committees.

5. A group of parents which was considered insignificant raised questions regarding the new accommodations in the Dixon Grove Middle School. In disregarding their concerns, the Review Committee and the Board administration has failed to provide some important data to the community.

a) Cost of renovations to the junior-middle school. The administration's estimate was \$50,000 - \$75,000. One parent claims that for the amount of space involved the estimate should be closer to \$200,000 - \$300,000. A trustee agrees the estimate is too low.

b) Will the junior school in fact be separate from the middle school? The junior school will use only 6 of the 10 classrooms in their section. The statistics used by the Review Committee itself in March 1980 state that the 780 middle school children require room for 26 grade classes; the junior school - 6; the building will provide for only 32 grade classes.

6. A one-by-one examination of individual schools leads to influence by external pressures. One decision influences another. Yet even committee participants have no opportunity to examine a whole district or area together. There were meetings between the Richview and Martin Grove Review Committees. On the one hand these provided Richview with the information Martin Grove had developed. On the other hand, this put pressure on Richview. For Martin Grove Gardens to consider seriously the option of moving to Dixon Grove, it needed another junior school to do the same. This too acted as a pressure on Richview. Furthermore, the consideration of Richview, without involvement of the other schools - Silver Creek, Westway, Kingsview and Parkfield - did not allow for an integrated planning approach for the area. The process of reviewing schools one-by-one means less effective use of board's administration time and that of trustees. The administration and officials must provide repetitive information and data and go through similar decisions several times.

7. The suggested criteria sent out by the Ministry were not followed:

- a) the decision was made in four months as opposed to 18 months;
- b) the financial implications of renovations to the receiving school were not fully explored;



- c) the alternative use of Richview and Martin Grove was not explored by the Review Committees;<sup>1</sup>
- d) there seems to have been little or no assessment of the impact of school closure on the social environment.

8. There was lack of communication between the Review Committee and some members of the community. Trustees and committee members did not take on responsibility for keeping community members informed and helping to work through differences. Although information was available through Review Committee minutes, the minutes were kept in the school. It was difficult for parents to xerox these. Furthermore, communication is different from information. It requires involvement at some level; discussion with those concerned; working through differences in perception.

<sup>1</sup> In Etobicoke's view alternative use should not be the concern of Review Committees. Rather, Etobicoke set up an alternative use committee to deal with this. This represents an absence of a holistic view of the community; it reinforces fragmented planning.

#### V OTHER FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

In the general review of closure policies in Ontario and in the specifics of the Etobicoke situation one particular item should be noted. The underlying philosophy is that school closures are inevitable. Almost all policies deal with a method to implement closures. They consider which of a number of schools should be closed, or what the timing should be or how the process should be implemented. They do not deal with whether, in fact, closures should take place at all. Thus a school closure may be the result of a philosophical decision which has little relationship to a particular school.

A school board's philosophy determines how it deals with declining enrolment, finances and community pressures. Etobicoke's board, for example, does not support the maintenance of small schools. In the case of the review of schools, closure is not viewed as a last resort, but as an alternative at least of equal value and often of higher value than other alternatives.

According to some trustees the reason for this lack of support for small schools is not finances. The Board believes the quality of education is declining in the small schools. Trustees cite lack of music, guidance and physical education and the presence of triple or double grades. The reasoning is that in a larger complex the children will have access to these courses.

Yet, the City of Toronto Board of Education, on the other hand, supports the small schools. In 1978, parents marched on the Board of Education offices in Toronto demanding that the teachers then teaching in the system be maintained. As a result in 1979-80, 108 teachers were kept on staff. The City has made a commitment to keep small schools open and to combine them with other community uses, because it views the school as a centre of the community. This decision has required the renovation of older buildings and a subsequent small increase in the local levy. However, the increase has not been substantial since the City has a broader tax base upon which to draw.

These two philosophies represent the two basic views which many boards across Ontario hold. A majority align with Etobicoke believing that school closures are positive steps in solving the problems faced by declining enrolment.



The basis for a board's decision regarding the worth of small schools may be well thought out or may be an extension of the thinking of the last several decades, when growth and bigness were the answer to the problems. Regardless of the reason for the thinking, it is a policy that should be reviewed and based on well thought out principles and present facts.

Are closures necessary in all cases? If a board decides the answer is "no" and agrees to look at the issues there are a number of areas where there is a certain amount of flexibility and options are opened. If the answer is "yes", then the process comes down to one of selecting the school.

