
Colborne- Holmesville Accommodation Report

Long-Term Vision Option

Prepared and Submitted by
Colborne Central P.S. ARC Representatives
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Introduction

In accordance with Board Policy 15, Section 7.1, the Colborne-Holmesville ARC is bringing forth two proposals for consideration by the Avon Maitland District School Board. The following proposed option is being presented by the Colborne ARC representatives.

It is our sincere belief and core value that ensuring academic success, on one hand, and the social and economic vitality of the rural community, on the other, is not mutually exclusive priorities. Honouring the traditions of country-side schools helps bind smaller communities and puts students and families at the forefront of education. The Sustainable Huron report recognizes how linked our economy, society and environment are and suggests that we need to focus on what we can do locally and work together make thoughtful decisions about our future.

Accommodation Proposal

Proposed Option

Continue to operate Colborne Central Public School and Holmesville Public School as is, for the short-term. Within five years, build a new, centrally located Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 school in the country-side. This new facility will accommodate student and staff populations from the closure of three older, inefficient facilities, specifically Brookside Public School, Colborne Central Public School and Holmesville Public School.

An immediate cost benefit analysis of closing Brookside P.S., Colborne Central P.S. and Holmesville P.S. within five years, along with building a new school facility should be conducted by the AMDSB. The results of this analysis must be compared to the on-going maintenance and operation of the existing three schools as well as the proposed Administration Option from the Colborne-Holmesville AR. It is anticipated that the results will demonstrate a new facility as the best option to foster generations of children to reach their full potential as well as the best return on investment that would serve a broader community

Rationale

The original recommendation by Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) staff to the AMDSB Trustees was to initiate an Accommodation Review (AR) of Brookside Public School (P.S.), Colborne Central Public School (P.S.) and Holmesville Public School (P.S.). The Trustees resolved to commence an AR of all three schools but the motion was amended and resolved that only Colborne P.S. and Holmesville P.S. would be included, according to the AMDSB meeting minutes of September 13, 2011.

Vice-Chair Sygrove, at the September 13, 2011 AMDSB meeting, noted that ideally this Accommodation Review would have occurred two to three years from now. This is an indication that the Board had every intention of supporting, maintaining and staffing Colborne Central Public School and Holmesville Public School for at least the next three to four years (this includes time for an AR and the transition year). Thus, financial forecasting completed by the Board and submitted to the Ministry of Education would allow for the status quo over the next three to four years.

The Colborne-Holmesville AR is a forced review due to the poor maintenance of the Colborne Central P.S. facility that created a significant mould problem in the school that impacted staff and students.

The exclusion of the Brookside P.S. in the Colborne-Holmesville AR is short-sighted and does not allow for a thoughtful review of AMDSB schools located in the Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh Township and Central Huron. It undermines the opportunity for a long term vision for the development of a centrally located country-side school within the Brookside P.S., Colborne P.S. and Holmesville P.S. catchment areas.

This is the primary reason the Colborne ARC representatives request the AMDSB cease final consideration of an option to close one or two schools identified in the Colborne-Holmesville AR. Furthermore, we request that a complete AR be initiated to include Brookside P.S., Colborne Central P.S. and Holmesville P.S. that will hopefully lead to the closure of all three schools within five years and the investment in a new centrally located, country-side school that will combine student and staff populations.

Value To Student

Short-Term

- Meets the number one priority of Colborne P.S. and Holmesville P.S families, to keep our students together.
- Meets the number two priority of Colborne P.S and Holmesville P.S families, for the AMDSB to provide a country-side option for future generations.
- Ensures consistency and stability for children because students will not be transferred between several schools over the course of their elementary years.

Long-Term

- Creates a new school facility that fosters learning in a clean, functional to maintain environment that accommodates all building code and accessibility requirements.
- Creates an opportunity to bring together the broader country-side community to support a strong student population who excels at extra-curricular activities, participates in music and environmental programming and continues to demonstrate strength in responding to the EQAO testing.
- Creates an opportunity to expand the natural, outdoor learning environment that goes beyond the playground.
- Allows the congregation of students and staff in grades K-8 in sufficient numbers to adequately provide resources and job-imbedded professional development.
- Maintains the rural citizenship qualities the broader community expects for a sustainable quality of life.

Value to AMDSB

Remembering that leaders lead by example, whether they intend to or not, the AMDSB is in a position of leadership in the County. Demonstrating thoughtful, long-term decision making is a good example for students. It is part of participating in a sustainable community.

