

Summary from the last ARC working meeting

The rules that the Ministry of Education have put in place in order to consolidate schools does not deal with improving student achievement; These rules deal with financial reform in order to reduce overhead in an attempt to reduce that the public education system places on the Ontario Government.

1. VFA is mandated to exploit renewal costs to support the Ministry of Education goal to reduce the number of buildings supported by the ministry
2. The rules that the Ministry of Education have put in place to fund surviving schools works against these schools to remain open... OTG, Renewal needs, Facility Condition index (the last two based on exploited renewal costs calculated by MOE)
3. The Ministry of Education rules for consolidating schools, induce a feeling of urgency within School Boards to act and consolidate or get left behind, they have created an environment of control by combining Capacity of schools with funding and directly associating this with staffing thereby affecting access to programming
4. The Ministry of Education uses programming to help 'sell' the idea that consolidation to create an On the Ground Capacity that is 'just right' is what is good for all students, because it supports the Ministry of Education's financial reform.
5. The Ministry of Education is concerned with:
 - I. Reducing overhead costs in education by reducing the amount of facilities requiring upkeep for 5 years
 - II. Reducing costs of employment by reducing the amount of administration required to run these facilities, as well as, front line worker costs such as custodial and secretarial positions.
6. The Ministry of Education is not concerned with:
 - I. The uniqueness of North Bay and area's extreme social-emotional, mental health, and addiction needs and the value that a smaller educational community has with regards to supporting these needs
 - II. Respecting the Northern Ontario culture that is made up of existing and functioning within smaller numbers
 - III. Extra funding and programming support for our Indigenous population that North Bay and area educational facilities, both publicly funded and post-secondary institutions, support from all over Northern Ontario
7. Validating the programming argument:
 - Total number of programs offered by Ontario High Schools?
 - percentage of the population that access these programs?

- ***To be able to offer the programs is one thing, but how many students would actually be interested in taking them? The responsibility of school administration to validate all programs will continue, if courses are not full, they will continue to be dropped. Therefore, the selling feature of increased programming is only viable if the population that it is servicing is interested in accessing the increased programming. So, what are the typical Northern Ontario students interested in taking, that a school with a population of 800 would not be able to offer?***

Moving Forward

West Ferris Intermediate Secondary School is an integral part of not only West Ferris, but the North Bay community as a whole. If the doors of this school are closed for good, the implications on this area of the city of North Bay will be reflected socially and financially with the entire city feeling the burden of this closure. Although West Ferris does not qualify for rural funding because of its proximity to the other 2 High Schools within the city, it must be brought to the Ministry of Education's attention, the unique support systems that this school and building offer to our community.

Where our community stands:

Supporting 2 schools to be refurbished, with West Ferris being one and Widdifield or Chippewa the other.

Business case defence:

- Using the numbers that were provided by West Ferris as a cost per student to re-furbish these buildings
- an adjustment in populations through re-programming and adjustment of boundaries (Phelps students go to West Ferris) to increase OTG capacity of each school
- using the following as a case to support the NEED for two individual schools' grades 7 to 12 in our community:
 - I. The extreme social-emotional, mental health, and addiction needs within our community and schools; these students require space to 'cool off'. Our educational environments must provide for this space to maintain a respectable inclusive learning environment for all students. This may mean that OTG capacity is unique for the needs of our population, not a simple equation.
 - II. As Northerners, our youth are socialized to function within smaller social communities, and because of this, a larger School will negatively affect their optimal learning environment. Student achievement is only optimal if the

environment in which those students are being educated within respects their social, emotional, and physical needs. A big city school for a small city kid, what are the affects?

- III. North Bay and area's indigenous population; the NNDSB educates indigenous students from all over Northern Ontario when these students come to North Bay with their parents, whom are registered at Nipissing University or Canadore College. We need to be given the tools and funding to provide support for these students.

For this to happen the following information is required with regards to the above items:

- I. How is a 3-1 school with a larger population going to affect the special needs of students born with addictions, students with mental health problems, and students with behavioural identifications; how is a school environment with a larger footprint and larger population not only going to affect these students, but the entire population as a whole?

To understand this, we need a clearer picture of:

- the number of students requiring mental health support within the area and NNDSB?
- concrete current data on the number of addicted babies/children that are born within our community.
- How students who are identified with an Individual Education Plan (behaviour) supported currently within the 3 High Schools (not programming)? The Social-emotional affect of a larger school on these students who are within the regular stream?
- Knowing the extreme and diverse needs of our unique student population within North Bay and area, what would a 3-1 school look and sound like with all of these needs under one roof?
- What are the safety protocols that would be required within our unique population, to ensure that education continues while all students and staff remain safe?

- II. Affect of large population schools on students who are growing up in a small community (placing a small-town student, on a large city type campus) what are the affects of this? We need to be sure that the educational facilities our children are attending respect their Northern Ontario culture, a school of this size may have negative effects on students feeling comfortable in their learning environment and therefore may affect student performance.

- III. Supporting our indigenous students that reside within our community as well as those who access our education system from all over Northern Ontario.
- What indigenous programming is currently available?
 - Making the case that the indigenous programming to be based on need for individual student achievement not overall enrollment numbers.
 - How many self-identified indigenous students does the NNDSB within the community of North Bay support?

Concerns about the affects of a 3-1 preferred school option on our community:

- What would the affects of a 3-1 grade 7-12 school built at the Chippewa site be on the West Ferris area and what is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Near North District School Board in maintaining the viability of this unique sub-community within North Bay?
- What would the affects of a 3-1 grade 7-12 school built at the Chippewa site be on the overall economic well being of the City of North Bay, due to the lack of an integral community hub located at the West Ferris Intermediate Secondary School location? Without West Ferris ISS, the risk of this area of the city continuing to be marginalized economically is exasperated.
- If students are not successful within the proposed 3-1 option, the only other option for these students would be to switch school boards, thereby opening up the possibility of further decreasing enrolment within the NNDSB.

The benefits of maintaining a High School in the South End of the city and a High School in the North end of the city:

- Keeping 2 schools offers increased flexibility in the case of further declining enrollment if it hits again at the elementary level. Possible k-12 options can be looked at for both sites, while maintaining a presence in both the North end and South end of the city of North Bay. At that time, the board could apply for a new build or retro-fit grant.
- Keeping 2 schools offers increased flexibility in the case of increased enrollment due to boosted local economy. The OTG capacity is available at the 2 schools, and at this time the Board could apply for a retrofit, or a new build grant.

- The Ministry of Education is moving towards deregulating and privatizing Education by imposing strict funding formulas based on population and reform finance rules that expose the vulnerability of schools within smaller Northern Ontario communities. This trend towards deregulation is an attempt to ease the burden on the Ontario Government, thereby, opening up a door for private educational services, such as, independent schools and possibly with government reform, Ontario Ministry of Education funded Independent and Charter Schools. With only one Grade 7-12 option within the city of North Bay, these additional facilities are able to exploit the preferred options lack of choice, and could contribute to further declining enrollment within the board.

See article below:

[http://business.financialpost.com/fp-comment/shutting-down-schools-hurts-small-towns-but-it-doesnt-have-to-be-that-way \](http://business.financialpost.com/fp-comment/shutting-down-schools-hurts-small-towns-but-it-doesnt-have-to-be-that-way)