#### Collective Agreements and Public Willingness to Pay

One of the arguments that are made for school closures is the staffing formulae which are used to determine the number of pupils per teacher. Teachers' federations and school boards usually sign collective agreements outlining what the staffing formula will be for the year.

For example, the teacher federations in Etobicoke, York and Scarborough bargained with the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Education in 1979 and 1980-81. The staffing formulae which were agreed to allow for:

<u>Classroom Staff</u>	
Grades 1-3	41.1 teachers per 1000 pupils
Grades 4-6	36.6 " " " "
Grades 7-8	41.6 " " " "

This clause ensures that the number of teachers will not drop below this figure. Within the agreement, however, a board may decide to increase the number of teachers for a certain number of students in a particular situation, i.e. small schools. This type of change is usually within the scope of the collective agreement, assuming the change is not substantial. By looking at options like these, and increasing the number of teachers, boards can have more flexibility in dealing with situations of declining enrolments.

The one problem is the resources needed to increase the number of teachers. Boards, such as Etobicoke, which have a narrower tax base upon which to draw are financially constrained. They are reluctant to negotiate for a lower pupil/teacher ratio because they do not believe the taxpayer will support it.

The assumption that parents and local taxpayers are not willing to pay to maintain small schools also needs to be challenged. According to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education 1978 study, mentioned earlier, adults across the province supported the current education expenditures.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 40% of the respondents object to making any education cutbacks at all. Second, of those prepared to make cutbacks, a sizable majority would prefer to cut back most on public funds for post-secondary education, with the emphasis clearly on cutting back grants to universities. Third, resistance to cutbacks is stronger among those who are younger; are attending or have children attending post-secondary programs; are from less dominant ethnic groups; or live in Northern Ontario. Corporate executives are more in favor of education cutbacks in general and university cutbacks in particular than any other group.

The study also asked whether respondents would favor or object to a variety of cutbacks in the elementary or secondary school system.

The majority are quite prepared to reduce the number of administrators in their local school systems, and also, though with less enthusiasm, to freeze any salary increases beyond cost of living increments. On the other hand, they are clearly not willing to support cutbacks that appear to threaten the quality of instruction more directly, most notably the number of teachers, new teaching materials, and programs for handicapped learners.

#### Financial Considerations

Most boards include some form of financial assessment of what a closure will cost. The savings are calculated but the costs of the closure are usually underestimated. Few boards do extensive cost/benefit analyses of the closures to determine how far ahead the board will be after the closure takes place. Unfortunately, the data required to do these analyses is not readily

<sup>1</sup>D.W.Livingston, Public Attitudes Toward Education in Ontario. 1978, O.I.S.E. Survey Report, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.



available and as a result few people have calculated actual costs. In those cases where schools have been closed for awhile, for example in Etobicoke, there has also been no attempt to monitor costs afterwards to see the real versus the budgeted expenses.

These two items are unfortunate. Without adequate data and followup, many boards will continue to make decisions based on the logic of closures saving money without knowing whether this in fact is the case.

One of the few studies done on the question of financial savings was completed in the U.S. Richard Andres undertook a survey in 1974 of 60 school districts across the country.<sup>1</sup> The survey covered large cities such as Atlanta, Georgia, as well as smaller municipalities. Of these 60 interviewed, 49 or 81.7% had already closed schools, and another 4 were planning to close schools.

When asked whether the school district actually saved money from the closures a surprising answer was given. Fifty percent indicated that there were in fact no savings. The causes for this varied but included such things as increased transportation costs, reduced school support, increased vandalism, and disruption of educational programs. Another 16.7% indicated that closing schools actually resulted in more money being spent than when the school was open. Only 33.3% calculated they had saved money but far less than originally projected.

The Justice Committee of the Ontario Legislature heard similar evidence in 1979 from the chairman of the North York Board of Education and from concerned parents in the area. According to the chairman:

. . . financial reasons are minor and cost savings are not significant enough in themselves to lead us to close schools.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Andrews, Roger Soder, Donald A. Eismann, The Environmental Impact of School Closures, (August 23, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> The Justice Committee of the Ontario Legislature reviewed in 1979 the recommendation that the Ministries of Education, and Colleges and Universities be amalgamated. Under pressure from Ed Phillip (NDP-Etobicoke) the Justice Committee was open to hear people's concerns regarding the education system which came under these ministries. The Committee became a forum for voicing questions of fears and criticisms regarding the Ministry, the elementary, secondary and post-secondary systems and the boards of education.

