



**The Corporation of the  
City of North Bay**  
200 McIntyre St. East  
P.O. Box 360  
North Bay, Ontario  
Canada P1B 8H8

**Office of the Mayor**  
Direct Line: (705) 474-0626, extension 2517  
Direct Fax: (705) 474-4925  
Toll Free: 1-800-465-1882  
Email: [mayor@cityofnorthbay.ca](mailto:mayor@cityofnorthbay.ca)

## **Presentation to Near North District School Board Re: School Closures and Potential Impacts to the Municipality By Mayor Al McDonald – City of North Bay (12 June 2017)**

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Thank you for the opportunity to present to you regarding the recently completed Student Accommodation Review Committee with respect to potential school closures and consolidations.

As I had stated in my initial presentation back in February, I understand that it is inevitable that there will be school closings. But at the same time, I knew that there were options beyond the single high school option that was being contemplated. Therefore, I would like to thank the Accommodation Review Committee for their time and thoughtful work to arrive at alternative solutions that will, if accepted by this Board, maintain two of the three high schools. In addition, I understand that the most recent staff recommendation also supports a 2-High School solution for our community.

It will now be up to the Board to deliberate and make a decision. I am here to ask that in your considerations, you weigh the potential impacts on our community and on the students. I ask that you make the decision that will make a positive impact on our community. Please consider carefully in your deliberations what the impact of school closures will have from a community perspective on our city. I ask Trustees from outside of our City to be cognizant of what our community, through the ARC deliberations, has recommended.

I will briefly summarize the impact I see on our city from a Community Development, City Planning, Economic Development, and Infrastructure perspective. I think that the ARC and your staff's recommendation did an excellent job of balancing these considerations in their recommendations.

From a **Community Development** perspective, below are the recommendations from the ARC and the Staff:

- Recognizes that **Schools** are the hearts of our communities and contribute intrinsic value to the communities and neighbourhoods they serve.
- Recognizes that **Schools** play a strategic role in the community as hubs around which the community develops.
- Supports our community's long-term planning objectives of intensification, neighbourhood revitalization, and the retention of walkable and mixed communities.
- Supports neighbourhood and community identity facilitating how people interact with each other, develop relationships and work towards a common goal. Enhancing that sense of community what makes our city a great place to live.

The ARC and Staff recommendation reinforces the identity and strength of our community. By endorsing and accepting the recommendation, you as a Board will reinforce our identity and strength as a community. Your decision must support our students, our schools and our community.

### **Municipal Planning**

One of the objectives of Municipal Planning articulated through the City's Official Plan is to build on North Bay's quality of life strengths through the suitable supply and range of housing types, complemented by efficient public transit, and active transportation, access to facilities and services for employment, education, health and social care, sports recreation, culture and parks for the sustainability and future growth of the City.

The potential removal of a high school in the southern part of the city does not support the objectives of the Municipality nor facilitate access to facilities and services for our community. It will negatively impact traffic, discourage active transportation by young people in our community thus potentially negatively impacting long-term health and wellbeing,

reduce park space and remove critical educational services from that end of the city that services a significant population of our community.

Therefore, I am very pleased that the recommendations of the ARC and Staff included consideration of Municipal Planning challenges in their solutions.

## **Economic Development**

The recommendation to maintain a high school in the southern part of the city is critical to building and maintaining an attractive place to live and supporting development and investment in that part of the City. It thoughtfully considers the impact of school closures on future residential development, park development and investment in businesses and services in not only that part of our community, but also in our whole city.

The city is making significant investments in our community. And we view healthy, vibrant, strategically located schools as an important competitive advantage in attracting investment to our community. I thank and applaud the Committee and Staff for supporting this view.

## **Infrastructure**

The City anticipated significant impacts to City infrastructure in the case of the single high school scenario and to a lesser extent on the elementary school scenario particularly with respect to Traffic and Site Services. The community anticipates these same impacts and I was pleased to see it was rationally considered and addressed in the recommendation brought forward by the ARC and Staff.

### **i. Traffic**

From a traffic perspective, the student population increase into one area of the city through a one-high school solution could be in the range of a 50% to 100% increasing the proportion of students requiring transportation (busing/drop off) compared to a local school. The increase in traffic volume in a single-high school solution as a result of the expansion at the originally proposed site for a single high school will bring additional infrastructure requirements to the High St. and Chippewa St. areas adjacent to the school property. Improvements may also be required at the Chippewa/High intersection. Therefore, we are concerned with the traffic and resulting safety impacts. The recommended alternative wisely highlights the above noted challenges and flags the need for traffic studies in the early planning stages. It will also minimize the potential infrastructure costs that will be required.

### **ii. Storm Water Management and Site Services**

For redevelopment of the sites as proposed by the ARC and Staff considerations may be necessary with respect to storm water quantity and water quality controls. Confirmation of municipal sanitary and storm servicing will be required.

Overall, there will be stresses to our infrastructure under the one-school solutions that would not be as significant under the proposed recommendation. These will result in less cost to our city. I will encourage you to engage the City early in the design process so that issues can be addressed early in this process.

## **Conclusion**

From the Municipality's perspective, I understand that this Board faces significant challenges and has a daunting task in front of it. I encourage that as you consider how to deliver the best possible education to our youth, you weigh the impacts on the community that will impact the quality of education that they will receive.

From our perspective, single-school solutions, particularly in the case of the single high school solution is not the optimum solution for our youth or our community.

You tasked your professional Staff and members of our community to evaluate options. They have thoughtfully and powerfully put forward a viable option that supports the objectives of our community, the objectives of the board and most importantly the needs of the students.

I am fully supportive of the recommendation that has been placed in front of you by the ARC and your staff and trust that the Near North School Board will move forward with those recommendations to help build and strengthen our community.

Al McDonald  
Mayor  
City of North Bay