- Creates time to prepare and consider a long-term vision that is inclusive, fair and conducted in an ethical manner
- Provides opportunity to be provincial leader by being a sustainable community and economic development partner at a local level.
- Meets the Ministry of Education's current policies related to consolidation of schools, yet it will be done on a much broader sense when all three schools are included.
- Recognizes the current and future limitations of Ministry funding available for ongoing maintenance of our school buildings.
- Allows the Board to build a school that meets the funding formula rather than trying to make the funding formula fit the existing schools.
- Allows time, in the short-term for the Board to focus on the Wingham build and transition.
- It does not infringe on any short-term budgeting because it has already been noted by Vice-Chair Sygrove that this AR would ideally have occurred in two to three years.

Value to the Community

- Creates a country-side option for education in a new facility.
- Supports community revitalization.
- Creates an opportunity to build capacity by engaging cooperative approach to working together.
- Allows for country-side culture to be reflected and the tradition is strengthened for the next generation.
- Creates increased access for a centrally located community use facility. With rural municipalities losing churches and community facilities there is opportunity to partner from a financial perspective to create this space within a school facility.

- Engages the wider community in sustainability and contributes to improved quality of life.
- Allows future generations to access a better facility than what is available now or possibly available if the Rural Option or Administration Option from this AR is accepted by the Trustees.

Value to Local Economy

- Responds to the recent release of the 2011 Census population statistics. Specifically, ACW experienced noticeable growth while population declined in surrounding municipalities, including Goderich.
- Creates new investment and infrastructure that is the foundation of rural success as it supports businesses and communities.
- Agriculture is a significant economic driver in Huron County and the province. To ensure the industry's growth, young farming families need country-side infrastructure.
- Multiple AR's create significant impact on administration, teaching, custodial and bus driver jobs. The economic multiplier impact of such decisions creates instability for local suppliers as well.

Remarks on Administration (AMDSB Staff) Option

- It is a short term vision.
- It creates a significant economic impact on small country-side communities. It reduces the need for local businesses, lowers property values and challenges local municipalities to maintain infrastructure when fewer people are choosing to live in an area due to lack of schooling available.
- The financial analysis provided is unclear and requires greater detail for a true analysis of the return on investment by excluding Brookside P.S.
- There have not been any recent air quality tests or invasive mould testing conducted at Brookside P.S.
- The value to the students is unclear as this option only focuses on the financial impact.
- Additional classroom construction will be required at Goderich Public School and the school gym is small without large windows to allow for an outside view and sunlight.
- There is a lack of outdoor space at Goderich Public School for accommodating school bus drop-off and pick-up.
- Transferring some Colborne students to Brookside P.S. is not a step towards improving the quality of space for educating children. Brookside P.S. is an older facility that requires over \$1.5 million of capital improvements.
- Condensing school populations from Colborne Central P.S. and Holmesville P.S. to Goderich Public School, G.D.C.I Elementary and Brookside P.S. limits the availability of pupil placements, should Brookside P.S. encounter issues rendering it unfit, as was the case with Colborne Central P.S. at the ACW location.
- It separates students from their original school community and friendships.
- It adds students to Goderich Public School, which has already gone through a significant transition and has worked very hard to create a singular school community. To ask those students and families to adjust again seems unfair and is a good example of the challenges presented with short-term solutions to long-term issues.
- Nothing has been done to assure parents how excellent EQAO standings for Colborne P.S and Holmesville P.S would be fostered at the other schools.

Remarks on the Rural (All Colborne students to Holmesville P.S.) Option

- The majority of Colborne parents who responded to surveys do not want their children attending Holmesville P.S.
- It does not keep our Colborne student community together as many parents will cross-border their children to Goderich Public School.
- The length of bus rides for students in the north of the Colborne Central P.S. catchment area will be too long.
- Holmesville P.S. is also an older facility with a small gymnasium that has small windows that do not provide an outside view and over \$1 million of capital improvements required. The cost of capital improvements is similar to those needed at Colborne Central P.S., exclusive of the additional \$995,000 needed rectify the mould issue caused by poor maintenance.
- The AMDSB hires contract custodial staff for Homesville P.S. The same approach was taken for Colborne Central P.S. when the students attended the ACW location. Past experience at Colborne Central P.S. suggests contract custodians are not satisfactory for maintaining the cleanliness of a school. There is concern that continuing contract custodial tasks when the student population significantly increases will not suffice.
- There have not been any recent air quality tests or invasive mould testing conducted at Holmesville P.S.
- Relying on this facility that also has significant capital requirements, could result in students being transferred to other schools in the near future.
- Holmesville P.S. is not in a central location for the two catchment areas.

Additional Information

- Colborne Parent Survey Results (to be included by February 29, 2012)

Conclusion

Sharing ideas is fundamental to any process. Ideas foster discussion and that is exactly what has occurred for our Colborne Central P.S. community.

It is time for the AMDSB and our community to build upon past experiences and learning. The short-sightedness of the past has created some of these financial challenges associated with school facilities. Let's take the step forward together, as a broader community, to provide our children with the very best in education.