### Neighbourhood Effects

There has also been much discussion about what effect a school closure has on a neighbourhood. Many people view the school as the focal point of activity in a community. A recent study by the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto stated:

Neighbourhood school facilities and sites are the most important public resources which local suburban communities possess. Post-war suburban design focused on schools and their sites as public centres of community life.

Schools, then, serve functions which go beyond education. They define neighbourhoods and determine social ties between people. They serve as a focus for community activities and even development of strong leadership through Home and School Associations.

What effect does a closure have on a community? This is difficult to identify and measure but there are some indications that the effect is adverse.

According to Richard Andrews' survey of sixty U.S. school districts, The Environmental Impact of School Closures:

- neighbourhoods quickly diminished in viability after elementary schools were closed;
- support for public education diminished in those districts where schools were closed;
- property values declined;
- crime rates increased;
- young families did more selective buying of houses in areas where schools were closed; there was a sharp decline in students residing in the area.

Although it is too early to measure the effects in the Canadian situation, some of the same patterns seem to be emerging.

<sup>1</sup> Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Planning Agenda For the Eighties, September 1980.



Using the Etobicoke situation, one of the most obvious problems is the rate of transfers out of the public schools - which break the neighbourhood ties. Some Richview parents will not send their children to the Dixon Grove Junior Middle School. Instead they intend to send them to the separate school where the proportion of older children to younger ones is smaller. In September, 1980 the separate school in the area, St. Marcellus, received six transfers from Richview. A dissatisfied Green Meadows parent is withdrawing the child from Valleyfield to go to a private school. This means loss of support for the public school system.

Canadian real estate data for determining property value is not conclusive for determining the effects closures have on values. A number of prominent real estate companies have confirmed informally, however, that closures are starting to have an impact. Initial indications seem to be that property values are becoming lower in areas where there is not a neighbourhood school. Properties in these areas also stay on the market longer. In time, more information can be collected and more extensive analysis can be undertaken to see the extent of this trend.

As Andrews states:

Once an elementary school is closed, the environmental forces of out-migration, population decline, and neighborhood deterioration are set in motion. It is difficult - if not impossible - to reverse these forces. Closure is a simple solution to the problem of excess space. But at the same time, closure is most assuredly a source of other problems, problems far more intricate and complex and much more difficult and costly to solve.

## VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School boards across Ontario have been or will be faced with declining enrolment. The decisions which have to be made as a result are complex and require much time and commitment on the part of trustees as well as parents and residents.

School boards are developing policies to deal specifically with closures - a phenomenon which has happened only in the last five years on any wide spread basis. These policies, and even more so the method of implementation, in many cases are logical and rational. They deal with decreased finances and pupils, concerns over the quality of education in small schools, and solicit the participation of parents and residents. They also result in what many boards view as the inevitable - the eventual closure of schools.

The Bureau believes that a school closure should be viewed as a last resort and not be accepted as inevitable. By a board accepting closures as a "fact of life", they are also accepting that the question of closure is beyond their control. It is not. If boards make a commitment to keeping schools open and use innovative ways to redistribute the resources available, many schools which are being threatened with closure can remain open. It takes a change in philosophy and a broadening of the basic thinking.

Automatic closure is not a long term solution, but is many times an incremental one. In fact closures can create many more problems than they solve. Financial ones are not solved since there are real indications that costs are ultimately not saved by closing a school. Enrolment is worsened since with every closure there is a switch to separate and private schools - resulting in even fewer pupils. The effects on neighbourhoods and children are only now being discovered. These and other factors reinforce the fact that boards in Ontario must widen their perceptions. Without widening of perspective the public school educational system will be undermined and receive less and less support. Once this basic change in philosophy is made there are a number of steps which can be taken to implement this philosophy. They are presented here as a guide which obviously must be adapted to each particular board of education.



### General Board Policies

1. Whole school areas should be reviewed together to ensure a planned systematic reorganization of the system. Instead of dealing with schools on a school by school basis an attempt should be made to be more comprehensive. Reviewing districts at one time can present other options such as averaging out schools and future trends not previously considered.

2. Most boards deal with school closures as a separate issue from financial planning for all schools or the number and distribution of teachers. These issues are interrelated, however. Each school should not be viewed as a separate source of money and teachers. The allocation of funds and the negotiation of collective agreements should provide opportunities to ensure good education in small schools - they should not be the obstacle to providing good education in small schools.

3. There should be a formal review process which involves not only educators but parents and individuals in the affected areas. This process should review the situation and realistically look at alternatives. If the commitment of the Board is to keep schools open as long as possible, then the stability of a neighbourhood and school can be maintained throughout the process. Instability develops when a closure is viewed as inevitable. Solid decision making and planning ahead can ensure that a neighbourhood does not become undermined by a school closure years before it happens.

4. The review committees established for entire areas should have representatives from the business community, the parents of students from the schools involved from different and specific geographic parts of the community, teachers, principals, the area superintendent, trustees, and public school supporters without school children. All groups should be actively encouraged, through such things as invitations to organizing meetings, to participate in the process. Those elected to the committees should have varied backgrounds and interests.

5. The largest problem in trying to integrate school affiliated (i.e. administrators, trustees and teachers) and non-school affiliated individuals is information. Lack of basic information and knowledge of the school system, programming, finances etc. has caused many parents and individuals to

become frustrated with the system. Many people withdraw from the process feeling that the decisions have already been made by others who know the facts better than they do. It is imperative, therefore, to have some sort of training available to bring everyone up to a common understanding of the information available.

6. Review Committees must have a neutral orientation otherwise interest from people outside the system will not be maintained.

7. When reviews are being made of a particular school they should be done based on set criteria of evaluation. Some examples of the criteria are:

- what is the standard of education in the school? Can it be improved?  
How?
- are music, art and athletics available? Where? Can a small school provide these?
- what are the options for different teaching arrangements (i.e. student/ teacher ratios)?
- what can be done in terms of class size reduction?
- what is the availability of alternative accommodation in neighbouring schools?
- what are the true costs of keeping the school open or reducing its size?
- what are the true costs of closing the school including: operating and vandalism costs to the closed school; busing costs; renovations and increased operating costs for the second school; etc.
- what alternative uses should be considered for the school and are there revenues to be gained here?
- what renovations are needed to keep the school functioning properly?
- what will the student transfer rate be if the move is implemented?
- what effect will the closure have on the neighbourhood and community activities?
- how safe is the present school in terms of traffic, etc. and are there any safety problems getting to the new school?
- what will the age mix be in the new school?

The questions are examples of the issues which need to be adequately addressed before a closure decision can be made.



8. There should be regular communication between the review committee and the community. This should be accomplished through (a) easy access to the data reviewed by the committee; (b) "coffee hours" with the neighbours initiated by several committee members, including trustees, to discuss the proceedings in more detail.

9. The review process should not be shortened for the sake of efficiency. It should be part of the long range planning for an area which contributes to its stability.

10. Consultation with other municipal departments is useful since they are a source of additional information. For example, planning departments can provide information on the neighbourhood involved and the importance a particular school has in that community.

11. If a school has to be closed there should be a mechanism available for monitoring the effects of the closures. This would provide useful information for future action.

#### Trustees

1. There is a need to ensure that education is viewed from a broader perspective than the traditional view. Trustees must involve themselves in social analysis and be aware of the complex role schools play in community and individual development.

2. Trustees should view their jobs not only as decision makers and reactors to citizen demands but also as educators. Trustees should ensure citizen awareness and involvement in important issues. To this end, trustees and principals should encourage active Home and School Associations.

#### Parents and Residents

1. Unfortunately it is unrealistic to assume that all the changes we have outlined here will happen. In fact, even if many of them do happen, the role of the citizen as well as parent will remain crucial. Without strong parent and citizen organizations few changes will be made to the present closure processes and schools will continue to close at a rapid rate.

2. Voting for trustees has always been considered a fairly unimportant activity. This attitude only perpetuates the present system. People should vote for trustees based on their philosophical beliefs (i.e. school closures as necessary and automatic), the candidate's experience and amount of time that he or she is willing to commit to the job.

The whole question of closures should be reviewed and the decisions made should be based on sound analysis. Whether or not small schools can provide an adequate quality of education is the hidden question behind every closure. By not evaluating this question and instituting procedures which really deal with the issues, closures will continue across the Province and school boards will continue to be unprepared for the results of these decisions.

© Bureau of Municipal Research  
November 1980

Mary Lynch, Executive Director  
Linda Mulhull, Research Associate (Contract)



## **CORPORATION**

Algoma Central Railway  
Allstate Insurance of Canada  
Bank of Montreal  
Bank of Nova Scotia  
Bell Canada  
Board of Trade, Metro Toronto  
Brascan Limited  
British American Bank Note Co. Limited  
Cadillac Fairview Corporation Limited  
Canada Malting Company Limited  
Canada Packers Foundation  
Canada Permanent Trust Company  
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce  
Canadian Tire Corporation Limited  
Confederation Life Insurance Company  
Consumers' Gas Company  
Consumers Glass Company Limited  
Costain Limited  
Crown Life Insurance Company  
Davis & Henderson Limited  
Dofasco Ltd.  
Donlee Manufacturing Industries Ltd.  
Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company  
Eastern Construction Co. Ltd.  
General Mills Canada Ltd.  
Greater Canada Corporation S.A.  
Group R  
Guaranty Trust Company of Canada  
Guardian Insurance Company of Canada  
Gulf Realty Co. Ltd.  
H.U.D.A.C. (Ontario)  
I.B.M. Canada Ltd.  
The Imperial Life Assurance Co. of Canada  
Independent Order of Foresters  
Jackman Foundation  
Kodak Canada Ltd.  
John Labatt Limited  
A.E. LePage Limited  
Lever Brothers Limited  
Maclean-Hunter Limited  
Manufacturers Life Insurance Co.

Maple Leaf Mills Limited  
Marathon Realty Company Ltd.  
L.J. McGuinness and Co., Ltd.  
McLean Foundation  
McLeod, Young, Weir Limited  
Midland Doherty Limited  
Misener Properties Ltd.  
Molson Companies  
The National Life Assurance Company of Canada  
Noranda Mines Limited  
North American Life Assurance Co.  
Northern & Central Gas Corporation Limited  
Northern Telecom  
Olympia & York Developments Limited  
The Oshawa Group Limited  
Parking Authority of Toronto  
Rio Algom Limited  
The Royal Bank of Canada  
Royal Insurance Company of Canada  
Royal Trustco Limited  
Shaw Industries Limited  
Sheraton Centre  
Simpson-Sears Limited  
Southam Inc.  
The Steel Company of Canada, Limited  
Sunoco Inc.  
Texaco Canada Inc.  
The Toronto-Dominion Bank  
3M Canada Limited  
Toronto Star Ltd.  
Trans Canada Pipelines Limited  
Travelers Canada  
Turner and Porter Funeral Directors Ltd.  
Union Gas Limited  
Valleydene Corporation Limited  
Victoria & Grey Trust Co.  
Hiram Walker & Sons Limited  
George Weston Limited  
Wood Gundy Limited  
Xerox of Canada Limited

---

## **PROFESSIONAL**

H.H. Angus & Assoc. Ltd.  
Ernest Annau, Architect  
Armstrong & Molesworth  
Arthur Andersen & Company  
John Bousfield Associates  
Costa, Thurley, McCalden and Palmer  
Currie, Coopers & Lybrand Ltd.  
Deacon (F.H.) Hodgeson Inc.  
DelCan  
Development Engineering (London) Ltd.  
M.M. Dillon Limited  
Govan, Kaminker, Architects and Planners  
Eric Hardy Consulting Ltd.

I.B.I. Group  
Jarrett, Goold & Elliott  
Judicial Valuation Co.  
Marshall, Macklin and Monaghan  
Russell J. Morrison  
Norman Pearson, Planning Consultant  
Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt  
Peat, Marwick and Partners  
Price Waterhouse & Co.  
Proctor and Redfern Group  
P.S. Ross & Partners  
Smith, Auld & Associates  
Weir and Foulds

---

## **GOVERNMENTAL**

City of Chatham  
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation  
Regional Municipality of Durham  
Borough of Etobicoke  
Township of Gloucester  
City of Hamilton  
Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth  
Metropolitan Toronto  
Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board  
Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs  
City of Mississauga  
Township of Nepean  
Regional Municipality of Niagara  
City of North York

City of Oshawa  
City of Ottawa  
Regional Municipality of Ottawa/Carleton  
Regional Municipality of Peel  
Town of Richmond Hill  
City of St. Catharines  
City of Sarnia  
County of Simcoe  
City of Sudbury  
City of Toronto  
Toronto Board of Education  
Town of Vaughan  
City of Windsor  
Borough of York  
Regional Municipality of York

---

## **LABOUR**

Ontario Federation of Labour  
Sudbury and District Labour Council

200 Personal/Academic Memberships,  
including Libraries



Founded in 1914 as a non-profit research agency, the Bureau of Municipal Research undertakes a wide range of studies into the problems facing municipalities in Ontario.

An advocate of responsive and responsible government, the Bureau has gained wide recognition for the high calibre of its *Civic Affairs*, its *BMR Comment/Topic*, its information and the participation of its staff in the public discussion of issues.

The Bureau is an independent agency supported by a broad cross-section of business and professional firms, organizations, governments, and individuals.

#### Recent Publications Include:

##### Civic Affairs

- Questions for Electors, *October 1980*
- Cost Saving Innovations in Canadian Local Government: A More In-Depth Look, *June 1980*
- Cost Saving Innovations in Canadian Local Government *September 1979*
- Directory of Governments in Metropolitan Toronto, *1979/1980, March 1979*
- Teaching Local Government: A Responsibility of the Educational System, *May 1978*
- Should the Island be an Airport?, *November 1977*
- Food for the Cities, *June 1977*
- Directory of Governments of Metropolitan Toronto, *1977/78, May 1977*
- Be it Ever So Humble: The Need For Rental Housing in the City of Toronto, *March 1977*
- Legislative Attempts to Control Urban Growth in Canada, *November 1976*
- The News Media and Local Government, *August 1976*
- Pet Control in Urban Ontario: The Municipal Role, *May 1976*
- \*Fire Protection Services in Metro: Is Unification the Answer?, *November 1975*
- Metro Toronto Under Review: What are the Issues?, *June 1975*
- Directory of Governments in Metropolitan Toronto *1975/76, June 1975*
- Citizen Participation in Metro Toronto: Climate for Cooperation?, *January 1975*
- The Development of New Communities in Ontario, *September 1974*
- \*Property Taxation and Land Development, *No. 2, 1973*
- \*Land Banking: Investment in the Future, *No. 1, 1973*
- \*The Toronto Region's Privately Developed New Communities, *No. 2, 1972*
- \*Reorganizing Local Government: A Brief Look at Four Provinces, *No. 1, 1972*
- Landlord-Tenant Relationships: Time for Another Look, *Autumn 1971*
- \*Urban Open Space: Parks, People and Planning, *Summer 1971*

\* Out of print but available in the Bureau's Library.

##### Topics

- 13 Municipal Services: Who Should Pay?, *February 1980*
- 12 Productivity and Quality of Working Life—Two Sides of the Same Coin, *November 1979*
- 11 Understanding Metro's Transit Problems *July 1979*
- 10 Proceedings Governmental Research Association Conference, *June 1979*
- 9 The Public Interest and the Right to Know, *March 1979*
- 8 Transportation Planning in London: Can London Catch the Bus?, *December 1978*
- 7 Should the Province Help Save Ontario's Downtowns?, *November 1978*
- 6 Questions for Electors, *October 1978*
- 5 What Can Municipalities do About Energy? *March 1978*
- 4 The Public Library as Community Information Centre: the Case of the London Urban Resource Centre, *January 1978*
- 3 Changing the Planning Act: Risks and Responsibilities, *November 1977*
- 2 In Response to the Robarts Report, *October 1977*
- 1 School Vandalism: An Emerging Concern, *September 1977*

##### BMR Comment

- 166 Design for Development: Where Are You? *March 1977*
- 165 Disappearing Farmland: So What?, *March 1977*
- 164 Is Metroplan A Gamble Worth Taking? *February 1977*
- 163 Restraint Without Hardship: How Do We Know?, *November 1976*
- 162 Questions for Electors, *1976, October 1976*
- 161 The Federation of Canadian Municipalities: In Search of Credibility, *October 1976*
- 160 Is Policing the Public's Business? *July 1976*
- 159 The Role of the Municipal Auditor, *July 1976*
- 158 The News Media and the Metro Toronto Teacher's Strike, *April 1976*
- 157 Low Voter Turnout in Municipal Elections—No Easy Solutions, *February 1976*
- 156 County Schools: The Effects of the County School Takeover on One Ontario Township, *December 1975*
- 155 The Teaching of Local Government in Our Schools, *October 1975*
- 154 Report on Leisure Time Patterns of Apartment Dwellers in the City of London, *July 1975*
- 153 Metro Toronto Under Review: What Are The Issues? *March 1975*
- 152 Should the Metro Toronto Chairman be Directly Elected? *January 1975*
- 151 The Politics of Waste Management, *January 1975*

your inquiries are invited:



#### BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

73 Richmond St. West #404, Toronto, Canada M5H 2A1  
Telephone ..... (Area Code 416) 363-9265